

Attachment: The Gospel and Our Families

The Gospel and Manhood

Dr. David Platt

June 15, 2008



THE GOSPEL AND MANHOOD
Psalm 128:1-6

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, I invite you to open with me to Psalm 128. This was supposed to be the end of the series on Attachment, looking at the gospel and our families. I hope and pray that this series has been profitable for you and for your family, for this community of faith. In many senses, it seems incomplete. There is so much more we can obviously dive into when it comes to the gospel and womanhood, when it comes to the gospel and singleness, the gospel and marriage, the gospel and parenting, the gospel and children. There's so much there that we could dive into. But it's even incomplete in another sense - and this is where I have been convicted, to be quite honest with you, over the last couple of weeks.

Last week, when I was preparing, and then this week as well, I sensed God confirming that we need to extend this series a couple of weeks. It's obvious in our culture today, and in the church today, that the picture of family is not quite as clean cut as singleness, marriage, parenting, children. There are so many different situations represented in the culture and in the Church where this is blending together. There's no question that the adversary is attacking the biblical picture of family that we see here. As a result, what I want to do over the next two weeks is I want us to dive into two of the most important areas that the adversary's attacking in the culture and in the church today.

Next week, what I want us to do is talk about the gospel and divorce and the following week, we're going to talk about the gospel and homosexuality. Both of these are areas that the adversary's attacking the biblical picture head-on; and to spend a week on each of those is obviously incomplete, but, at the same time, we need to have a biblical understanding of how the gospel relates to divorce and how the gospel relates to homosexuality. So that's where we're going to be going the next two weeks.

It's Father's Day and so we're going to look at the gospel and manhood. You know, it's interesting in some of the conversations I've had with folks this last week, it almost seems like some guys have been kind of bracing for today. Like they are almost a little anxious, little nervous about what's coming. I talked to one wife who is actually not here, who wasn't going to be here today, but she had told her husband that she really wanted to be there next to him when he got it today. So if there's any kind of nervousness or anxiousness in your lives, men, I want to kind of relieve that a little bit from the beginning. We're actually going to do something a little different.

Every week, we dive into a pretty thick study of the Word and I think that's a good thing to do. I think that our worship needs to revolve around the Word and we need to fill our minds with truth from the Word and that's what we do in worship. But the danger is that we can get caught up in filling our mind with all of these truths and bypass the heart in the process. We can fail to let those truths really soak into our lives.

So I'd like to take a step back, so to speak, from an intense, kind of heady sort of message and I'd like to share a little bit more of a heart message, so to speak. Now, that's not to say there won't be truths to write down. In fact, I'm about to walk through seven truths. So you all write those down if you'd like to, but what I want to do is something very different. This particular Psalm I've only preached from one time before and it was four years ago at my dad's funeral. And what I'd like to do is I would like to take this Psalm and the richness of it and I'd like to bring in some experiences that I've had with my dad in order to help us to understand the gospel and manhood.

My purpose is really threefold. Number one, I want to be obedient to Ephesians 6:1-2 which says to honor your father and mother. As your pastor, I want to honor my dad before you tonight. I talked about that a couple of weeks ago. We talked about kids honoring their parents. This is what I want to do tonight. I want to honor my dad.

Secondly, along with that, I want to honor him in such a way that men and husbands and fathers in this room will be encouraged and challenged to live lives that are worthy of such honor from your children and from your wives, from the people around you. I hope that this picture in Psalm 128 and some of the things I share about my dad will spur you on as a man, as a husband, as a father toward Christ. That's the ultimate goal.

Third, that our heavenly Father would get great glory in the honor I give to my father here on earth and the way we encourage and challenge one another with this text. That our heavenly Father would get great glory in men and husbands and fathers that are raised up, who are getting used by Him to accomplish the Great Commission.

So that's what we're going to do. We're going to dive into Psalm 128 and I want us to bring in some experiences from my dad in the process. Psalm 128:1, "*Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and may you live to see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel*" (Ps. 128:1-6).

I had to laugh last night when Heather and I got in town. We had been traveling for ten hours yesterday with our two precious, yet fairly cranky kids at that point and we were trying to get adjusted, trying to get unpacked and everything. After we did that, I sat down and was looking over Psalm 128, and it was almost humorous. It was then I came to the realization that the author of Psalm 128 most likely did not have a two-year-old and a six-month-old. Not that he wouldn't say these things, but he might not say them in the exact same way.

I think if I were to rewrite Psalm 128, which I'm not in any way assuming to have authority to rewrite Scripture, but if it were in my hands to write Psalm 128 last night then I'd have changed it around a little bit. It might sound a little more like this, and you might follow along and see just a couple of little changes.

I'd start, "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways." And this is where it'd start to change up a little bit. "You will eat the food you can pick up as quickly as possible from a take-out restaurant. Nausea and heartburn will be yours. Your wife will be like a tired, weary, and stressed out vine running around the house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. No, wait, actually, the only thing shooting around your table will be your oldest son's food flying from his hand across the table and your youngest son's food

as he sneezes sweet potatoes out of his nose and mouth directly into your face while your mouth is open. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord." That's how I would kind of rewrite it if it were up to me.

In all seriousness, the picture here in Psalm 128 is kind of like a family road trip. It's a part of a series of psalms that are called Psalms of Ascent, which are psalms that were sung or recited when people would travel to Jerusalem. They would travel to Jerusalem to worship there, which we'll talk about later and they would recite these psalms or sing these psalms. Psalm 127 and 128 really kind of go together. Psalm 128 lays the foundation for God and the home and then Psalm 128 really is one of the clearest and simplest pictures of God's desire for the home.

What's interesting is five years ago this week I received an email from my dad. Heather and I had given him a gift for Father's Day and expressed to him our appreciation to him and he sent back a short email, and I want to read part of it to you. What's really interesting is, unknowingly, this email almost perfectly parallels the picture here in Psalm 128. Here's what my dad wrote to me. He said:

"David, the best part about being a father is that I have the best wife and mother of my children. You children have made both mom and I as proud as any parents could be. If you had not noticed, your love for us has kept us totally involved in your lives. We are sorry if we have, at times, gone overboard; but your love is so contagious that we cannot help ourselves. I cannot think of another family I would trade for. God has been so good to our family."

Seven Entrusted Truths

That is Psalm 128 in a nutshell. So what I'd like to do is take seven truths that my dad entrusted to me - and they're all grounded here in Psalm 128 - and I'd like to take a few moments to pass them on to you.

The Favor of God is Found in the Fear of God

Truth number one, the favor of God is found in the fear of God. I think it would be most appropriate for me to start by introducing you to my dad, Tom Platt, he went to Florida State University where he got a Master's in business and met my mom and they quickly, after that, moved to Atlanta where they began their newly married life in Atlanta. He began working as an auditor with the federal government. He wasn't like the IRS kind. Not that IRS people aren't great, but I always kind of give that caveat. Whenever I say he was an auditor for the government, people, "Oh, he's one of those guys." Well, he's kind of one of those guys, but not one of, you know, those guys. So, anyway, those guys are great.

He was an auditor for the federal government and he excelled at his work, but what was most important was not my dad's work. He was born again at a very young age. One of the treasures that we have is a little photo card from a worship service at Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Florida, and it had his picture on it as a part of leading in worship as a teenager that day.

My dad walked with God, and he worshiped God. In fact, if he were worshipping God in this room, if you were anywhere near dad, you would know where he was. He loved to sing, and he loved to sing loud. Sometimes obnoxiously loud to - you'd be standing next to him and

everybody would be looking at you and your dad. You're like, why is he singing so loud? It would just be embarrassing. It's like just fix your eyes on God. Just worship God.

Whether or not you're singing aloud or not, if you were in the Platt family on a Sunday by Sunday basis, you were definitely worshipping God without fail no matter where we are. The picture is of a dad, and this is so key - we know this as parents and as husbands and wives - that we reflect the character of God and the positions God entrusts to us. I want you to think with me about how a father's love and a father's leadership of his children has a radical affect on children's worship of their heavenly Father. I want you to follow with me here.

I had a definitely level of fear for my dad. Corporal punishment was not a common practice around our house but when it was practiced, it was memorable. There were those particular times - and many, many, many, many years later, we would look back and laugh, but not at the time - where there was a definite sense of fear there. It wasn't because, in any way, my dad ever disciplined me inappropriately, but there's no question I knew my dad was serious about obedience.

Obviously, growing up, middle school, high school, and eventually college, the picture of corporal punishment faded out of the picture, but fear did not. Instead, fear of dad became deeper. There was no longer a superficial fear of getting a spanking. Now there was a fear of disobeying, displeasing, dishonoring my dad in any way, doing anything that would offend my dad. Now that was the fear.

I want you to think about how that translates into our worship of God, particularly in the context of this passage. Where does it start? "*Blessed are all who fear the Lord*" (Ps. 128:1). Do you think that means that we tremble before God, like we are afraid of His punishment? I think, in some sense, that's exactly what this means. Scripture gives us much reason to tremble before the punishment of God apart of Christ. This is where any person must begin a relationship with God - with a trembling before Him, realizing the depth of our sinfulness before a Holy God and realizing the punishment that we deserve. This is the starting point of a relation with God - a trembling before Him in fear of punishment.

Thankfully, that fear drives us to the cross. We find at the cross that Christ has satisfied the punishment of God, satisfied the wrath of God at the cross. That doesn't mean fear now leaves the picture. This fear gets deeper and now it's a fear of dishonoring, displeasing, disobeying our God. Doing anything that would bring offense to God. This is the kind of picture that the man of God is described as having in Psalm 128. When you get to "*Blessed are all who fear the Lord,*" in verse 1, the translation really kind of skews it a little bit. It literally says, "*Blessed is everyone.*" "*All*" seems like it's kind of a plural pronoun. The pronoun is actually singular here. When you get to verse 2, "*You will eat the fruit of your labor*" (Ps. 128:2), it's talking about a man. "*You*" will - singular - eat the fruit of your labor. When you get to verse 3, you know it's addressing the man in the home, "*Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots*" (Ps. 128:3). He says to men in Psalm 128, the Scripture is saying, "*Blessed is the man who fears the Lord.*"

That word "*blessed,*" it's used four different time in this passage. It's actually two different words, though, in the original language of the Old Testament. The first two times we see it in verse 1 and end of verse 2, "*blessed,*" and you might even circle it and put a little line out to the side, literally means "*happy.*" "*Happy are all who fear the Lord. You'll eat the fruit of your labor. Happiness and prosperity will be yours.*" The second time, second two times we

see it, the third and fourth times, when you get to verse 4, *"Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord"* (Ps. 128:4). Verse 5, *"May the Lord bless you from Zion"* (Ps. 128:4). That word, different word in the original language of the Old Testament, literally means "favored" - to be favored by God.

So the picture is "Happy is the man who fears the Lord." The favor of God is found in the fear of God. These two concepts don't go together in our contemporary thinking, but they go together in biblical thinking. The Bible is saying very clearly, "Happy are the men in this room who tremble before the majesty of God. Favored before God are the men in this room who tremble at the thought of disobedience." This is the picture we've got in 2 Corinthians 7:1, when it says we are perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord; 1 Peter 1, living our lives here astray as strangers in reverent fear.

So I ask every man in this room, every husband in this room, and every father in this room, do you tremble before God? I mean really. Really, do you tremble before God? Do you shake in fear and awe at the thought of doing anything, thinking anything, saying anything that does not bring great glory to your God? Happy is the man who fears the Lord. The favor of God is found in the fear of God.

The Wisdom of God is Found in the Word of God

Similarly, second truth, the wisdom of God is found in the Word of God. *"Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours"* (Ps. 128:1-2). The picture here is in a man's walk, in a man's work, that both revolve around God's ways. We see this - hold your place here and go back with to the very beginning of Psalms. Look at Psalm 1. This is one of those chapters in the Bible that I would encourage you, if you don't have this Psalm committed to memory, I would encourage you to commit it to memory.

Psalm 1, it's such an incredible picture. The imagery is so strong here of what it means to walk in the ways of God. You'll see here a striking parallel between Psalm 128:1-2 and Psalm 1. Go to the very beginning of this book. Psalm 1, we'll just read verses 1-3. Listen to this.

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers" (Ps. 1:1-3).

Same picture we're seeing over here in Psalm 128. Wisdom of God, found in the Word of God, meditating on it day and night and walking in it, immersing himself in it, and these first two truths go together. We see it all over the Psalms. We see it in Proverbs. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of what? - wisdom. Psalm 111:10, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* Another Psalm, in a sense, says the same thing. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

My dad was the wisest man I have ever met. He didn't just have knowledge. It was knowledge applied to life. It was wisdom. It was grounded in the Word. He read the Word. He studied the Word.

It was neat when I went off to seminary, Dad got so excited because it was his opportunity to go to seminary vicariously through me. So when I first got down there, he's calling me all the time. "How's it going? What are you learning in class? Just tell me everything you're learning." This and that, this and that. He would come down to New Orleans and visit, and

he would go to classes with me. I remember he wanted to go to a biblical geography class. I mean guys are snoozing in this class, and my dad is sitting on the edge of his seat, just soaking in this biblical geography stuff. For weeks after that, he's calling me up, "Hey, you remember what the professor said about this? I was looking at this. Remember what the professor -" And I'm like, "I don't remember. I was snoozing, too, Dad." But he was there.

I remember, I made the mistake of buying him a copy of my systematic theology textbook. I sent it to him and gave it to him for a Father's Day gift or Christmas or something like that. It was this thick volume, and so Dad took it upon himself to start reading it just from cover to cover. What that meant is every time I called him I was getting quizzed on my theological positions on everything. "So, Dave, what do you think about the Atonement? What do you think about the nature of man, the nature of God, the Trinity? What do you think about the gifts of the Spirit? What about pneumatology or ecclesiology or angelology or eschatology?" I'm like, "I don't even know what you're talking about yet, Dad. We haven't even gotten to that in class yet." And he's like, "Come on, Dave, you've got to figure these things out." I was like, "Can I just talk to Mom?"

Soaking in the Word, diving in the Word, enjoying the Word - and seminary was one part of the ballgame. Preaching was a whole other part. When I began preaching, anytime I was preaching anywhere near Atlanta, Dad would travel miles to go hear me preach and offer constructive feedback - and then he got into preaching vicariously through me. He would prepare sermons and study - and this was your tax dollars at work on some of those workdays, where he would call me in the middle of the day and he would say, "Man, David, I've been studying this; and this looks good." He said, "Why don't you work this in there or there?" I mean it was basically, "Dave, you go preach this and let me know how it goes. Just get back to me." And so this was the picture.

Men, I want to remind you that you will struggle in vain to find a man who is used of God in this Book who does not have the Word of God flowing from him. You will not find a man in this Book used mightily of God who is not gladly receiving the Word of God, who is not wholeheartedly embracing the Word of God, and who is not boldly reproducing the Word of God. It's the picture of Stephen in Acts 7. The Word just flowed from him, gushed out of him. It was a part of him.

You realize these two truths are completely against the grain, go completely against what this world would say would make you a successful man, husband, or father. Psalm 128 is giving a picture of a man who is blessed by God, and it's not a picture of a man who is blessed by God with large houses and cars and much stuff. It's a man who fears God, and he knows God and His Word, who walks with God and worships God. Does the Word flow from you? The wisdom of God is found in the Word of God.

Now, what that leads to is verse 3 in the picture of the family around him. The picture here is so beautiful, as opposed to the contemporary culture picture that we have of a man sitting around his table to watch TV with his kids at dinner. What we've got is a man who sits around and this is what he sees: a wife who is like a fruitful vine within her house and sons like olive shoots around the table. This is where the email that my dad had sent me parallels Psalm 128 so clearly.

A Wife is a Treasure to be Cherished

Truth number three, Dad taught me that a wife is a treasure to be cherished. He wrote, "The best part, David, about being a father is that I have the best wife and mother of my children." That's exactly what Psalm 128 is giving. It's giving us a picture of a wife like royalty in the home, treated with great value and significance.

Don't miss this. Notice what the psalmist is not saying here. He's not saying that the husband is blessed when he gets home, and he looks around at all his stuff. The husband is blessed when he gets home, and he looks around at all the 401(k)s that he has built up and the retirement account he's built up to leave stuff for them. It says he gets home and he looks around and the blessing of God is evident in his wife. Look at his wife, and you will see the effect of this man on a woman. What an incredible picture, a fruitful vine. The imagery in the Old Testament of a fruitful vine is rich.

It goes back somewhat to what we were talking about last week, regarding the blessing of God being evident in childbearing and productivity; and how we talked about that in the New Testament the picture changes. It's not just about physical offspring, but spiritual offspring. But the picture is definitely a wife who is productive with her life because of the influence of her husband upon her.

Related to the whole childbearing thing, you go to Song of Solomon, the not so PG part of the Bible and you'll find there this picture of a fruitful vine and a wife's fruit, pleasing her husband. We'll just stop there but it's a picture of the intimacy between a husband and his wife, not just fruitfulness, but faithfulness.

The fruitful vine within your house - it's a picture that we have over in Proverbs 31. We talked about this when we talked about the gospel and womanhood. It's not a picture of a woman being confined to her house all day long, but the picture is she is leading her house. She's not going after other pursuits to the neglect of leading her home to be a God-centered home. A God-centered family has the fragrance of God in it. This is the picture. It's the result of the husband who fears the Lord and walks in His ways.

I have no doubt, along with my two brothers and my sister, that we have a dad who valued his wife. You heard it in the e-mail I read, "The best part about being a father is that I have the best wife and the mother of my children." He was always telling us, like a broken record, the story of sitting in a worship service one night and this girl coming over to him. There was an empty seat next to him so she plopped down right next to him. That was the word, he'd use every time, "She plopped down right next to me," he said. And that girl just happened to be my mom. She would always tell us how Tommy, as he was called in those days, would make pies for everybody to come over. He was the real social guy, so everybody would come over to his place, so Mom was lured by his pies.

Before Dad died unexpectedly from that heart attack, you go to his screensaver at home and you would see a picture of the chapel where he and Mom were married. My dad was not afraid to show affection for his wife - and I praise God for that. It's funny. Heather and I were joking around about this the other day. The first six months we were married, before we moved down to seminary, we were actually living with Mom and Dad. Every once in a while, we'd come up and watch a movie at night, so Heather and I'd be cuddled up on this couch over here and so Mom and Dad would start cuddling up over this couch. It was like, "Don't look. Don't look."

He would bake pecan cinnamon rolls and take them to Mom at work. Just a few weeks before he passed away, I called him one Friday night and unexpectedly found him on a surprise date with Mom. They had gone out for dinner and a movie. It's the picture of a dad who treasured and cherished his wife. He loved to listen to her play the piano. Mom has played piano for years and had always made her promise that when he passed away, that she would play the piano at his funeral - and she did. My dad loved being with his wife, loved playing with his wife, loved joking with his wife. A wife is a treasure to be cherished.

Children are a Gift to be Nurtured

And, similarly, *"Your sons will be like olive shoots around your table"* (Ps. 128:3). Fourth truth, children are a gift to be nurtured like olive shoots around the table. Olive plants were important, extremely important. They had so many different uses. They had medicinal uses. They had nutritional uses, and the picture here is of a plant that is long-lasting in its impact. Olive plants had much longevity but the picture here in Psalm 128 is olive shoots, not plants. They're still growing. They're still developing. Not bearing all their fruit at this point. This brings great encouragement when I look around my table and see the two-year-old and the six-month-old. Maybe not bearing all the fruit yet, but one day. The picture is a long-lasting impact in a wife and children because of the influence of a man who fears God and walks with God.

And this is the picture we keep coming back to over and over again in this whole series as we look at the family. We look from the very beginning of Scripture in Genesis 2 all the way throughout and what we see over and over and over again is that God, in His sovereign grace, in His sovereign wisdom has established the man, husband, a father as the leader of a home, as the head of a home. This is the reality with which Scripture confronts every man, husband, father. You and I, we will lead our homes. That is not a question. We will lead our homes. The question is not will we lead our homes. The question is how will we lead our homes?

It's inevitable. The marks of our leadership will be across our homes and across our wives and across our children's lives. The question is not, will we affect our wife? The question is, how will we affect our wives? The question is not, will we be examples to our children? The question is, what kind of examples will we be to our children? The picture is developing olive shoots around your table, loving, leading them, nurturing them. There are so many different ways to do that and so many different ways that my dad nurtured us.

You have jell-o slurping contests at the table. You have just, every once in a while, rampant food fights. I remember vividly running after Dad with the macaroni and cheese as Mom yelled for us to stop. Mom was very gentle in the way she would wake us up, but Dad, on the other hand, would bring a cup of ice down and pour it down our back. That is a cruel way to wake someone up, but it got the job done.

Dad coached the Muppets and Sting and the Jackets and the Panthers and the Generals and the Expos and the White Sox and countless other teams. Not just coaching, though. When you get to high school, dad's coaching is no longer in the picture because you have the professionals at that point - the coaches there at the school are going to take care of the coaching. Well, that wasn't enough for Dad, so Dad would get off work and he would stand outside the fence and watch football practice every single day. I'm not exaggerating. There were no other parents out there. Nobody wants to watch practice. Nobody likes to be in practice. Who likes practice? Dad would go and not just coach, but he'd go and watch practice.

There were all kinds of things Dad did. He took us late-night camping when we were young. He took us on late-night Waffle House trips when we were a little older. He taught us a lot about teamwork in some interesting ways. Probably my favorite way was what I call the Platt family binge Coke purchasing. This is how it would work.

The grocery store once a year or so, would have a sale on cans of Coke, but there was a limit on how much you could get. So we'd all pile up in the van and drive to the grocery store together. Then we'd get out and kind of huddle around and Dad would give each of us, four of us children and then Mom and Dad - he would give each of us a \$20.00 bill and he'd

say, "All right, let's go." And we would fan out. We would separate from that point. We'd each go and inconspicuously get our different carts and peruse over at different points to the cases of Coke and we would pile them on. I mean this is my younger sister, Amy, just a little girl at this point, just piling on cases of Coke; then, eventually, you would see six different checkout lines with Platts represented in them. All of them with cases of Coke piled high, and we'd be set for the rest of the year. This was teamwork. This was what it was about.

Dad would stay up late at night. During the Christmas season, it was cold outside. He'd take a heater out into the camper and put together action figures. On family bike rides, just a couple of weeks before he passed away, he was outpacing all of us.

And then there were Wednesday nights with Dad. This is something he did during each of our senior years in high school where we would finish any activities we had going on, whether church activities or ball, and we would meet Dad for dinner. Every single Wednesday night during my senior year, I'd meet Dad. We'd sit down and talk about life and relationships and school, everything under the sun. He had just started this time with my younger sister, Amy. They were doing Wednesday nights at the mall. They would go to the mall and eat there and then she would go shopping while he had a book. My dad invested his life in nurturing his children. He laid down his life for that purpose.

The favor of God is found in the fear of God, and the wisdom of God is found in the Word of God. He taught me that a wife is a treasure to be cherished, and children are a gift to be nurtured. These last three truths all flow together and talk about a life that counts.

A Life that Counts Flows from the Presence of God

Truth number five, my dad taught me that the life that counts flows from the presence of God. Verse 5, "*May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life*" (Ps. 128:5). You read that kind of stuff in the Old Testament - this talk about Zion. What's that all about?

Well, it's referencing Jerusalem. It's referencing specifically the temple in Jerusalem where the glory and presence of God dwelled among His people. Don't forget, this is an Old Testament picture and this is why they would travel to Jerusalem. If you want to encounter the presence of God in the Old Testament, if you want to encounter the glory of God in the Old Testament, and experience this glory in His presence, then you go to the temple. You journey there. This was a big deal, and this is where the gospel radically changes the picture of families here.

The reality is when you get to the pages of the New Testament, Jesus dies on the cross and rises from the grave and sends His Spirit and, all of a sudden, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. And the reality is we're not going on any journeys. Praise God. The picture is - don't miss this - men, husbands, fathers in this room, the gospel radically changes your role in your home and my role in my home. We do not pull the family together and take a trip to Jerusalem, so we can go and encounter the presence and the glory of God. And we certainly don't put the kids in the car every week and go Sunday to a building to encounter the presence and the glory of God.

That is Old Testament faith. Old Testament religion is being practiced all across this culture today, and it's not New Testament faith. It's not New Testament reality because there is no place - any man, husband, or father who walks with Christ, who knows Christ - you need to pack up your kids and take them to because the reality is you bring the presence and the glory of God into your home.

You want your kids and wife to encounter the presence of God and the glory of God? Then rise up and show them your body - the temple of the Holy Spirit. And not just men but also women, all who trust in Christ. But the picture is you tie what we've got here in Psalm 128, the blessing of God flowing from the temple of God, flowing from the presence of God and you bring that into the gospel picture we have, the New Testament, the reality is, men, when we wake up our wives in the morning, when we wake up our children in the morning, the presence of God, the glory of God is intended to flow from our lives. The blessing of God intended to flow from our lives. We are the temple.

We sit around the table for dinner at night to let the presence and the glory and the blessing of God flow from us. Is this a reality, a day-to-day reality in your home?

Yes, my dad taught me to swing a bat. Yes, my dad taught me to shoot a ball, but before he did either of those, my dad taught me to pray. He taught me to experience the presence of God in family prayer times, before we would go to bed. I remember getting in ruts where I would pray something just real quick and real rote so I could go on up to bed. Dad would stop me and say, "David, this is the time when we express our hearts to God and God is to be sought and is to be found." This is the picture. Men, husbands, fathers, lead a home that seeks God, enjoys, experiences the glory and the presence of God in the home, not at church, not Old Testament reality.

How can this be a reality in your home? Intentionally, how can you let presence of God, glory of God flow from you onto your children and your wife, all throughout your home?

The Life that Counts Advances the Gospel of God

Leads to this next truth, number six. The life that counts advances the gospel of God. It's not just the presence of God saturating a home, but the effect of that saturation on the people of God.

Look at this. The life that counts advances the gospel of God. Listen to what it says end of verse 5, "*May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem*" (Ps. 128:5). Here's where the scope of Psalm 128 just broadens and it's not just about one family anymore, it's not just about one man and his wife and his children. The picture is the prosperity and the blessing of God in the entire people of God. That's what Jerusalem stood for.

You want to see the blessing of God on the people of God? Look at Jerusalem. This is what the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are all about. They're rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, they're rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem. Why? Because they want the blessing of God to be restored there amongst the people of God and, as a result, they will display the character of God to all the nations around them. So the picture is a man who is blessed in his home with his wife and his children in such a way that it builds up the community of faith and displays the character of God to the world. Isn't this the great need of our day?

Men, husbands, and fathers to lead wives and children to, yes, experience the presence of God in the home and the Word of God flowing and saturating the home in such a way when that happens in individual families all across this room, that's not the end game. The end game is a community of faith that is strong and is built up and it is displaying the character of God in Birmingham and all nations, advancing the gospel of God as the people of God are growing. This is the picture.

Is this why we're leading our families, men? Are we leading our families for the sake of our wives, for the sake of our children? - but not just for the sake of our wives and children,

also for the sake of the church? - and not just for the sake of the church, but for the sake of the character of God displayed to a lost and dying world? This is the lesson. I was looking back this week through other e mails and letters that dad had written to me and he wrote me this e mail when he was struggling with how to respond in a certain situation, a situation of conflict in the church. I want you to hear what was driving his thinking.

He wrote, "Dave, my responsibility is to do all I can to influence those without Christ to come to Christ. If this means I should lose or be wronged in the process, I should not fight; but accept the fact that, as long as I'm being a positive witness, I am on the correct side." You hear the picture of Psalm 128 there? It's not about being wrong or right. How does this go against the grain? It's about the glory of God displayed from the church to the world. My responsibility is to do all I can to influence those without Christ to come to Christ. This is the responsibility of a husband, the father, the man - to lead the home, show the character of Christ to the world and to build up the church, the community of faith. Men, this is a cause worth rising up for. Is this what is driving us?

Gentlemen, are our children learning from us how to advance the gospel? Have our children heard from us how to share the Gospel? Have our wives seen in us how to share the gospel, how to proclaim the gospel? This is far more important than teaching how to swing the bat or shoot the ball. How to advance the kingdom and build up the church are the things that count.

The Life Counts Multiplies the Glory of God

All of it leads to this last truth. The life that counts flows from the presence of God and advances the gospel of God, the kingdom of God, and the life that counts multiplies the glory of God. This is the last part of the chapter, verse 6, "*May the Lord blessed from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and may you live to see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel*" (Ps. 128:5-6). What a picture. "May you live to see your children's children."

This was the blessedness of the man. It started, Psalm 128, with a man surrounded at the table by these olive shoots, not grown up, not developed yet. The picture now is that they are olive plants and they're bearing fruit and around those olive plants come more olive shoots. The blessing of God is displayed in the privilege He entrusts to this man in Psalm 128, who has the opportunity to see before Him the legacy that he has passed down. A legacy not just to his sons and daughters, but to them in such a way that they are now passing it down to their sons and daughters and the legacy of the Word of God and the fear of God is being passed down to an entirely new generation, indirectly, through him. This is just an incredible picture of blessing.

It is far greater than any 401(k) or retirement account can provide to any man in this room. It is the investment of our lives and the lives of those around us, our wives and children, so that children beyond, wives and husbands beyond, experience the blessing of God and walk in the fear of God. "May you live to see your children's children."

Can I be completely honest with you? This is the part of Psalm 128 that I struggle with most. It is an incredible picture of the blessing of God and I see so much evidence of the blessing of God in my own dad's life. However, the reality is he did not live to see Caleb or Joshua. So does this mean that he did not live to see his children's children? Does this mean that he missed out on the blessing of God? I don't believe so, and here's why. It's a secret I believe my dad knew.

God receives great glory in the man who loves and serves his family, and the fruit of that man's life is not just evident in this world. The fruit of that man's life is such that it carries into the world to come. The reality is my dad did not live to see these two precious sons of mine, but I pray that the glory of God that he multiplied into my life, I pray that it's being multiplied all across this church. I pray that it's being multiplied in places God gives me the privilege of going and serving and teaching and training. And I pray that, ultimately, it will be multiplied in my two sons' lives and they will have the privilege, one day, of seeing their granddad and they will experience how loud he sings when they bow around the throne of Jesus Christ with him and sing His glory forever and ever and ever and ever and ever. This is worth living for. This is the life that counts.

Men, husbands, fathers, family – our families, our homes are too important. They are eternally important, and so I pray that you are encouraged. I pray that you are challenged to find the favor of God and great fear of God, to experience the wisdom of God in your home which flows from the Word of God in your heart, to cherish the treasure that is your wife and nurture the gift in your children we have been given. And to make our lives count by demonstrating the presence of God, advancing the kingdom of God, and multiplying the glory of God in a way that generations from now—should the Lord tarry, and not come back—people will be singing the praises of God as a result of the way we have led our families. God, may it be so. This is the picture of the gospel and manhood.

Will you bow your heads with me? I want us to go into a time of prayer. During this time of prayer I want to invite men, husbands, fathers, and single men in the next few moments in light of Psalm 128, to come before God and to yield yourself as a man to God. I want to invite you to yield, to lay down your pride, and say, "God, I need you by the power of your gospel to make me into the man that you desire for me to be. I need you to mold me to be the husband, to be the dad you desire for me to be. I give myself to you here."

I want to invite you in just a moment, after we pray, to get together with your family to pray with them – maybe if your wife is here or your children are here, you can pray with them. Feel free to do that. Wife and children, pray for your dad if that's an opportunity you have to do.

I realize that may not be an opportunity for everyone, but I want to invite you, men and husbands and fathers, to pray in light of Psalm 128. I want to invite women to pray for men in this room. You can pray aloud together. You can pray silently. You can pray wherever you are. I want us to surrender our lives. This is the crux here. God has entrusted men to lead the home. I want us to pray that God would raise up a community of faith dominated by men who are described by Psalm 128, and pray that God would do it by the power of His gospel.

Father, we pray, during these moments, God, in response to psalm 128, in response to your Word revealed here, God, that you would pour out your grace on men. God, we know every single one of us, God, we know that we fall short, God. We know that we are not able to live up to this picture on our own. We know that we have stuff in our past we have done as men, as husbands, fathers, that has not brought great honor to you. God, we tremble at that thought and we pray that your grace in these moments would cover us and that your grace would enable us. God, I pray that, during these moments - as we let these truths soak into our hearts, as we pray together, as we pray alone, as we run and kneel before you, as we bow before you - that you would take our hearts and take men and mold us. We pray you would mold us into men who are blessed by your name, favored before you, and happy in you, because we fear you and are walking in your ways and experiencing your promises in our homes. We give this time to you.

And if you'd like to pray together as family units. If your family unit's maybe not represented here, that's fine. I want to invite you to pray about living for the glory of God and being men who live for the glory of God. Let's pray together.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: Radical.net