

Well, let's take our Bibles this morning and turn to Psalm 127. Stand as we read together Psalm 127. I want to speak this morning on the subject "Heaven Help the Home." Heaven help the home.

This is a song of ascent. You can see in your Bible. It's written by King Solomon. It's about laboring and prospering with the Lord. So let's read the text. "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. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with their enemies in the gate."

So reads God's word, and you may be seated. Psalm 127. Heaven help the home. I was reading recently about the story about a millionaire who was asked how to kind of explain his success. He said, "Well, you know, you might look at me wealthy and healthy right now, but there was a time I was down to my last nickel. And I took that nickel and I bought two apples. I washed them and polished them, and I sold the two apples for a dime. I took that dime and I bought four apples. I washed them and polished them and sold those for 20 cents." Then he says, "I bought eight apples. I washed and clean those and sold those for 80 cents. Then I kept doing that till I made about \$1.60. Then my wife's father died and left us a million dollars."

I like it. I like it. It's a parable on life. It's a parable on life. Cause here's the issue: whatever success comes to us at home, at work, in ministry, and whatever contribution we have made to that success, and no doubt we have through good choices, hard work, diligence, the real story behind the success story is God's favor, God's blessing. The reality is whatever heights we have reached in life, we have been carried there on the shoulders of God's kind provision and providence.

Doesn't Proverbs 10:22 say this? "It is the Lord's blessing that makes rich and adds no sorrow to it." If you and I are enjoying times of prosperity and peace, it's because God has caused His face to shine upon us. That's the ironic blessing of number 6:24-26. Promotion, advancement, success, good things and good times, according to Psalm 75, verse 6. It doesn't come from the north. It doesn't come from the south. Doesn't come from the east, doesn't come from the west, it comes from the Lord.

Success in life is heaven's benediction on life. I hope you understand that. That's the story behind any success in our story: God's favor. That's why God must be sought. That's why life must be built upon the foundation of trust in Him. That's why humility must be cultivated and pride must be crushed in our lives: because God is the unfailing source of all strength, all satisfaction, all security, and all success in life that's truly lasting. "What do you have," says Paul, "that you did not receive?" Good question, and we know the answer. It's baked into the cake. It's the Lord.

Conversely, there is an emptiness. There is an ultimate dissatisfaction and vanity to living life under the sun apart from the God of the sun because that's the thesis of our Psalm this morning, Psalm 127, written by King Solomon, who says what? Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. Can it be any plainer? God is the source of happy families. God is the source of prosperous nations. God is the gatekeeper to success in life.

So I want us to come to this Psalm this morning, a message I have entitled Heaven Help the Home. Because when it comes to the home, God is its architect. God is its builder. We need to seek His help in our home. More than living under a roof, in a nice home, in a cozy neighborhood, we want to live under God's benediction. So we would do well to look at this wonderful Psalm that can speak to us about life. We need to heed its wisdom, its ancient wisdom for the modern family. In fact, it is a wisdom Psalm in terms of its genre.

This is a Psalm that's written with the intent of giving us the skill for living and parenting, for marriage. I like what Voddie Baucham says in his book Family-Driven Faith. We're doing marriage according to Dr. Phil. We're raising our children according to Dr. Spock. We're governing our sex lives according to Dr. Ruth. We only run to Dr. Jesus when things have gotten so bad we can't find another doctor to help us. No, Psalm 127, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it." "This is a house built by wisdom," Proverbs 24, verse 3-4.

If you're taking notes, we've got several things we want to look at. Number one, we want to consider what I call the context, number two, the contradiction, number three, the caution, number four, the celebration. We'll move along as quick as we can. Let's look at the context. You'll see from the Psalm that this is a song of ascent. You'll see that in the superscription or description of the Psalmist. A song of ascent of Solomon.

What was a song of ascent or a Psalm of ascent? As best we can tell, there's 15 of these songs, Psalm 120 to Psalm 134. They were sung by the nation of Israel or, to put it more specifically, by the families of Israel that traveled up to Jerusalem three times a year for the prescribed festivals. As they journeyed up to Jerusalem ... Those who were with us in Israel know that you always journey up to Jerusalem. As they went up, as they ascended, they sang these songs and they described and ascribed certain aspects of God's character and covenant life within the nation.

There was Passover in the spring, Pentecost in the summer, Tabernacles in the fall. Three times a year, you could watch, as it were, families leave their front door, go through their garden gate, take to the road, and as families left, they would gather with other families, and a caravan would assemble, and they would travel up to Jerusalem and worship God. Along the way, you'd find them breaking out in song. What a beautiful picture. That's, I think, the best way to understand the text.

It was interesting, when we were in Israel in 2017 ... And those that join us this year, you're going to find this. When we actually sat just outside Solomon's Temple, the Jewish guides told us there is a theory that there were 15 steps up to the temple. And as the pilgrims ascended the 15 steps, these songs were sung by them, and they were sung in an antiphonal manner by the priests at the top of the steps. Either way, these are songs that were sung on the way up to Jerusalem.

That's the context, but there's a big takeaway. The practical and pastoral point is this. No doubt, as they traveled together in caravan, they were reminded that family life is the nation written large. When we talk about nations, you gotta break it down. We're talking about families. Nations are built up of family units, Mom and Dad and the children. No doubt, as they made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they were reminded that the strength of Israel was found in its God-fearing families. Strong and happy homes added to the nation's national security.

If you want to forecast the future of a nation, look at the state of its family. By the way, that doesn't auger well for us right now. But here's what we have by way of contrast. You've got these families traveling up together with other families, and they celebrated family life. So they sang Psalm 127. They sang Psalm 128. And they reminded themselves that the home is the cornerstone and keystone to safe communities and prosperous nations.

Abraham Lincoln, one of our great presidents here in the United States, said, "The strength of a nation lies in the homes of its people." Amen. Barbara Bush said this: "What goes on in the White House is not as important as what goes on in your house." That's echoing Psalm 127, Psalm 128. The family is fundamental. In fact as I stepped, back I just thought, theologically about that, several things suggested themselves to me.

Number one, did you ever notice that God begins His revelation to man with extended teaching on the family and marriage? It's the first thing God shares. "In the beginning, God ..." And God begins to speak. The first thing God speaks about it's family. A Man leaving his mother and father and clinging to his wife, and that couple establishing a home that will produce godly offspring, children that love the Lord, where they'll multiply and produce children that will carry on God's will for His creation, because everything starts with the family. Everything rises and falls with the family.

It's interesting that the book of beginnings, which is Genesis, begins with the family. Talk about its importance. You also see it in the order of creation. The family is the basic building block of a strong society. The family is life's multiplier. It predates the idea of human government. That's why the government's role is to help the family prosper, not replace it.

Number three, the importance of the family is to be seen, in that Satan has made it a primary target from the beginning. That first marriage is no sooner established than Satan's trying to elbow his way in between Adam and Eve and split them up. He tempts Eve to work apart from the authority of her husband. Did you ever think about the fact that sin is predicated upon a role reversal? Satan has made the family and marriage his primary target because he knows that it's fundamental to God's program and plan.

Fourthly, just again talking about the importance of the family that these families would have recognized on their way up to Jerusalem, do you ever think about this, that the family is the place of primary discipleship? The family is the place of primary discipleship. Now, let me say this because I think there's an opposite concern today. The family does not replace the church. Never should, never can. But I would remind our families, beyond the teaching you get from this pulpit, beyond the discipleship we offer in all of our different ministries, the family is the primary place of discipleship when it comes to children.

That onus is put on Mom and Dad. Ephesians 6:1-4, you've got to bring your children up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. You've got to do that. Pastors, youth leaders, can supplement that. Other women in your daughter's life, other men in your son's life, can supplement that. But it's no replacement for your job. Don't you be falling down on your job. The home is where the gospel is fleshed out. The husband is to love his wife like Christ loves the church. That's the gospel. A wife is to submit to her husband's authority, like the church. The bride submits to Christ's headship. That's the gospel being fleshed out.

In Ephesians 5:32, we're told what? That marriage is a great mystery. That doesn't mean it's not understandable, you can't work it out, you can't even make it work. That's not what it's saying. It's saying you realize that there's a love that predates human love. It's a love between Christ and His church and the eternal counsels of God. God gave His son a people, and His son paid for those people and would redeem those people in time. And He would make up His people, the bride of Christ. Paul says, your love for your husband and your love for your wife is predated by a love so perfect that it can perfect your love, 1 John 4.

So, again, it's just a reminder: think about the importance of the home. It's where the gospel is fleshed out. I don't care what age you are. You're in pursuit of this kind of life, discipling your children, developing your marriage. It explains the gospel. It portrays the gospel. Here's the last thought before we move on: few things in life will afford you the joy that a happy home does. That's the importance of the home. That's in our text, isn't it? Here, talking about children? Verse 5, "Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them."

We read about the reward of the family in verse 3. If you scroll in to Psalm 128, it's the story of a happy man with his wife and his children around his table. He's the king of his castle, so to speak, and he's a happy man. The Lord has blessed him out of Zion, and he desires in verse 6 to see his children's children and peace on Jerusalem or peace on Israel. There's just this portrayal of happy families.

There's joy to the caravan going up to Jerusalem. There's no success without succession. Few things will bring you greater joy than a marriage that's stood the test of time and children who honor you all the days of their life. Let me kind of illustrate this, and we'll go to our second thought. I think I've shared this in the past.

George H. W. Bush was a man of a résumé bar none. Do you realize that he's the only man besides John Adams, our second president, who was both the president of the United States and the father of a president? He was a two-term vice president. His son was the governor of the state of Florida, his other son. He was a war hero. He was shot down in the Pacific and survived that. He became the head of the CIA. He was the ambassador to China. Do you want me to stop? Because right now we're all feeling pretty small, and we're all a bunch of underachievers, right?

So I'll stop right there. That's quite a résumé. In a magazine article, he was asked what he considered his most important achievement. Here's what he said: "My children still come home to see me." And we watched this man and his beautiful wife, Barbara, be laid to rest last year. You could see the devotion of the family that still continues. For him, that was his greatest achievement. In that sense, he died a happy man. He didn't take pride so much in that other stuff. It was the fact that George, and Jeb, and the rest of the family loved him and Barbara. Still come home to see them.

The importance of the family. We see that in the context. Secondly, the contradiction. We're not going to spend a lot of time on this because it's not at the heart. In fact, we're still in the superscription here. We haven't even looked at the text. So we've seen the context, the song of ascent. Secondly, we see the contradiction. It's written by who? Solomon.

Now, we know that Solomon wrote this text for several reasons. Number one, Solomon was a builder. It's funny that this author says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it." He was a great builder. He took 7 years to build the temple. He took 14 years to build his own house. I'm

not sure about those priorities, by the way. 7 years to build the Lord's house and 14 years to build his own? That's a bit mixed up, it would seem.

There's an emphasis in this Psalm on, it is vain to try and build your house without the Lord. It is vain to try and guard the nation without the Lord. It's vain to get up early and stay up late without trusting in the Lord in your sleep, and putting it all on yourself. Does that ring a bell? Of course. It's the book of Ecclesiastes. It's one of his favorite words there. Vanity, vanity, all is vanity.

And then just a little note. Verse 2, "For he gives his beloved sleep." I wonder if that's code, because you know Solomon's other name? Jedediah. Do you know what that means in the Hebrew? Beloved. So I think Solomon definitely wrote this. Others will argue otherwise. But here's the contradiction. He didn't do what he said. He didn't do what he said. His life's a contradiction to this Psalm.

I mean, think about it. He married outside the will of God. He married foreign women that turned his heart against the Lord. 1 Kings 11, verse 4, he started with one and he ended up with 700. Then he had 300 concubines on top of that. Then, on top of that, his son Rehoboam did what? Divided the nation. Young upstart. Chronological snobbery, as C. S. Lewis talks about. "We have nothing to learn from the older generation," and he just hung out with his peer group. Before long, he's taxing the people. Before long, there's a popular uprising, and the kingdom's divided.

Solomon's home life was a disaster. I just want you to see that. I just think that's interesting, and it is a good reminder, as Geoffrey Grogans says in his commentary in Psalm 127, sadly, a human channel of God's word may deny God's teaching by his lifestyle. Now, you don't want that, but it can happen. Think about this just for a moment. You can be a writer of the word and not a doer. And then that's kind of a direct application to Solomon and the biblical writers, but more at home to us.

James 1:21-25, you can be a reader of God's word and not a doer. Isn't that James issue? When you look into the mirror of God's word ... He kind of presents God's word as a mirror, and it's like, "Hey ..." You look into it and you say, "Hey, man, I need to comb my hair. I need to wash my face. I need to trim my beard." But then you just go out and don't do any of it. James says we can do that with the Bible. We can read it. We can even read it to a point where we get convicted about it, to a very point where we know what we gotta do to repent and change. But we don't do it.

I remember hearing a preacher imagine telling his kids to tidy up the living room and put the toys away and get ready for dinner. About 10 minutes later, he comes downstairs and the family den is a wreck. Nothing's been lifted. Nothing's been put away. But here's what the children say to their dad, "You know Daddy, we prayed about it. We actually had devotions on cleanliness is next to godliness. We even sang songs about it, and we actually checked the Greek words behind your words." You get the absurdity of it. You think that cut mustard with the dad, praying, singing, studying Greek?

We do the same with the Bible and don't do it. Let's not be that. Let's seek God's grace to be better than that. There's always a great danger on a weekend conference on marriage or on a Sunday with the congregation that we fill our notebooks, and yet we never rewrite a single sentence in our life story. The contradiction. Thirdly, the caution. The caution. Now we're into the text. Now you're wondering, when we're going to finish? But we'll get there.

The caution is verse 1 and 2: "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's vain for you to rise up early, sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for he gives his beloved sleep." What's the caution? It's the clear and present danger of failing miserably or succeeding more miserably without God.

You know that you can fail miserably without God and you can succeed even more miserably without God. You can get it all, like Solomon, and it'll all be sand in your mouth. It'll all have a bitter taste. It'll all be empty. It'll all be vain. It'll all be a puff of smoke someday because only that which is rooted in God, that which is rooted in Christ, that which is rooted in the gospel, has any true legs and lasting joy.

Here's the danger. Here's the caution of raising our families and building our cities with a complete dependence upon human ingenuity and industry. Solomon just wants to warn us about that. The danger of leaning on our own understanding, of trusting ourselves more than we should, of acting apart from God. We have a tendency, don't we, to take too much credit for what God wants to do. We have a tendency to come up with our own plans and ask God to bless them as if it was His will.

No. Unless the Lord builds the house and unless the Lord guards the city and, unless the Lord gives you sleep, you're going to end up burning yourself out. It would be vain to try and attempt life apart from the giver of life. That's the main point with a domestic application. That's why we've got the phrase three times, "It's vain." Come on. Stop trying to push that boulder up the hill. It's vain. It's the book of Ecclesiastes and the book of Psalm.

Now, let me say this. This is not a call to laziness. Right? Do you get that? Solomon is not saying don't build your house. Not saying that. He's not saying be an irresponsible parent or a pietistic parent. No, you gotta put some hard work in in raising those kids. Yeah. You'll be tempted to pull your hair out. I get all of that. That's all part of life. He's not telling us to be lazy. He's not saying don't guard the city. He's not saying don't rise up early and put a good day's work in.

But what he is saying is don't do it apart from the Lord. Don't work to the point where you don't rest, you don't trust, and you don't sleep. God will give you sleep. You can put in a good day. Get up early, but don't stay up late. That image must be this kind of frenetic, anxious, godless activity where it's all on you. Where you're working with an anxious heart and you can't sleep and you're worried about the kids and you're worried about the home.

Somebody says, "Hold on a minute, there's something wrong with this picture. I want you to work. I want you to guard, I want you to get up early and give all that you can. But at some point realize God can only do what God can do." God will have to multiply your frail, feeble efforts to raise your family. It's only God can save your kids. It's only God can protect them when they're out of eyesight. Get this. It's a reminder that a little bit of God makes up for a great deal less of us.

Write that down. I stole that off someone. I can't remember who. It's a reminder. It's a reminder that a little bit of God makes up for a great deal less of us. It's a reminder to watch out for the sin of serving God. That's going to sound strange right now. The sin of serving God? How can it be a sin to serve God? Well, the sin of serving God is serving God without God, or giving people the impression that it's all about you, that you're the determiner of success or failure.

1 Corinthians 15, verse 10, "I am what I am by the grace of God. I labor more abundantly than most," says Paul, "but it is not I. It is the grace of God that works in me." Philippians 2:12-13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. There is human responsibility. There is doing your best. There is giving your best, for it is God who works in you to do His good will and pleasure."

That's the sin of serving God. It's putting yourself first in the service of God. We're never first in the service of God. It's a chain reaction. It is God serving us, that we might serve Him. It is God helping us, that we might help Him. When Jesus came, he said, "I didn't come to be served. I came to serve. In fact, you can't serve me without me serving you," Matthew 20, verse 28.

I think if I was to calm it all down, Solomon is saying here in Psalm 127, verses 1 to 2, "Here's my caution, avoid the sin of serving God apart from God." It's not a call to laziness. It's not a call not to use wisdom. It's not a call not to try and get ahead. It's just a call to make sure you don't run ahead of God. Make sure that all your parenting and all your working and all your serving is rooted in prayer, rooted in dependence upon God's grace.

If I was to apply that towards the family, which I should do since this is a Psalm on the family, two things. Number one, don't become an overanxious and overbearing parent. They're everywhere today. I don't know if you've noticed that. They're everywhere. Overanxious, overbearing parents who give you the impression that they're the true guardian of their kids' health and spiritual well-being, that they're going to guard their kids from calories and sugar and vaccinations.

There seems to be an anxiety today that I never saw in my parents. I'm sorry. I never saw that anxiety in my mum and dad. Now, maybe it was hidden. Maybe I went to bed and they cried for three hours. I have no idea. But I never saw it. I never saw it. I never saw my mum and dad read one book on parenting. In fact, the old preachers never preached on parenting. It was always the gospel. Even when they did the song of Solomon, they're not going to talk about sex. That's just an analogy of Jesus's love for the church.

I grew up with that. But today, it's just this kind of omnicompetence. You can't do that. You're going to eat the bread of sorrows, young woman, young man, young couple. You're going to grind yourself into the ground. You gotta work hard. Don't get me wrong. You gotta be diligent. You gotta be responsible. I love all of that. And in some ways, I love what young couples are doing today. They do seem to be more purposeful. But with it, I think it has fallen over into this idea that they can build their house without the Lord.

They're trying to be omnicompetent, and they're scared to death. They won't put their kids into children's ministry unless their kids gets the sniffles, and that's a precursor to cancer and death. I don't know how they think, but somehow I don't get it. June and I were just happy. Here they are, they're sniffing and they're snotters. Here they are. We want rid of them for an hour. I don't get it. I don't get it. "Don't give them soda, Dad," and on and on it goes.

Again, you get me. I'm having a bit of fun. But come on. I thought about this. See if this doesn't make some sense. Here's what I wrote to myself, and here's what I want to say to our young couples. Get this down and get it down well. Do a few fundamental things well as a parent, and then fundamentally leave the results to God. Just write that down. That should be your parenting philosophy. You don't need to read a ton of books about it. You don't need to read a ton of books about it.

That should be your parenting philosophy. Do a few fundamental things well as a parent, and then fundamentally leave the results to God. Parenting is not as complicated as we've made it. I'm telling you get off the internet and the 10,000 self-appointed experts that's spinning your head in 100 directions. Shut it down. Listen to your own conscience. Follow some common sense and do the basics well.

Have you ever noticed ... Again, I love the resurgence of focus on the family today. Absolutely love it. I watch with admiration at young couples and their desire to bring their kids up in the fear and admonition of the Lord and fostering and adopting for the gospel. See, I love it all. But alongside of that has come this elevation of the family, this overanxiousness, this pursuit for perfection that's kind of scary.

While the family's important ... I just gave you five reasons why the family's important. I would also remind you that, really, when you study the scriptures, there's not a ton in there about the family in another sense. It's just some fundamental basic things. Enjoy your kids. Value your kids. Discipline them. Pray for them. Teach them. Bring them to church. Provide for them. Just some fundamental things you need to do. Now, you don't need to be a rocket scientist to know how to do that.

We're scaring ourselves to death. There's a plethora of books that's robbing us of common sense and confidence. We can get too focused on the family. I actually look back on my own childhood. My siblings, myself, we're all loving the Lord and following Him. We all love our mum and dad. We want to honor them all the days of their life and our life. I look back on the DeCourcy house, a little house my mum and dad still live in. You couldn't swing a cat in there. I know that's not politically correct, but it's an Irish phrase and I love it.

So here's the deal. Here's the deal. There's nothing special about our home. The home was small. Mom kept it tidy, nothing fancy. I can tell you this: I watched more TV than I should've. I think I broke the neighbor's window twice playing soccer. I never did like carrots, but I bought into the idea my mother told me: if I don't eat them, I'd go blind. So what do you do when you're five years of age and your mother tells you you're going to go blind if you don't eat your carrots?

I teased my sister. I fought and kicked my brother several times. I got detention at school for misbehavior. I never did get the big talk from my father about the birds and the bees. I don't remember a lot of heart-to-hearts. I do remember when you stepped out of line, you got the belt swiftly and sorely. But you know what? I knew I was loved deeply. Mum was the best nurse in the world. She was a stay-at-home mother, always there. I can hardly remember a day ever coming home from school and not finding her in the kitchen or somewhere in the house. I loved her sponge cakes.

I admired my dad coming home in his overalls, working class, blue-collar man. Did a job for 30 years he truly didn't like, but what do you do? It's a job. You've got a family to look after. He read the Bible often, prayed, took us to church when we didn't want to go to church. There was no negotiations. He believed it was his job to indoctrinate his kids with the gospel, lest they go to hell. Nothing special. I don't know about you, but it sounds real special to me. Just some fundamental things done well.

There wasn't this omniscience. They weren't reading books every month on how to be a better parent. They just understood some things. They need to love us, care for us, value us, discipline us, teach us the gospel, and then surrender us up to God. I lived in a tough neighborhood. I got into all kinds

of trouble, some of which my parents don't know to this day. I don't know if they're listening this morning, but you know what I mean.

Sometimes when my mum comes out, which takes me to my second point here ... And I'm going to carry this over into next Sunday morning because I've got three good points to go that you won't want to miss. And it's The Lord's Table next Sunday anyway. I've got a limited time. Here's my first point on this, just applying this idea about the caution. Don't become an overanxious and overbearing parent. Don't try and be omniscient.

Work hard, trust God, and then rest. Do a few fundamental things well as a parent, and then fundamentally leave the rest to God because only God can save your child. God can send His angels to watch over His elect. God can do what you can't do, which brings me to that second application: remember that parenting is like most things in life. It's an act of faith. Parenting is an act of faith. By implication, we've got to trust the Lord.

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. And it's vain to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. That's labor that's anxious and overbearing and giving people the impression that it depends on you, so much so that it robs you of sleep and trust in God. And it's being condemned here because ultimately, parenting, like every aspect of life, is an act of faith.

Without faith, it's impossible to please Him in your home and anywhere else in your life. That would remind me of this. Here's my little application on this. That would remind me that one of the best things we can do as parents is pray. One of the best things we can do as parents is pray. Why would I say that? Because unless the Lord does something, all that we do can amount to a hill of beans.

Write down Genesis 11, verse 4. Write down Genesis 12, verse 2. What a great contrast. What's Genesis 11 about? The Tower of Babel. What do we read there? Man said to himself, "Come, let us build a tower and make a great name for ourselves." What do you think God did with the tower? Just blew on it, and it collapsed. Genesis 12, verse 2, God says to Abraham, "I will make your name great and build from you a nation."

"We will make a great name for ourselves." God says, "Ha. Boom." And then he says to Abraham, "I'm going to make you a great name," and Abraham trusted God. It was counted to him as righteousness. Tremendous, isn't it? You can do more once you have prayed, but you cannot do more until you have prayed for your children. I love that verse about Hannah, godly mother, 1 Samuel 1:27-28. She prays for Samuel, and when she gets Samuel, we read, "And for this child I prayed."

Should be true of every godly mother and father. All our feverish and frenetic activity cannot substitute for God's grace. Kevin DeYoung warns about misguided spiritual determinism. As I said, we've got this resurgence of focus on the family. We love it. There's things happening among young families and young couples in the evangelical church we haven't seen for years. It's great.

But be careful against misguided spiritual determinism that it's going to be your parenting and your expertise and your gospel-centeredness that's going to do it. No, God's going to have to do it. And you know what? He'll do it mainly through answer to prayer. In fact, when my mum has been here ... I don't

think, sadly, she'll be back. She's just getting weaker. We're going to hopefully go and see her later this year.

But when she's here and has been in the past in several churches we've pastored, usually some of the young ladies will go to her and say, "Hey, Mrs. DeCourcy, what did you do? Well, tell us about how you brought Philip up. I guess you did something right. You know, he's a preacher and all of that." My mum kind of doesn't know what to do with that question, to be honest about it. She doesn't have five points. She doesn't have a talk on successful motherhood, how to produce a pastor.

She just doesn't know how to do that. In fact, she's just opened kind of stuttered literally and say, "Well, I prayed a lot," basically is her answer. Prayed a lot. She often said that to me when I was unsaved: "Praying for you." That's about the best thing we can do beyond the other things we should do. But they're not the determining factor, because prayer is the slender nerve that moves the omnipotent arm of God. He reaches down and takes our kids and saves them. And then, with His mighty arm, He protects them.

We can do more once we have prayed, but not more until we have prayed. Let's just hear Solomon's word to us, and he's teaching us a lesson, which is free of charge to us. Cost him a ton because he is a contradiction. Watch out for this frenetic, feverish, faithless, human pursuit of family life, even in the name of religion, where it's all about you and what you are and what you do. No. Unless the Lord builds the house, we labor in vain.

The beauty is we have all messed up. We're all weak. None of us are perfect parents. Gotta trust our kids to the Lord and ask for His grace and His mercy. And if it's not showing up at the minute, don't give up. Be patient. Keep praying because God can do what we cannot do. Maybe God is yet to do what we have longed for Him to do. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for our time in the word. So practical. So pastoral. So helpful. Thank you for this ancient text that speaks to the modern family. We look out on our nation, and oh God, we see wreckage everywhere. We see man building his house, redefining marriage. We see the government intruding upon the home, trying to replace the home with initiative after initiative. We look out and we see a modern America, many, many people trying to build their house without the Lord.

Oh Lord, we pray that we would be the counterculture. We pray that we would be the oasis. We pray that we would be a watering hole in the desert. Help us. Thank you for the families of this church. Thank you for their diligence. Thank you for their desire to bring up children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, and grandchildren. Lord, help us to learn good lessons from a bad example this morning.

We thank you for this reminder. Help us to realize that what happens in our house is more important than what happens in the White House. Help us to realize that strong families build strong communities and strong nations and strong churches. Lord, help us to do, not just hear. And, Lord, we thank you for the balance of this Psalm. Make us diligent. Give us grace to build and watch and labor. But, Lord, help us to tuck our kids in to bed at night and pray over them. Help us to jump into our own beds and fall asleep, sound in the knowledge that our God is watching over us and our little family, and He can do what we cannot do.

For we ask and pray these things in Jesus's name, amen.

