

# Home

## Week 4: Dads, Moms, Arrows in the Quiver

May 14, 2017

Happy Mother's Day! No other role I know calls for constant self-denial like parenting. I'm glad you get a day where everyone at least tries to thank you. I know for some of you this isn't a celebration day, it's a day of sadness. We love you.

*Home* recap - Made for relationships. Homes show off the greater home. When these two things meet, we get hospitality. The Christian life is designed to be one of hospitality to our neighbor. That's what we talked about last week. For the next two weeks, we're going to talk about loving the neighbor that lives the closest to you. The neighbor inside your house. Your kids. On the surface, Bible doesn't appear to have tons of practical help for parenting until you realize that everything the Bible must say about how you should love your neighbor applies to your kids.

Two encouragements for you today on Mother's Day coming out of Psalm 127, I'd like for us to read the whole thing together first.

### **Psalm 127:1-5**

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Song of ascents. Sung by pilgrims each year as they ascended to Jerusalem for one of their three yearly festivals. Community traveling together, had traveling songs they would sing together. The whole community together, parents and children, married and unmarried, grandparents. They together sang this song about the role of parents and children. That communicates something very different from what Americans tend to believe. The bible shows that the whole village has a responsibility for its children. Whether they are your kids or not, you have a role to play in their development and their faith. The church is called a "household of faith". My hope is that those of you who do not have kids and have been around a while have already picked up on this. We are a family, together, with a shared responsibility for the development and discipleship of the next generation. And those of you without kids have a unique role to play that in some ways, those of us who are parents, can't.

My kids listen to some of you in ways they won't listen to me or Courtney. Or at least you are reaffirming what we're telling them.

- Esteban.
- babysitters telling my kids how they became Christians.

Ok parents, let's start here.

Interaction - Who at times feels lost as a parent? Who has at some point lost your mind at your kids? Ever disciplined too harshly? Ever failed to discipline strongly enough? Who constantly is wondering if you're ruining your child? Found yourself disengaged out of sheer exhaustion?

I have wonderful news. Encouragement number one.

- 1.) God is the decisive power in your kid's life. Not your home.**

Look back at Psalm 127 with me and hear this good news...

**Psalm 127:1a**

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

There is a hard, diligent work that is in vain. Will not work for a pleasing end.

**Psalm 127:1b**

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

His role is to protect the city by watching for attack. Watchman is up when others are sleeping.

**Psalm 127:2a**

It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil;

“Vain” is repeated three times. Means empty.

How many parents are deeply anxious about how their kids will turn out? Feel responsible for how their kids turn out? There is much stress and anxiety in trying to create outcomes and trying to control all circumstances surrounding our families.

There is a helplessness that comes with parenting, is there not? I cannot protect my baby all the time. I can't make her choose wisely all the time.

I've got a good friend who says she lives in a near-constant fear of her home not being perfect and her kids growing up to be the pained kids who look back and talk about all the harm that came to them from growing up in her home. This is not only crippling for her it makes her harmful to the kids sometimes. It can come out and be expressed with her being anxious and overbearing.

God doesn't suggest that builders should stop building, or that watchmen should stop watching. Just that their building and watching is not decisive, God is. That all the watching and all the building in the world does not prevent the Lord's purposes from prevailing.

God is the decisive power in your children's lives. God knows you need his help.

For those of you who feel all this pressure in your parenting... allow God to release the pressure valve for you a bit. Here's how he goes on to say it:

**Psalm 127:2b**

for he gives to his beloved sleep.

The Psalmist here says that one evidence of us knowing that we are God's beloved is sleep. Now, for you new parents I know that sounds far-fetched. That is a lifestyle adjustment that is hard to be ready for...how much less you sleep when you have a baby. Feedings, late night emergencies. But, there are two different kinds of sleeplessness: One, there are the emergencies and needs that you must get up for and two, sleeplessness from worry. Sleeplessness because you're attempting to carry the weight of your child's outcome.

The second one, God says you aren't responsible for. He is. God cares more about your kids than you do. Do you believe that? God means good for them in ways you couldn't possibly imagine. He can be trusted. It's not on you. You can rest, entrusting God with the “city” of your family. Spurgeon says that “faith brings calm with it.”

Most parents feel a crushing burden to get their parenting techniques right or they have failed their child. Your child does not belong to you. He or she belongs to God. We do not ultimately need perfect parenting techniques; we need the intervening grace of God.

So, hear me - if you kid watches a little TV every now and then, he's not going to grow up to be a sociopath. Just because your house is a little dirty, she's not going to go to counseling when she's in her 20's to talk about how her parents didn't love her. Summer and sunscreen. Relax...let God give you some sleep. Pressure to give them every opportunity and lack for nothing.

Parenting is an area I feel most weak. I'm always second guessing myself and wondering if I'm doing right. How can you ever know? I need this reminder.

In fact, the Bible It is full of families that were just utter catastrophes, and yet, God takes care of them and uses them for his eternal purposes.

- The first parents in the Bible, Adam and Eve, one of their sons kills the other one.
- ABRAHAM - Didn't want to wait on God's timing for a kid, so he slept with his maid. Then had a child with his wife - the family drama got so tense his maid and their child got kicked out of the house. And yet, God turns both into great nations and chooses to save the entire world through one of them.
- ISAAC - plays favorites with his twin boys and they end up hating each other. One of them runs off to live with his crazy uncle for a little while. Comes back with two wives who give him 12 kids. Then those 12 sons, sell one of their brothers into slavery! And yet, God uses all of that to save all of them from poverty and famine.
- Even JESUS' family, His parents Mary & Joseph left Him behind on a road trip. They somehow missed the fact that the Son of God was no longer with them on the way back home. They found Him in the temple and made Him get back in the wagon.

The Bible is full of parenting catastrophes, yet God proves more powerful and He redeems and transforms and uses for His purposes. And this is true for your family, too.

Christian author Jon Bloom says it well:

#### **Jon Bloom**

Most families aren't harmonious. Humanity is not harmonious. We are alienated — alienated from God and each other. So put alienated, selfish sinners together in a home, sharing possessions and the most intimate aspects of life, having different personalities and interests, and a disparate distribution of power, abilities, and opportunities, and you have a recipe for a sin-mess. But there's a deeper purpose at work in this mess. The Bible's main theme is God's gracious plan to redeem needy sinners. It teaches us that what God wants most for us is that we 1) become aware of our sinfulness and 2) our powerlessness to save ourselves, as we 3) believe and love his Son and the gospel he preached, and 4) graciously love one another. And it turns out that the family is an ideal place for all of these to occur. But what we often fail to remember is that the mess is usually required for these things to occur.

As much as you may try to avoid it, your family is going to be a mess. And that can either cause you to lose sleep, or trust God. You are not the decisive power in your child's life...God is.

I think a good litmus test to discern where you are here is to ask this question: Which is greater: the energy you expend praying for your kids or the energy you expend worrying over them? That will tell if you're resting in God's power or trying to do it on your own.

That's number one, here's number two.

## 2.) God intends for your kids to be shot out.

### Psalm 127:3-5

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.  
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth.  
Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!  
He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Now, listen, don't misunderstand the first point. God being the decisive power does not mean that you don't do anything as a parent. "Oh, well God is the decisive power... so I guess I'll let little Johnny play in the oven." No, God works ultimately and decisively in conjunction with our efforts as parents. This passage says that children are a heritage from the Lord - a gift from the Lord about the Lord and they are a weapon.

Children are arrows, to be shot out to accomplish God's purposes on the earth.

I began to think about this Psalm differently after I read this letter. Jim Elliot, who had a promising career in business, gave it up because of God's call on his life. He died as a martyr on the beaches of Ecuador (about 60 years ago), to his parents when he told them he was going:

#### Jim Elliot

I do not wonder that you were saddened at the word of my going to South America. This is nothing else than what the Lord Jesus warned us of when He told the disciples that they must become so infatuated with the kingdom and following Him that all other allegiances must become as though they were not. And he never excluded the family tie. In fact, those loves which we regard as closest, He told us must become as hate in comparison with our desires to uphold His cause. Grieve not, then, if your sons seem to desert you, but rejoice, rather, seeing the will of God done gladly. Remember how the Psalmist described children? He said that they were as a heritage from the Lord, and that every man should be happy who had his quiver full of them. And what is a quiver full of but arrows? And what are arrows for but to shoot? So, with the strong arms of prayer, draw the bowstring back and let the arrows fly—all of them, straight at the Enemy's hosts.

Our job as an entire church is to equip them to know and love Jesus. To guide them in love for others. Our aim is set the gospel around them like kindling for the Holy Spirit to light up and turn into a fire - giving them the perspective and ability to be able to foreshadow our future "home" wherever they go.

Your home will be the first and primary picture of what your kids think life and Christianity are all about. At home is where they learn what is important - what matters and what does not. It's where their major thoughts about God are developed. Where their loves, ambitions and goals are chiefly forged.

At home, they can learn that Jesus is the hero we need and knowing Him, enjoying Him and living for His purposes are the all-consuming point of life OR that Christianity is what we do on Sundays and maybe once or twice a month outside of that, but what really matters is my parents' job and my sports and school and all the things that everyone else cares most about. And that is what your parenting choices affect.

Your kids are unconsciously soaking up from you what you think is true and what you think matters. They are unconsciously asking the questions - Is Jesus trustworthy? Is He most valuable? And answering these questions is not a parenting technique or style - it's you. And they are looking at what you say, and how you spend your time, and how you treat others and make decisions to formulate that answer.

One of the major problems in the American church today is that kids are made to think the gospel is powerless and irrelevant because they only hear true things but never see Christian culture lived out. The best thing you can do for your kids, is to trust and love God with all your heart, soul, and strength and talk to them about it. And listen, I'm not talking about being perfect. Your kids need to see you screw up.

They need to see you ask for forgiveness - even to them! And above all they need to see you cling in hope to God's grace for your sins.

They need to see you trust and love God in such a way that they learn what it looks like so when the Holy Spirit ignites faith in their heart they can love Him and love others.

This is our aim: to think of our kids as arrows to be sent out for God's purposes.

I want our kids - mine and yours - to be little missionaries in the schools they attend. I want them to learn to be on the lookout for people who are cast aside and include them. I want them to recognize the dignity of God in every little human they interact with. It's not just that we want them to have fun at school tomorrow. We want them to learn to notice who's being left out and go love them. We want them to see who's hurting and ask them what's wrong. We want them to someone who needs help and take initiative and if they've got little leadership gifts even rally a group to help.

Kidtown. That's what we are doing. Raising supplies for Transitions this month. Because we see our kids as arrows to be launched out. When you serve in Kidtown, you are doing weapon fashioning. It's not babysitting.

Student group leaders who are coming alongside kids who don't have parents in their life.

I hear parents at weddings all the time talk about how they've, "prayed all their life for their spouse." Which is not a bad thing, but it always gives me the impression that it's the only thing. But considering God's purpose we'll pray for more. We'll pray for their salvation. We'll pray for their friends - that God would surround them with a community that welcomes others and pushes them toward Jesus. We'll pray that they discover their giftedness and are able to use it for the Kingdom.

Then maybe one day your kid comes up to you and says, "Mom, Dad, I think I'm going to plant a church," or "Mom, Dad, I think I'm going to adopt," or, "Mom, Dad, I'm going take this job that pays less because it enables me to love and serve marginalized people." And then you get to say, "Man, I've been praying their whole life that they would serve Jesus with reckless abandon like that. I've been praying that they would see God as so big and beautiful that sacrificing for Jesus. This is amazing."

So, here's what I want to leave you with this morning... Adoniram Judson was a missionary to Myanmar (Burma's present-day name). Arrived in 1813. Before they arrived, it was a hostile and utterly unreached place. All the previous missionaries had died or left.

Judson went there with his 23-year-old wife Ann. had been married 17 months. He was 24 years old. Adoniram Judson's Letter to Mr. Hasseltine Asking for His Daughter Ann's Hand in Marriage:

**Adoniram Judson**

I have now to ask whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world? Whether you can consent to her departure to a heathen land, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life? Whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death? Can you consent to all this, for the sake of Him who left His heavenly home and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with a crown of righteousness brightened by the acclamations of praise which shall resound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?

Today, there are two million Christians there today. In part because Mr. Hasseltine understood his role in his daughter's life. And when it was time to send her out for God's purposes, he said yes.

What would you say if you got a letter like that?

Family, we have 6,205 days with each of the kids in our church until their 18th birthday...then they got to get out. That's the time we must prep them to be shot out. When we send our kids off and out of our house, I want them to be equipped to create home wherever they go. Our role is to train them and equip them to be about God's purposes on the earth. Once we let them go it's on them if they walk with God and obey him. That's not on us. But our job is not just to protect our kids from danger. Part of good parenting is to prepare our kids for danger.

If you start with this assumption from the beginning, it will shape how you approach all of parenting. God gives us kids for God's purposes.

Parents - what are you functionally believing has the decisive power in your child's life? What are chiefly preparing your kids for? What are they learning from you matters the most or is most worthy of your time? You're invited today to trust God with your kids. Trust that He cares for them more than you. Trust that his purposes for your kids are better than your own.

For those who are not parents, how do you see your role in the lives of the next generation in our church? Have you thought about the support role that you might play?

Finally, let me say this, lest we have missed this - we are all children in the room. And thus, these things are not just true for our little ones, but for us, too.

God is the decisive power in your life

- There is nothing that has happened to you or has been said to you that is more powerful than the love of Christ that is beyond God's ability to transform and redeem.
- Maybe you feel scarred by your parents. As though something they said or did or are currently doing is the decisive power in your life. That is not true. The power the raised Christ from the dead is now available to you.

And God created you for his purposes...

- What do you live for? What do you think matters most in life? If you are an arrow, what is your life being shot at? Yourself? Your job? Your comfort? Or the eternal purposes of God?