

God's Plan for the Home

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[0:00] Well, this morning, this being Father's Day, I want us to look at a text of Scripture, deviate a little bit from Philippians, Psalm 127.

So you can be turning to that if you would like. Well, I hope you would like. I want you to. If you have a Bible with you, turn to it. Psalm 127. Now, we'll get to that in just a moment, but I want to begin by asking a question. I do that quite often in preaching.

Ask a question. That's a good way to get our brains working and thought processes going. And the question is, what is the biggest danger we face as a nation?

That's a big question, kind of an open-ended question. I imagine you could answer that a number of different ways. I didn't say one of the biggest. I said the biggest. What is the biggest danger we face as a nation?

Is it the rising crime rate in our American cities, not just in our cities, in our towns, in our communities? Is that it? Is that the biggest danger we face? The crime rate.

[1:16] You know, where it used to be in America, you never, ever thought about locking your front door and never thought about, you know, taking a trip to the city and going downtown for shopping, let the kids go one way and you go another way.

We never thought about that in America. Now, it's been a number of years. And as I look around the room, there are a number of you young enough. You don't remember those days. But it used to be that way. And so what is the biggest danger we face?

Is it the crime rate that's growing in our nation? Is it alcoholism? You would agree with me that is a big danger we face, have been facing for a number of years, the drug industry, drug addiction?

Or is it poverty? Some would have us believe that that is the most pressing, most dangerous thing going on in our society today, poverty.

And to think of it in terms of kind of politically, is it that we are becoming, growingly, becoming a welfare state?

[2:28] Is that one of the biggest dangers? Well, it might be one of them. Is it the biggest one? Is it the decline of the educational level of our citizenry?

You say, is that happening today? Well, certainly it is. I mean, in comparison to the other industrialized nations of our world. We're declining. We certainly don't rank number one.

And fact number two, number three, number four, I'm not sure where we rank, but it's way on down the list. That's a danger, isn't it? Is that the greatest danger? Biggest danger?

Is it the economy stupid? And you have to be a little bit older than some to remember that kind of phrase. The economy stupid. It's the economy stupid.

Is that it? You know, the national debt. Right now, \$15,750,000,000,000 and some change.

[3:29] Kind of hard to think of it in terms of change. That is millions of dollars. And it's growing by a rate of \$4 billion a day.

That's huge, isn't it? A growing problem. Or the housing market where, you know, the upside down mortgage situation that many Americans are in right now, they've placed themselves in right now.

Or, add to that, in terms of economy, the unemployment rate, and we could go on and on with the list. Is that the biggest danger we face?

If not, what is the biggest danger we face as a nation? Is it terrorism? Another 9-11 or worse than that. And something could happen that conceivably could be worse than what happened on 9-11.

Is that it? Or maybe you would say, well, preacher, really I think it's the rapid moral decline of our culture.

[4:35] And that is a huge danger, isn't it? Right before our eyes, we're seeing it. And happening very quickly, the moral decline, sexual promiscuity among our young people and even other adults.

It's commonplace. It's accepted even. Pornography and homosexuality and these kind of things that are happening in our nation. The moral decline of our nation.

It's a very serious problem. Now, clearly, these are significant dangers. Wouldn't you agree?

Significant dangers to our national health and the well-being of our society.

Huge dangers. But I would say to you, and not just because this is Father's Day, we need to think of this more often and make it a matter of prayer and also make it a matter of commitment, the biggest danger we face, I believe as a nation, is the destruction of the family.

The destruction of the family. I don't mean family in its many different definitions and more and more hit the scene every day.

[5:59] I'm talking about the family as defined by God and His Word. We could call it, and I think it's still valid, to call it the traditional family.

Traditional, that is, in the sense of a Christian nation, as we once were. I'm not so sure we still are. I'm talking about the family as it was established by God.

That is our greatest danger, is the destruction of family. The family in America is under the attack of Satan like never before.

Wouldn't you agree? Are you seeing this? It's very easy for those of us who are still very committed to a traditional kind of family. It's difficult for us inside the church sometimes because we're insulated, in a sense, from what's going on around us.

But really, we're not because this kind of thing is going on inside the church. But sometimes we turn a blind eye to it and we don't see it, that there is the attack going on against the family and there is the destruction of the family in America today.

[7:11] It's the biggest danger we face. It's being attacked by Satan like never before. It's one of, I believe, one of his strategies for the destruction of our nation.

And he seems to be winning. And I would even add, he may win. He may win in America.

A possibility that ought to drive us to action, to drive us to our knees. Now, here's the lie that we're learning more and more today or hearing more and more today, and that is that the traditional biblical family is obsolete.

It's out of date. And really, for many, they would say and have us believe that in the grand scheme of things in our culture, the traditional biblical family is irrelevant.

Really. If it still works for you, that's fine for you. But it's really becoming more and more irrelevant in our culture today. It's just not something we need.

[8:14] But here's the truth. And I really believe this with all my heart. As the family goes, so goes this nation. And this has been unfolding for us now for a number of years.

That is the truth of this. As the family goes, so goes the nation. Again, this is Father's Day, and I know you know that. And according to the Bible, the father is the head of the family, and so there could not be a more appropriate subject on this day, this particular day, than the subject of the family.

The family. And so I would say to you men, and I would also include the ladies here. It's to all of us. The most important business you and I have on this earth is the health of our families.

More important than any other business we have. Even more important than our commitment to the church. Yeah, I know. I'm the pastor, and it's maybe surprising that I would say such a thing, but the family, and the health of the family, and your commitment to the family is more important than your commitment to the church.

Now, your commitment to the church is important. But understand that God established the family long before the church was established. Long before government was established.

[9:42] God established the family. The family is the first institution in human society. Now, with that as an introduction, let's look at Psalm 127.

And I want to read the entire psalm. It's just five verses. The Song of Ascents of Solomon. That's part of the inspired text, though I'm not going to deal with that introduction to the psalm this morning.

Here's the psalm proper. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so He gives His beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord.

The fruit of the womb is a reward, like arrows in the hand of a warrior. So are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.

[10:54] That is children. They shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate. Alright, now, very quickly this morning, I want us to see three important truths about the family from this text, Psalm 127.

And really, we're just going to follow the text very logically. Each of my points come straight from the text. Really, it's very easy to outline. First thing we see in verse 1, the first part of verse 1, is the building of the home.

That's number one. The building of the home. And verse 1 is very specific about that. Though not detailed, we have to go to the rest of Scripture, really, to flesh all this out and to bring in the details. But the statement, the declaration in verse 1, is really very clear. And it says, unless the Lord, and that's all capitals, L-O-R-D, that's Yahweh, God, unless God builds the home, that is, the household, the family, they labor in vain who build it.

There it is, very clear. Now, ask yourself, why is it that so many homes are falling apart today in America? And they are, aren't they? Falling apart, coming apart at the seams.

[12:25] And if they haven't yet fallen apart, it's like World War III inside the home. Why is that? And why is the term dysfunctional family so commonplace in our culture today?

Why is that? And it is, by the way. And why is, and I don't want to offend anyone because this may apply to many of you, but why is the divorce rate now, believe it or not, slightly higher among professing Christians than among non-Christians?

Why is that the case? Well, I think partly because we're failing, somehow failing to see that God has a definite plan for the building of the home.

And if we do see it, we're not, like we should, implementing that plan to the building of our home. And what is God's plan for building the home?

What is His plan? Well, number one, it starts with the right partners. I have to say a word about that even though for many of you I'm looking at right now, you've already selected the partner.

[13:42] But there are others, some young people down here and some singles in our congregation. The right home or the building of the home starts with the right partners.

The right partners. And we're failing to see that. Someone has said that there is really nothing wrong with the institution of marriage. It's the personnel we have problems with.

That's true, isn't it? God has something to say about that. His word. In fact, a number of things, a number of places we could go, but perhaps the most well-known passage when it comes to what God has to say to believers when the believer is selecting that mate for life, God says in 2 Corinthians 6:14.

Do you know what it is? Do not be unequally yoked or bound together with unbelievers.

It's very clear. And then He asks a series of questions and all these questions. A yes answer is implied or none is implied, rather, not yes, but none.

[14:55] And here it is. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? Or another translation puts it this way. What do righteousness and wickedness have in common? And the answer is nothing.

None. And then He asks, And what communion has light with darkness? None. And what accord or what harmony has Christ with Belial?

That's just a word that means wicked. The wicked. And the answer is none. Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And the answer is no part.

The instruction here is very clear. Very clear if we have ears to hear it and many do not today. And the reason so many families are falling apart is because there are so many marriages falling apart. And the reason why so many marriages are falling apart is because it did not start right. It did not start the right way, God's way, with the right partners.

[16:00] Now here's some good advice, I think, for singles in our congregation, even our young singles. And so with this I would say these would be some good instructions to parents who are raising children right now.

when you begin to look for the right partner in marriage, first start at the spiritual level. There's a novel idea.

Before you select a partner for life in marriage, start at the spiritual level. Start with yourself first.

I mean, if you want to marry the right person, then you need to be the right person spiritually. It begins there. Better make sure you've got that done. Be the right person.

But then consider the boy or girl you might possibly want to marry and consider the spiritual things about that boy or that girl, that young man or that young woman.

[17:07] Is he or she the right person spiritually? spiritually? I'm talking about the starting point. I didn't start with, are you attracted to them?

Is this girl good looking or pretty? Is the boy good looking? Is there some kind of attraction there? I said, start at the spiritual level.

Is this person the right person spiritually? does he or she believe the Bible and live out that Bible? Desire to live out the truth of the Bible?

Really, before that, does he or she believe in and love Jesus? And does he or she live according to God's Word?

Does he or she love the church? You say, now, pastor, that's old fashioned. Surely, that's not a major consideration about a person's desire concerning the church.

[18:11] Well, yes, it is a major consideration. See, I think every believer ought to love what Jesus loves. Huh? And Ephesians 5 says that Jesus loves the church and died for the church.

They ought to love what Jesus loves. And so, when you're looking for a partner in marriage, first check out the spiritual level. is this person, this boy, this girl, this young man, this young woman, the right person spiritually?

Then, move to what we could call the soulish level. First, the spiritual level, then the soulish level. What does that mean?

Well, I think we could describe this as kind of the friendship level. The friendship stage. Get to know that person. Get to know them.

Find out all about this person. Learn everything you can about this person. Develop a friendship with this person and take your time doing it.

[19:18] Get in a hurry. Take your time and don't get in a hurry. And certainly, do not move to the third and final stage until you've fully completed the spiritual and the soulish level.

Because, you see, and don't miss this, young people, the final level is the physical level. And the lion's share of that is something you do not partake of, do not engage in until after the marriage relationship is established, until you're married.

The physical level. It's the consummation in marriage. And so, the spiritual level, the soulish level, the physical level, and in that order. Amen?

Amen? In that order. And therein lies the problem. Most today, in America today, in our culture today, are getting the whole process backward, in reverse order, starting with the physical. and then hoping the spiritual and the soulish features of a marriage will somehow work out in good time as time goes on.

[20:33] And they rarely, if ever, do. Especially the spiritual. Don't kid yourself. If you think marrying a young man or young woman is a part of your evangelistic responsibility, you're wrong about that.

You're not going to save the world, one person at a time, by marrying that person first and leading that person to Christ. It will not work that way.

And we're talking about God's building of the home, and it starts with the right partners, and then the right plan. The right partners, the right plan for building the home.

And it's God's plan. It's God's plan. not some secular psychologist, but God's plan, and God's plan will work.

You know, the Bible represents the law of God. In fact, oftentimes in Scripture, it is referred to as the law, God's law.

[21:40] And that goes way beyond just the Ten Commandments or the first five books of the Bible. It is the whole of Scripture is in that sense the law of God. And so the Bible represents the law of God.

His holy precepts, and they are laws, they are precepts, truths that must be obeyed. And if you obey them, these precepts will bring life to you and blessing.

Now, in a sense, you can break every single one of God's laws. Every single one of them. except one.

There is one law you cannot break. You cannot break this law. You can only demonstrate it with your life.

Do you know what it is? It is the law of sowing and reaping. That's one of God's laws. A powerful law.

[22:48] And you cannot break it. You can only demonstrate that it's true. The law of sowing and reaping. Galatians chapter 6 and verse 7. Do not be deceived.

God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. Whatever he sows, whatever you sow, that's what you'll reap. I mean, it's just like a farmer.

Whatever the farmer puts in the ground, that's what's going to come up. And whatever you sow, that is the decisions you make in life, the life choices you make, the direction you go, and you choose to go, whatever direction that is, that's what your life will result in.

The fruit that will be the result. The law of sowing and reaping. And so I would say to you young people and singles here this morning, you select an ungodly partner and an ungodly family will be the result.

An ungodly marriage, rather, and family. That will be the result. Whatever you sow, that's what you'll reap. And I would say this also to the parents today, you raise ungodly children and an ungodly family will be the result.

[23:57] Just mark it down. Whatever you sow, you will reap. And I would also say to the church here this morning, the more ungodly families we have, the more ungodly our churches will become, and the more ungodly our churches become, the more ungodly our nation will become.

And that's what we're seeing today. It's very clear. And it's a truth that we cannot deny a law that cannot be broken.

The law of sowing and reaping. And in this context, the context of the family, as the family goes, so goes the nation. Just mark it down. The building of the home, it begins with the right partner arranged by God.

It continues with the right plan, and it's God's plan. It's ordained by God. It's revealed to us in the Word of God. Read it. Study it. Learn it. Apply it.

Live it. The right plan. And then it is accomplished with the right power. The right partner arranged by God.

[25:07] The right plan ordained by God. The right power obtained from God. Philippians 2, 8, 13 rather says, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And so the psalmist said, except the Lord build the house. They labor in vain the building. The building of the home. That's point number one.

Let's move on. Number two, the battle for the home. The second part of verse one points us to the context of warfare.

And it says this, unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. Unless the Lord guards, keeps, secures the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

What is a nation? It's a collection of cities. Ever thought about it in that way? A nation is a collection of cities or towns.

[26:23] Bartlesville is one of them. Collectively, all the towns and cities and communities together make up this nation. What is a city? Collection of homes.

Collection of homes, whether it's just one person or more. Collection of homes. A collection of families. See, God's people had better wake up.

We'd better wake up today. I would even go beyond just God's people. I would say to America, Americans need to wake up. You need to wake up to this issue. Whether you're a believer or a non-believer, the battle that is taking place right now that threatens our very existence as a nation is not taking place in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The battle that threatens to take us down as a nation, as a world power, is not coming from the Middle East. Syria or Iran or any of those countries there, it's not coming from China, not coming from Russia, not coming from any communist nation or Islamic nation.

The battle is within and it is against the home. It's against the family. The biblical, traditional family is being attacked on every front.

[27:42] And what hope is there of us winning? Just one. Just one.

Unless the Lord guard the city. The collection of homes. The watchman stays awake in vain.

See, the watchman was the early warning system for the cities in ancient times. The watchman, of course, would stay awake all night and be a lookout, a lookout for an attacking enemy. And so this whole kind of reference refers to or represents the defense of a city. The watchman is not the defender.

The watchman is one who watches. So that those who have the duty of defending the city can defend the city. But he's saying here that unless the Lord defends the city, defends the home, the watchman can stay up all night and it's worthless.

[28 : 55] So not only is God the builder of the home, and therefore the building of the home is impossible apart from Him and apart from His Word, also the battle for the home, which is waging in our day like never before, the battle against those who would destroy the home is vain.

It's futile. Unless God defends it. Without God, without His Word, it's futile. And what is God's strategy for preserving the biblical family against the attacks of Satan and against the attacks of the culture?

What is God's strategy for this? I think we could sum it up this way. God's strategy for the family to preserve the family is to continue reproducing it.

The biblical family. That is, families producing families producing families and it growing exponentially in that way. I'm talking about family as defined by God's Word.

God's strategy for preserving the family in our nation is to continue to reproduce it. And we're part of that.

[30 : 14] A strategic part of it. And it begins with our children. Let me give you a verse. One you ought to know. Proverbs 22.6 Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Very familiar, isn't it? Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old or older he will not depart from it. But have you noticed that the Bible did not say teach a child?

It says something more than that. It said train up a child. That's different. There's a big difference between teaching and training up.

Now training up includes teaching but teaching doesn't necessarily include training up. This is something bigger. Something more. Because if you just simply teach a child in the way he or she should go then someone else will come along.

Some other kind of teaching and maybe your child will like that person's teaching more than yours. But training up a child that's something different.

[31 : 26] That is something significantly different. The Hebrew word here translated train up and it's one word in the Hebrew is the word *konak* and it comes from a Hebrew root word that was used to describe what the midwives, the Hebrew midwives would do when a new child was birthed under their care.

And this is what they would do. Immediately after the child is born, coming right out of the womb, the midwife would take her index finger and dip it in some olive oil and then dip it in some finely crushed dates, something very sweet.

And then she would very carefully, very gently take her finger and stick it inside the mouth of that newborn baby, that infant, and touch the palate of the baby's mouth and this would trigger something in that baby.

It would trigger the sucking instinct, the nursing instinct. And so it was done to create, again, to create a desire in that child for nourishment.

The very first thing the child needs, nourish. Now, that's the meaning and the usage of the word, of our word here in Proverbs 22.6.

[32 : 42] And this is a word for all homemakers today because that's the context in which the word is used here in Psalm 127 or Psalm, excuse me, Proverbs 22.

The context is children and the training of children. And so this is a word for homemakers, fathers and mothers. And so I would say to fathers and mothers and grandparents as well.

This is job one. And what is job one according to Proverbs 22.6? It is to create a desire, create in the hearts of your children a desire for God and for His word.

And so then when they are older, they will not depart from it. That's the principle taught here, the proverb. And so we as parents, we teach and we train and we lead by example and we display in our lives and the way we live, not just at church, but at home.

We display in our lives our love for God and love for His word and love for His son Jesus and love for His church. We display that to our children.

[33 : 53] And so by doing that, we are also teaching them to choose the right partner in marriage and to follow the right plan when they do get married and have a family and to rely upon the right power.

You see, this is the battle for the home. Now, folks, listen, it seems that when it comes to the health of the family in America that we are in a free fall toward disaster.

It's very clear. But it can stop with us. It really can. It can stop with us. Our generation and the generation of those we are training, training up, if we will trust God and if we will obey His word. We can put a stop to it. By nurturing our biblical family and spreading and reproducing the biblical family in our culture.

And we have all but given up on that. All but given up. God help us. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

[35 : 11] The building of the home. The battle for the home. There's one more. The blessings of the home. The blessings.

The rewards. See, when, this is very logical, when God is the builder of the home and when God is the keeper of the home, the guard of the home, then and only then can we enjoy the rewards of the home.

And what are they? Well, the text mentions two, by the way. Contentment. Contentment. He gives his beloved sleep. And children.

These two rewards are blessings of the home. Contentment and children. Contentment. Verse two. It is vain for you to rise up early, sit up late, eat the bread of sorrows.

For so he gives his beloved sleep. It's vain for you to get up early, stay up late, just to eat the bread of sorrows.

[36 : 21] Because God gives contentment. That is, he gives his beloved sleep. Now, what is he talking about here? He's talking about a focus on material things.

Money. Material things. Money. Things. Materialism.

The love of things. That's the idea here. Again, in the context of the home. The family. And this is where I believe he's primarily singling out the bread winner in the home.

There was a day when that was just the man, but now we have women too who are breadwinners and involved in that. And so it speaks to men and women. Mothers and fathers. Husbands and wives.

Who have an inordinate focus on the accumulation of things. To rise up early. To stay up late.

[37 : 26] All so you can eat the bread of sorrows. or the destruction of the home. Ultimately. You know, we remember good commercials usually because they're comical, especially in our day, but sometimes because they have a very strong message.

A number of years ago, I remember a commercial that ran quite often. I don't even remember what the commercial was selling or, but I did get the point of it.

And it showed a wealthy businessman, kind of an executive type guy, in his tailored suit. And he is sitting in the formal dining room of his big mansion.

Sitting there. And he's seated there all alone. All alone except for his dog. And his dog is lying there on the floor beside him. And he's seated there all alone at the end of his dining room table in his home.

And he is speaking about all of the material riches that he had given to his family, provided for his family. The wealth, the home, all the things that he had provided for his family.

[38 : 43] And he's kind of reciting all of that. And now he's all alone. The implication being, the wife's gone. Kids are gone.

He's all by himself. All by himself with the things that he accumulated from rising up early, staying up late.

And so there he is. He's seated there. Going back over, rehearsing all of these things. And in front of him is the plate with his filet mignon.

And he picks that plate up and he sets it down on the floor in front of his dog. And he says, here boy, I ate at the office.

You get it? The question is, when is enough enough? When it comes to the accumulation of things that we have convinced ourselves that it's all for the family?

[39 : 48] When is enough enough? If it takes rising early and staying up late, eventually you'd just be eating the bread of sorrows.

the Bible says it's vain, worthless, it's a waste of time in the end for you to do this.

Because there's no contentment in this. No contentment for you, no contentment for your family at all. Contentment comes from the Lord.

It's a blessing of the home when he's the builder of it and he's the keeper of it. It's contentment for the home because he gives his beloved sleep.

His beloved contentment. Then there's another blessing of the home, of course. That is the home that's built and kept by God and its children.

[40 : 56] It's children. Children are a blessing of the home. Right? Are you out there? Children are a blessing of the home.

Verse 3 says, Behold, children are a heritage, a reward from the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward. Children are not a curse.

Curse. Though it seems that the abortion industry is an indicator that to many, children are a curse. Not a curse. Children are a blessing. That's what the Bible says. And have you been noticing that it has become almost un-American to have a large family? It really has.

How sad. But God's Word says, verse 5, and though I know we have used this verse as kind of a source of jokes, but the Bible says, Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.

[42 : 06] Children. Full of children. That his home is full of children. Happy is the man. Do you think that's the prevalent philosophy of our day?

Absolutely not. The point of the text, though, is not just simply the desirability of children.

I mean, that's pretty clear, but it's more than that. It goes further than that. It also, the point of the text is also the directability of children. I know that's not a word, but you understand what I mean.

The directability of children. Look at verse 4. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. That's when we have kids usually.

When we're young. So we're talking about young children. They're like arrows. And we're to treat them like arrows. Children are like arrows. But what does that mean? Well, you know, in the first place, arrows can go where you cannot go.

[43 : 06] They can be shot to places and to tasks and to life contributions.

Places you cannot go and things you cannot do. An arrow can go where you cannot go. And arrows also, of course, in the imagery here, a warrior, arrows can be shot at the enemy.

Children are like arrows. And parents have been given a blessed privilege. And also with it an awesome responsibility. And that is to aim their children at the world for Jesus.

To shoot them straight for Jesus. They will not hit the mark on their own. They must be guided.

We must take careful aim. And according to careful aim and more importantly, God's grace, we're to shoot them for Jesus.

[44 : 12] This is really an important text. Let's close and put all this together. The building of the home. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain to build it.

The battle for the home. Unless the Lord guards or keeps the home, the watchman stays awake in vain. The blessing of the home.

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb is His reward. Amen and amen.