

## **NEXT: The Gospel and the Next Generation**

Homes Built by the Lord

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### **Homes Built by the Lord Psalm 127; Luke 2:41-52**

There is no other name like Jesus. He has made a way for us. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Man, what a strong, strong word as we come today to this conclusion of Next Generation Series that we've been in. The Lord has taught us and it just seems that even through our time leading to this moment where we look in God's Word intently, what we've already heard is that God sent His Son to come get us. He sent Jesus—He came Himself. He didn't send someone else on His behalf, He came and He came to ransom us. He lived a perfect life of holiness. He demonstrated perfect holiness. God sent His Son who lived in perfect holiness so that when as God, He died for us on the cross, He was not dying a death He deserved; He was dying a death that we deserved. And in that position, dying a death that we deserved, He paid the penalty for our sin who don't live... We don't live in perfect holiness.

And He made a way for us to God. He was the path for us to get to God. He is the Way the Truth and the Life. So God sent His Son to make that way because of the power demonstrated in the resurrection, He has the authority, the power over sin, death, hell and the grave. And when we step into that we become His sons. We have one Father—we are His children, His sons, His daughters. So He sent His Son to come get us. If you don't know Him today, I beg you today the most important thing you could do is consider the claim of Christ on your life.

For those of us who have made a decision He's chosen to bless us here as a faith family and as individual families in some cases with children. So God sent children in His Providence in His Sovereignty to us so that we could send them for Him. Now that is a good word isn't it? We get them from Him and we send them for Him. So the short-run of that message is you don't have to keep them forever; you get to send them. You know they're going to go, right? They don't get to stay.

So I'd like to start this morning out by declaring some things. When the Lord gives us children, He tremendously blesses us. Is that an "amen"? Amen! He tremendously blesses us. The children in our presence need to hear that's a good thing. So when the Lord gives us children, He tremendously blesses us, doesn't He church? He does. In our homes and as a faith family when we have hallways filled with preschoolers and children and down the hill a building filled with students who are coming together under the tutelage of mentors who are being constantly raised up to come alongside families and pour into the next generation so that there is a support system in the church. God is the expert on our kids. We are His specialists and the Church is a great support system for the values that He wants to pass through you to the next generation. It's a great thing. So when God sends the next generation to churches, it's a great blessing to us, isn't it church? Amen. They need to hear that. They need to know. Let us never be guilty of under-investing or under-expecting from the next generation. You agree with that? Never be guilty of that.

Well further, when God trusts us with them, He also places us in a context where, if the experts who talk to me are right, about 70% of the families around here are filled with parents and children who don't have the comfort of knowing Christ personally. Who don't have the comfort of going home and being a part of a family that loves and honors Christ and who don't have the comfort and support of the church that's calling people to mission together. And understanding the greatest thing we could do as the Lord builds this house and the Lord builds this church is to go together on mission.

To get the glory of God to the nations we desperately need to engage the next generation. Your home and this faith family are part of a radical mission of raising the mission force that will take this Gospel to all people groups and all nations, so it is mission critical to reach and engage the next generation to go after the nations. Don't you want Jesus to come back soon? Then let's get the glory of God to the nations through the generations.

Now having said that, I want to try to share with you an article that I wrote to the church that I served on the day that I took my oldest son to kindergarten. Now, I want to emphasize that I'm really going to try to read this to you. I hope that I will make it through it but that is one of the longest days of my life. There have been several because I have children in my home but that was one of the longest days of my life. And reading this article kind of takes me right back to that moment, so will you guys just forgive me in advance if I have a little bit of difficulty reading what I'm about to try to read to you? And you'll see, I guess why, because maybe some of you are there right on the verge of this, but this is one of those great moments where God points out that we get to send our kids through little natural milestones that happen in our life and for me it was sending him to kindergarten. So, it's titled and our church read this the following week, "My Biggest Little Boy Went to School Today." Okay, here we go. Going to try. Just read it like a newspaper, right? Okay.

Orientation complete. We attended the first class party for Seth's kindergarten class just to get comfortable with the rebellious children he was soon to be certainly surrounded by. As proud parents, we stood ready to tackle the first day of school—sort of ready. We secured the babysitter to stay with the Kindig brothers two and three (at that time we didn't have Marybeth who is four), so we could make a morning of breakfast, family prayer and Mrs. DePuy's classroom. You could watch those little five-year-old eyes and register that the giddiness and wonder-ness meter was dangerously close to the red zone. Burger King wasn't large enough to contain the excitement of our Kindig-kindergarten kid. So we drove into the parking lot of the school with the confidence that God had chosen this school and this teacher to initiate our firstborn's formal education.

It was comforting to have Seth greeted by the friendly face of one of our youth group's finest young ladies and to know that amidst all of these K-12's there was at least one familiar face. It was a long walk through the activity-filled corridors of students and parents scurrying to beat the bell. It felt normal to be the only parent carrying his son bear-hug style around the last corner and into a prepared teacher's territory. We helped him put his supplies and snack in his cubby. We put on his paint shirt and draped the apple-necklace nametag around his neck before we said our goodbyes to Seth and Mrs. DePuy.

Stunned. Silence invaded our hearts as we retraced our steps down that hall, out the door and to the van as we rode out of the parking lot. Not a word was said between my bride and I. Kim was thankful for the innocent enthusiasm that bubbled from Seth's eyes making it easier for us to leave him that first

time. Then she turned and saw a tear streak out of my eye and stream down my cheek and it was literally all over but the crying. [It really, really was.] The suddenness of those first five years ambushed us with a sucker punch that left us with the sinking ache in our stomachs. What an awesome privilege to be a parent. God entrusted us with much more than gold when He fills our home with children. May God bless this church family and its homes to work together raising the next generation to honor Christ.

I made it. Sort of. Okay. We recognize in this transition of our life that God sent him to us, not to hold for ourselves, but to send and to share with others for the glory of God. And it's with this backdrop that I want us to consider what it means to be homes built by the Lord. Homes that don't hold but homes that release to the right things. Homes that don't cling but homes that send with purpose.

I also want to call on us as a community of faith to beg God to build homes for the sake of His glory demonstrated in and through our children and our children's children and our grandchildren's grandchildren. Even to people we're never going to meet. May what we do in the presence of our kids and may what we as a faith family do with students that are entrusted to us by parents in these preschool hallways, the children's hallway, the modulars and the student building down the hill, may what we do with them be bearing fruit on this planet. When your grandchildren's grandchildren know your name because it's in a family tree but they've never seen your face. May God give us that kind of a, that kind of a moment with Him today to focus on building that.

So let's just get right to it this morning. Psalm 127 verses one through five. As you turn to Psalm 127 let me quickly preview where I hope to get to today. We'll read Psalm 127 and then we'll actually examine a passage together where Jesus' life and His family life intersected with Psalm 127. And then we'll walk through Psalm 127 together and apply this Good Word to our lives individually, as a family and as faith families.

So if you are with me we will read Psalm 127 verses one through five where it says, *"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"* (Ps. 127:1-2).

Isn't that a Good Word? That's a Good Word.

*"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"* (Ps. 127:3-5).

Now there's sort of, if you can make a mental outline of this passage... At first the Lord talks about building homes, then He talks about protecting a city, and then he talks about blessing homes by filling them with the next generation, and then he talks about the battle that is sure to come. And as we look at Psalm 127, it's a Psalm of the Ascents. If you look in your Bible, Psalms 120-134 are Songs of the Ascent. And what happens with Psalms of the Ascent is they would be sung at feasts and festivals—the three in the Old Testament that would be celebrated: Passover, The Feast of Weeks and The Feasts of Trumpets. As they would go from their hometowns to Jerusalem they literally would ascend because Jerusalem was the highest place. So, as they would go they would go in sort of caravans.

Now that's not a van made by Chrysler but that's large groups of family members. It's like your greatest memory in life. If you could put every cousin, every brother, every sister, parents, grandparents for three and four generations—everybody that was alive that was related to you—in the same caravan and it numbered maybe a hundred maybe several hundred people they would go from their hometown, maybe dozens of miles maybe a hundred miles or even more together for safety so that the people who would try to intercept them and rob them would have to rob a big old family clan. That's what they called it. So, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, cousins, crazy aunts, crazy uncles and grandparents—all making this journey together. And as they would go they would be ascending toward Jerusalem and they would sing these songs to prepare the next generations' heart to receive what they would receive at Passover and at The Feast of Weeks and at The Feast of Trumpets.

So, this whole journey was a unique experience. But the cool thing is we have this little glimpse into one of those journeys in Jesus' life. And in Luke chapter two, if you will turn there for a moment and hold Psalm 127, we're going to intercept this moment with the way that Jesus and His family dealt with it when He was 12-years-old. And to start out we just want to say that if you're following along in your notes that Jesus is a gift and we agree don't we?

## **Jesus is a Gift**

Do you agree that Jesus is a gift? He is. He's the best gift you could ever receive and He's a gift giver. So, the special nature of the gift that He was is demonstrated in a couple of unique ways. Today when we think we may be going to have a child we go and we go to a drug store and we buy a pregnancy test and we wait for the results on a little blue stick: a plus sign, a check, a line—something tells us whether or not we're going to have a child. Mary had an infinitely better situation.

### **God Promised Mary and Joseph a Very Special Gift**

In Luke 1:26-33, don't turn there just hold Luke 2 for just a second and verse 41 is where we're going to start. But, God promised Mary and Joseph a very special gift. God's promise to Mary we find in Luke chapter one starting at verse 26 where it says,

*...the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!' But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God' And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end' (Lk. 1:26-33).*

Now you know that God is providing a very special gift for you when an angel comes and announces its coming. You're about to have a baby and not only is it just any baby, this Baby is going to be the Promised Messiah. Now it's got to be a scary thing to encounter an angel but a message like that just creates a sense of anticipation of the Lord. "Why me? How are we going to accomplish this?" And the truth is, she wasn't going to accomplish, the Lord was going to accomplish it through her. But the promise came to her it also came to

Joseph. God's promise to Joseph we find in Matthew 1:20-23. And again, don't turn there, I'll just read it to you where it says, "...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:20-21).

What an amazing promise to provide an amazing Child that is unique in the history of creation and these parents heard that. Verse 22 says, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel'" (Matt. 1:22-23). An angel is so much more impressive than a home pregnancy test. It really is.

### **God Provided Mary and Joseph a Very Special Gift**

But God sent His Son—He came Himself—and we get to see this moment where Mary and Joseph stepped into that responsibility. So God provided Mary and Joseph a very special gift that He had promised. And you can read, later in Luke 2:1-7, that story. But the essence of the story that Jesus came to Mary and was born and we celebrate Christmas now because God sent His Son. He sent His Son for us! And again, if you've not encountered the gospel, this day is about you encountering the truth that the greatest part of the gospel is Jesus is available to you by responding to Him in faith and through repentance. God sent His Son to get you in today as you heard the gospel already in the testimony of baptism and a summary of it at the beginning of this message. Today can be the day that you can give your family the greatest gift they'll ever receive: a person in your family who loves Jesus and embraces Him by faith. I beg you, if you don't know Christ, do that today.

### **Mary and Joseph Consistently Cared for God's Special Gift**

So, God's provision of Jesus was as a Son to Mary and Joseph, but God's provision of His Son, their Son, was as a Savior for the world. So watch this, God sent His Son to earth—to Mary and Joseph—to send His Son to us in 2011 in Birmingham, Alabama. To the nations... He sent so they could send. So literally (no pun intended), God delivered on His promise and Joseph and Mary consistently cared for God's special gift. That's where we come to Luke 2:41-42. Look at that with me where it says in verse 41 of Luke chapter two, "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up according to custom."

Now what we need gather from that is Joseph and Mary, because angels came most likely, took diligent care to do everything they could to put Jesus in the place where He could most understand and embrace God's will for His life. That meant every year they went to great expense to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover and they would go in this crazy group of people through the desert to Jerusalem so that they could encounter what it meant to really come into God's purpose for their lives and for the next generation's life. It was a great deal of trouble.

I don't know if you've ever traveled with large groups of people. Our students went to New York this past weekend to ministry and a variety of multi-cultural sections of the city and they did incredible ministry. It got time to get on airplanes last night and Delta said, "We're sorry you have to wait 'til the morning." So they're flying in and probably driving here right now. Again, God is Sovereign, Delta is responsible. But trips with large groups of people are always really easy and really fun, right? Well, maybe not so much. I mean they are fun for you and everybody else because you're there but everybody else is a problem, let me promise you —except for you.

So here's the deal, when they would go to Jerusalem...when Jesus went they would sing this Song of the Ascents. They would literally sing, *"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...God gives rest to those He loves. "Children are a heritage from the Lord...They're like arrows in the hand of a warrior...Blessed is the man fills his quiver with them."*

They would hear those words of Psalm 127 over and over and over again as they would sing and they would hear other of the Song of the Ascents but it would teach and it would prepare the hearts. Not only did they make the trip, they prepared their hearts with these songs that they would sing. So Joseph and Mary consistently cared for that gift. They went to great trouble to make these trips to put Jesus in the place.

Now here's the deal, we need to remember from our study of Old Testament and New Testament Secret Church, that God's purpose throughout history is always to bring His people to His place for His purpose. In Jesus' lifetime, the place to meet with God was the Temple. So that family, Joseph and Mary, His people to His place for His purpose for those families to step into the will of God for their lives. So God's people, God's place, God's purpose—just hold on to that thought.

So His parents did go every year and they put up with all they had to put up with and it was His twelfth year when this happened. The twelfth year for a Jewish boy was the beginning of the year they would call "Becoming the Son of the Commandment" because at his thirteenth birthday he would stand before a faith community like this and say, "Today I am a man." And now all the people listening didn't necessarily think that meant that he had everything he needed to be fully mature but what they knew it meant was, this community is recognizing this young man today as being responsible for his own faith. He's responsible for his own sin and in that culture that would be the point—his Bar Mitzvah—year thirteen, now this is year 12, but year 13 would be the day where the father was no longer responsible to make sacrifice for the sins of his son because his son today was a man, meaning "I can personally respond to God. I can own my faith walk with Him."

### **Mary and Joseph Lost that Gift**

So knowing that, we see in verses 43-45 that Joseph and Mary lost that gift, the gift that angels came and promised you about. They lost the gift. Look at verses 43-45 where it says, *"And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him."*

Now this is the fly in the ointment. I don't know how often you travel in caravans and I don't know if you take things for granted, but let's just kind of have a moment for honest confession here. If you are a parent or have been a parent and at some point you lost your kids for a little while, just give everybody else here some comfort by knowing they're not alone. How many of you've lost your kids for a little...yeah there you go. Look, all over the place. Everywhere. It seems to be a common experience so let's give Mary and Joseph a break. They were traveling in a caravan; I mean they thought somebody else had Him. He was with the guys talking about football or He was over with the cousins doing something dumb. I mean, they thought...they thought, "Surely somebody's got Him." And they may have even done a head count.

And if I can in a moment of honest confession just tell you that we were leaving church one day when our oldest was maybe around nine years old and his brothers were just a few

years younger than him. And we had to load the van up and we did load the van up and we were wanting to get home so quickly that we did the head count—one, two, three, four—we've got everybody. And we took off and we got to our house; two-mile trip to our house. We got in our house, we opened the van, we turn around and looked and it was not the right four children. But we had three out of four, which you know if you're in school 75% is still a passing grade, but somehow that wasn't much comfort to his mom. So we'd noticed the boys giggling a little bit while we were making this journey and I turned around and looked at them and I said, "Did you guys know that we didn't have Seth?"

And here's what they did, they went, "Ha-ha-ha, yeah. Ha-ha-ha. We did. We knew." I was like, "Why didn't you tell us?" And they said, "Well, because it's funny and because he's mean to us sometimes and can't we just leave him? Could we leave him? Let's not go back and get him."

And then Kim went into military mode and got the kids inside and said, "You go back before somebody up there realizes we left our kid at church." About that time the pastor drove up, opened his car door and said, "Hey, you forgot something. I'm pretty sure this is probably going to come up at church tonight."

So here's the deal, they got Jesus (God's Person) to God's Place (the Temple) for God's Purpose (to engage with God). Problem is they just didn't get Him home. I mean that's a pretty good scale there, they got him there, they just didn't get Him back. So here's the deal, Mary and Joseph had to be panicked, don't you think? You go away for a day, how long does it take to get back? Another day. You're two days without seeing Him. Can you imagine how Mary must have been praying? "Dear God, we are so, so sorry that we lost God. You know the One the angels told us about. The special gift to save the people from their sins. We lost Him. We're not telling you because you don't know 'cause we kind of know that you know that we've lost Him, but you are God so you probably know where you are right now. If you could just guide us back to you that would just be awesome." And if it was Mary I'm sure she said, "And please forgive His father for not watching Him more diligently. In Jesus' name. Amen." She probably didn't pray in Jesus' name at that point but 'amen' anyway.

Now here's something I want us to intersect with... When we started in Psalm 78 we pointed to some statistics of generational decline of spiritual influence. It went from 65% to 35% to 18% to 4% of 16-33 year-olds being engaged with the gospel. Understanding and embracing it. We don't know if those statistics are even half true. This is a mission critical moment for the church in North America. We have to engage—capture—the imagination of our children. We can't wait for someone else to do it; we all have to jump in the boat and get that done. If you're singles or single again or senior adults or just empty nesters, don't look at this as the responsibility of other people who are either paid staff or volunteers that work in an area. Don't look at it as parents' responsibilities because you've done your time. Jump in with us and let's go get them and let's engage them to go get the 70% in the schools and in the neighborhoods of this community who don't know Christ.

There is no hope of eternity with God without a relationship with Jesus Christ and our kids are the mission force that we'll send to that mission field. Join us in that journey, faith family of Brook Hills. And across the nation, let's reengage, let's embrace, let's tell children they are a blessing from the Lord and let's just go after them. It is so important that we do it because getting to the nations is going to be made possible by getting the next generation. That's the way the two cross. We have to do both and one facilitates the other.

### **Mary and Joseph Found that Gift**

So, verses 46-48. Joseph and Mary found that gift. They lost Him, here's where they find Him verse 46, *"After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers."* Of course they were. *"And when his parents saw him, they were astonished."* A word that literally means "struck of themselves" like they were hitting themselves in the head. I could have had a V8 sort of moment. They were astonished. When my mother lost me and she found me, astonished is not the word that I would normally use for what she was. But, I was astonished *"And his mother said to him, "Son..."* Now listen to these kind words of this mother, *"Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."*

Now it sounds so nice but man they were searching for five days. And then because Mary and Joseph—watch this—had consistently cared for Him and carried out their responsibility to provide spiritual leadership when a moment of crisis arise they found Jesus where? In the Temple talking with teachers and people being amazed at what He would say at 12 years old. Remember God's people, God's place, God's purpose. It was natural for Him to be getting after God when His parents weren't available to Him. How many of us who have had kids or who have kids now say, "Man I love it when you obey me when I'm with you. But I love it so much more when I'm gone and I hear the great things that you do in your life." Isn't that an amazing thing when your kids do the right thing, not because you're there to enforce it but because they know it's the right thing?

### **The Gift, Jesus who was God in Flesh, Took Mary and Joseph to School**

Jesus did that for His parents and He kind of took His parents to school—next verse 49—the gift Jesus who was God in flesh took Mary and Joseph to school. Verse 49 says, *"And he said to them, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'"* Translation: He's getting to Bar Mitzvah just a little bit early. He looked at His parents and said, "I hadn't seen you all for five days but you need to know if something separates us, where you'll find Me is getting after God and getting after His purpose for My life. I'm not borrowing your faith. I own it. It's mine. It's mine too."

### **Mary and Joseph did not Understand their Adolescent Son**

So Mary and Joseph, this will be comforting, in verse 50 did not understand their adolescent or preadolescent Son, surprisingly enough. *"And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. [verse 50] "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man"*

Jesus and His family sang the Song of the Ascents on the way to the place where it really...God's purpose became personal to Him. And that diligence, parents, that diligence of faith families meeting together mentoring one another paid off and it's still paying off 2,000 years later. May God make your kids, our kids—those that we love on—mutually mentor alongside as a support to the parents. This congregation. May God have 2,000 years of influence extend through them.

## Children are Gifts

### **God Builds Durable Homes and Families on a Solid Foundation**

So, that brings us to this. All children are gifts. Every single one. Now, I believe children need to hear us echo "amens" when we say that. So, I'm prompting you, I'm telling you to be awake and let kids hear this. All children are gifts. Amen. That is weak. All children are gifts—even the ones sitting beside you right now is a gift—a gift. God builds durable homes and families on a solid foundation. That's next. Remember God's people, God's place, God's purpose. Psalm 127:5. look back at that with me.

Do you believe God is a better builder than you? Do you believe that God is a better protector than you? So, the safest thing we can do for our kids is to send them in God's will. Do you agree with that? Because if God wants to send them and we keep them from doing that, God's protection goes with God's purpose. So, what we need to do is send them in His purpose and when we send them in His purpose He does a better job than we could ever do. So Psalm 127:1, *"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain..."*

Do you realize that our best efforts and our ingenuity and our techniques of what we want to do with our kids pale in comparison to the effectiveness of cooperating with God as you raise your children? Do you understand that? They do. I pray every day for my kids because I'm their parent. I know that God does a better job. I know that He can hit straight with a crooked stick, which is what He has to do when I'm the parent. But I pray for my kids because a messed up me that is a dad that loves them and loves Jesus and follows Him imperfectly, I don't want to mess up the great gift that God's given me. So, *"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."*

The labor in vain part is part of the futility curse. How would you like to work your whole life or if you were a farmer work for a whole season of life and to get to harvest time and something takes the entire harvest away from you. Man, that's an incredible curse. How would we like to raise a generation under our influence and then watch them choose to walk away to something else? And here's my fear... I just want to honestly tell you this for my kids—not for your kids 'cause you're a lot better parents than I am—but for my kids. It is possible for our kids to grow up in a place like this with this zip code—35242—and by growing up here they have availability to great education, great parents, great homes, all the things that they need to meet all the needs in their lives. They pretty much hit the jackpot when they were born to you and in your home and in this area. Success for them is generally speaking, not questionable. You're going to love them. Others are going to love them. They're going to build on the education they get. They're going to build on the skill set they have.

But here's what I fear. I fear that my children could get 40, 45, 50 years old and be successful at a whole bunch of things that really don't matter. I don't want my kids to be successful at things that don't matter for eternity. I don't mind them being successful in all the things they do but I definitely, if I had to choose, want them to be successful in fulfilling God's purpose for their lives. I can't build that. I am totally dependent on God in my kids' lives to make that happen.

So how do we translate that to our children? When issues come up for your families, is the first place that you go...is it to prayer? Because they see where we go when trouble hits. When times are good do they see you running into the arms of Christ as a family and praying together? At the end of each day do you just, even if it's just for a moment, pray for God's character in your kids? It's nice to have kids that are old enough now to tell you

what you did that didn't make a difference and what you did that did make a difference. And, my kids still tell me to this day, "Dad, it was more important that you prayed for us at the end of every than it was any of the lessons that you taught us cause we don't really remember a whole lot of the lessons but we remember consistent, daily prayer for us." If I miss a day with my daughter, she calls me from Atlanta and she says, "Daddy, I need you to pray for me." She expects daddy to pray for her. It is the little things that inculcate just a heart that invests a heart for God in them. Do you open your Word regularly? Are you building with God's tools: prayer and Word and the third tool really is each other? We need more than just what we bring to the table. Amen? We need each other. I need you to invest in my kids.

### **God Guards His Community**

So, "*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.*" And then we extend that by God guards His community. Not only does He build durable homes, but he guards His community. "*Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.*" Do we think because we stay awake and keep guard over something that it's safer? Or can we rest in peace knowing that God is in charge and in control. And when we walk in His way, we're walking really in cooperation with His will and whatever happens to us in that case is what is best for us. So God guards His community.

### **God Gives His Beloved Rest**

Next, God gives His beloved rest. There's a rhythm to life. When we wake up in the morning and we try to eat together and we pray together, we send...we go our separate ways and we work hard as if we're working for the Lord. And then when we come home God wants us to rest. He wants us to play with each other; to have fun together in our homes. He wants us to use our homes for hospitality so others come into it and see the amazing abundance that's present in our home and they're drawn to the Gospel because of it. And then He wants us to lay down and have sweet, sweet sleep and rest. That would be okay with us wouldn't it? Amen, it'd be good.

Verse two, "*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.*" How many of you could use that gift in your life today? Oh man, you're thinking about the nap after lunch now. He gives His beloved sweet sleep. There's a rhythm to life. Work hard. Play hard together. Rest.

### **God Blesses Homes with the Next Generation**

Then God blesses His homes. God blesses homes with the next generation. "*Behold,*" verse three, "*children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.*" He multiplies His blessing with children. He wants to surround you with kids and this isn't just if you're parents, this is if you're grandparents, this is if you're senior adults and never had kids, single adults, it's everybody. He wants to surround you with the next generation because they're going to go to a mission field you'll never see. They're going to be here after you're gone. You know you don't get to stay, right? I mean that is actually an 'amen' too. You get to go be with Jesus in eternity and they will still be here and what we do with them makes a difference. So, He wants to surround you with the next generation with birth children, with adopted children, with foster children. We have all of those represented in this room right now. He wants that.

And then with all of your children's friends...He wants your children's friends to come raid your refrigerator constantly. That may happen for some of you already. When your kids get old enough you don't have to ask for it, it'll just happen. They move like sheep grazing from house to house until the field is absolutely barren and then they go to another one and they make that one barren. Just wherever food is, that's why if there's students in the student

building and there's food somewhere on campus and they're hungry, it doesn't matter how many locks you put between them and that food; they will find a way to get to that food. So, your children's friends love the fact that your house is the place that they want to come.

And God fills your home with abundance. How? Children become your ammunition in a battle that you're fighting for the sake of the Gospel. Children become your protection and children extend your mission and values. Look at this re-gifting God's gifts verse four and five. *"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."*

Here's something I want to say, enemies flee in the presence of strength. As God builds your home and God protects your home and then He gives you rest so that you have energy and He gives your family rest and your home is not constant turmoil because God's teaching you how to let your home be a place that gives energy instead of drains energy. So, He builds your home, He protects your home, He gives you rest, then He gives you children or somebody else's children or foster or adopted children. He gives you children and they surround you. They become your protection and they become your ammunition. *"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."*

## **Regifting God's Good Gifts**

This is all about re-gifting God's good gifts. Your children, the next generation for us, even as a church family, what we're doing with them next door, what we're doing with them in modulars and on the third floor and down the hill, we're preparing them to fight a battle. We're not just entertaining them for 90 minutes so we could sit and listen to a message. We're coming alongside you and engaging them in the battle. We're giving them opportunities to go to places like New York City and Ecuador and Vancouver and all parts of the globe. To be sure with them we work hard, we play hard, we rest well.

### **Fill the Quiver**

*"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!"* So the archery metaphor, how do we fill the quiver? Well, you just gather as many kids around you as you can. All of us. Gather as many kids around you as you can. If you love them, they will run to you and they will know it. Gather as many kids as you possibly can. Fill your quiver. Have babies. If the Lord leads, adopt babies, foster babies and then adopt people who aren't even yours, just bring them all into your family. Practice hospitality in your home. Fill your quiver and then when there's a problem out there, then you see your quiver is full, then you reach into your quiver and you grab an arrow and you bend the bow.

### **Load the Bow; Aim the Arrow**

You need to help your children know what they're good at, what they're blessed by God to do, what their skill set is. And you take those arrows and you pull back and you load the bow. Just load that bow and get ready. And then you aim, you aim the bow at targets, not that you determine or that I determine or that the culture determines for them. They're a lot of voices asking your kids to aim at certain targets that are not good for them. You need to be the expert in the life of your child. God is the expert. You need to be the specialist in the church, the support system. God's people, God's place, God's purpose.

But you help them aim. Notice what they're good at all the time. "You have a great memory. You would be great. You communicate well. You'd be a great teacher. You'd be a great communicator. You could be a great commentator on television." Tell them what you see that's good in them; that's how you bend the bow. Bring others alongside you to do that.

We have a great friend in Atlanta who has spent years with our oldest and with others along the way and he came alongside us for years as student pastor—12 years in one place. Probably our kids watched us disciple literally dozens or hundreds of kids that would be in and out of our home all the time when they were little. And I remember praying one night, "Lord send us, send us people who will do for our kids what you've allowed us the privilege to do for these other folks." And He sent into our life a man named Ken Hunzburger who teaches at the school that they attend in Atlanta. And he came alongside our oldest and is now alongside our other two and he walked with them for five years; Seth for five years. Halfway through the sophomore year in school... And Ken's daughter attends here so she may be here today; if so, thank you on behalf of my family.

But halfway through his tenth-grade year, they picked a place to go to the world on mission—Tanzania. We worked for two years to raise the money, to pray, to get the training that he needed for him to go do ministry, the Masai tribe, to climb Kilimanjaro, to spend three nights in the open desert—so it was kind of a mission-trip-man-card sort of a deal. And they walked together—these ten young men and Ken—walked together in that season of life.

And three days after he graduated from high school we went to the Atlanta airport and we went to the international section and something was wrong with somebody's ticket and of course it was him and they were trying to solve all these problems. Things were going crazy all over the place and so they gathered to pray and leave and we thought, "Seth's not going to get to go. He's going to get stuck. All two-and-a-half years for absolutely nothing. It's not going to happen. And God is Sovereign, Delta is responsible." We were thinking all those things and I looked over and saw somebody come running in and punch his ticket and hand it to him and we were already praying for them to leave and walk away. So they were praying and I thought, "Ok, he's got his ticket, that's fantastic."

And then all of a sudden he had snuck around and he just leaned and hovered over us—his 6'2" frame. And Kim was here and I was here and his big old arms just hung down there and he was a little misty (like I was when I was reading the kindergarten deal), and we were actually a little misty. And they were like, "We got to go everybody. In Jesus' name. Amen. Let's go, we have to go." And he turned around and just for like three or four seconds he turned around and just looked us dead in the eye and he couldn't say a word. And we couldn't say a word either. But what our hearts wanted to say was, "Man, we're so jealous, we wish we could go. Wish we could go with you. We wish we could watch what God does through you there." But because Ken helped us pull that bow back we aimed it at a target, gave him a heart for missions for the world before he went into college. And this year he's seen God do some amazing things on his college campus because somebody else helped us bend that bow, load the bow.

### **Release the Next Generation Toward God's Bulls Eye**

You aim the arrow and then you release them—the next generation—toward God's bull's eye. Individually we do this. We do it as a faith family alongside you. Then you do it as a family. God's purpose... God's people, God's purpose, God's place. Now watch this, with your kids they all converge in one spot because God's people who come to Him in faith become

God's place—the temple of the Holy Spirit. Believers. Now the temple has the ability to go on the move. God's purpose. All three converge in the person of our children, those who've been trusted to us to lead. And we will lead them and we will lead them well because God wants us to get His glory to the nations.

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