



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N19 May 11, 2025

## PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

### "Psalm 127"

#### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

##### Personal God

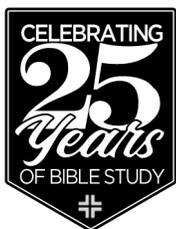
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

*"I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."*

Psalm 121:1-2



What is family for a Christian?



God cares about our daily lives in a variety of ways. Christians would be quick to recognize that God is in charge as "the Maker of heaven and earth" (Ps 121:2). God's sovereign rule is evident through our birth, growth, life and even death. We can take comfort in his concern for us at all times.

One of the ways God cares for us is through family. God is a "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows" (Ps 68:5), but the psalmist does continue to state that sometimes "God sets the lonely in families..." (Ps 68:6a). Care for infants comes most often from parents and grandparents. As children, our family of origin is not something that we choose. God orders our steps and picks for us parents, whether natural or adoptive. We may have different experiences as children, but God's distributed care for children most often comes from parenthood.

The connection of God and his care for children is also highlighted in the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you" (Ex 20:12). This commandment recognizes parenthood as instituted by God and ties the honor and recognition of family relationships to the promise of long life and blessing from God. The apostle Paul reminds us that this commandment is the only commandment that includes a promise of blessing (Eph 6:1-3). Honoring God and keeping his commandments includes recognizing the special place of parents as they provide care for children. Even as adults, honoring parents by caring for them in their old age is a way to show love to God and our neighbor (1 Tim 5:4).

God's ideal from the creation of the world was for humanity through families to "fill the earth and subdue it," caring for the world and all its creatures through the shared administration of family (Gen 1:26-30). Human-

ity's fall complicated this original plan, introducing sin and its judgment into this family system (Gen 3:9-13). Humanity's first children struggled with this arrangement and suffered the consequences of a broken family (Gen 4:8-12). From the days of our first parents and their first children, God's care through family suffered significant deficiencies.

God's promise of remedy for this broken world is a through a coming child (Gen 3:15). In the New Covenant this coming one will "turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents" (Mal 4:6). The promise of this coming one makes it possible for all who believe in him [Jesus] to have "the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (Jn 1:12-13).

Jesus, though honoring and loving to his parents (Lk 2:51-52), understood that family could be more than biological. When Jesus was challenged and even opposed by his own natural family (Mk 3:21), he asked the question, "who are my mother and my brothers" (Mk 3:33)? Inside a crowded house of disciples and followers, while Jesus' biological family stood outside, Jesus "looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother'" (Mk 3:34-35). Jesus declared a "new family" of believers in him. The early church fostered this collection of "brothers and sisters" (Acts 1:14), and Paul encouraged the early church to see each other as a spiritual family (1 Tim 5:1-2).

We should honor God by honoring the natural families he has provided for us. We should perhaps praise God even more for the spiritual family of brothers and sisters in Christ that he has given to us through faith in Jesus. God's great care for us through families both natural and spiritual, knows no bounds!

# 1

## EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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### Read Psalm 127

*A song of ascents. Of Solomon.*

1 *Unless the LORD builds the house,  
the builders labor in vain.*

*Unless the LORD watches over the city,  
the guards stand watch in vain.*

2 *In vain you rise early  
and stay up late,  
toiling for food to eat –  
for he grants sleep to those he loves.*

3 *Children are a heritage from the LORD,  
offspring a reward from him.*

4 *Like arrows in the hands of a warrior  
are children born in one's youth.*

5 *Blessed is the man  
whose quiver is full of them.*

*They will not be put to shame  
when they contend with their opponents in court.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle each use of "LORD" in Ps 127.
- Underline each verb in vv. 1-2.
- Place a box around each use of "vain" v. 1.
- Draw an arrow connecting the words "he" in v. 2 to whom it refers to in v. 1.
- Underline each word or phrase that describes the value of children in vv. 3-5.
- Draw an arrow from the word "they" in v. 5b to whom it refers to in v. 5a.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What is a song of ascent? Who would sing it?
2. What do “house” and “city” represent?
3. Put v. 1 in your own words. Explain how you might put such words into practice.
4. Is verse 2 promoting laziness? What is really being stated?
5. Who grants “sleep” (v. 2b), and what does this gift mean?
6. Where do children come from according to v. 3? How does this contribute to their value?
7. What are children like according to vv. 4-5?
8. Who will not be put to shame when they contend in court (v. 5b)?
9. What connections do you see between vv. 1-2 and vv. 3-5?
10. How does Psalm 127 relate to people who have never had children? How does Psalm 127 relate to those whose children are grown and have left home?

# 3

## EXPLORE RESOURCES

### Commentary On The Text

Psalm 127 is a unique psalm found in a collection of psalms called the Ascent Psalms. These fifteen psalms (Pss 120-134) all have a heading of "A Song of Ascents." These psalms are all rather short and memorable. Psalm 127 is the eighth psalm in this collection and is the only ascent psalm attributed to Solomon. Many scholars connect these psalms to the festivals celebrated in Jerusalem. "Since Jerusalem sits on a hill, no matter where one comes from, one always 'goes up' to Jerusalem. Pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem may have sung the Songs of the Ascents, which, except for Psalm 132, are brief and thus easy to memorize. Although these fifteen psalms most likely come from a variety of times and places in ancient Israel, the message of the collection as a whole is that Jerusalem is the place for the coming together of the people of God for celebrations and commemorations and for acknowledging the goodness and help of the God of the Israelites. Some speculate that the 'ascents' referred to in Psalms 120-134 are the steps of the temple, which Ezekiel calls 'ascents' (Eze 40:6). ... The Mishnah states, 'fifteen steps led up within [the Court of the Women] to the Court of the Israelites, corresponding to the fifteen songs of the steps in the Psalms, and upon them the Levites used to sing'" (Nancy deClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, "The Songs of the Ascents: Psalms," in *The Book of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, 887).

Psalm 127 is also considered a wisdom psalm (perhaps from Solomon's pen), giving proverbial wisdom to those who are going up to the "house" that Solomon built to participate in seasonal temple rituals. Even though going to the "house of the LORD" is significant, the singers of this ascent psalm are reminded that the LORD is more important than the house or city dedicated to him. "Unless the LORD" is involved, the house, the city and the offerings made are of little value (Ps 127:1-2). As these songs were most likely sung by families on their way to the temple, fathers and mothers and children would all be reminded that the LORD should be the focus of their worship more than the temple, the city or even the offerings they were preparing.

This wisdom of spiritual prioritization would also apply to individual builders of their own homes, villages and even their own enterprises. Working tirelessly with no rest belies a self-sufficient perspective and a lack of trust in God. Taking time to rest and pursue sleep is an acknowledgement that God is in control. A person who can seek rest and sleep even in the midst of his labors is a person who is most likely trusting God to do what he or she cannot do. Psalm 127:2 is not a call to sloth or a discouragement of hard work. Instead we are encouraged to trust God enough to rest after hard work and wait to see what God will do with our labors done righteously in his way. God does not guarantee sleep always, but in general, those who trust in him can find it possible to sleep because they know he is in control.

The next message of wisdom shared in Psalm 127 relates to family (vv. 3-5). Just as God is recognized as the ultimate source for the building and protection of his house, so God is the source and provider of children and family in our own homes. Children, who culturally received inheritances from their parents, are described as being an "inheritance" or "heritage" from the LORD to the parents. Those seen as dependents or considered liabilities are considered a financial boon or reward given by God. In an agrarian or mercantile setting, children would become natural apprentices and successors to family enterprises. In our modern world, children are often perceived as obstacles or impediments to success and advancement. Solomon's wisdom regarding adding children to a family should be embraced now even as it was accepted in ancient times.

Children are also likened to arrows (Ps 127:4-5). "For the ancient warrior the arrow was a primarily offensive weapon intended to be used against a long-range target, in contrast to weapons such as the sword or the spear that were used for short-range battle. Arrows are propelled by the strength and according to the aim of the archer. Similarly, children can extend the influence of a parent beyond what the parent can do personally. Paul noted of David in Acts 13:36 that he served in his generation and then died, and that holds true for all of us. The children one has, whether they are biological offspring or spiritual disciples, take the parent's values to places where the parent may never be able to go personally. By this means the parent can transcend the intrinsic limits of mortality that otherwise would cause his or her best efforts to be in vain" (Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, vol. 13, New American Commentary, 481).

Just like sleep is not a guarantee (Ps 127:2) so the gift of children in a family is not an ironclad promise. Sometime children experience death. Sometimes couples are infertile. The gift of children in a family should be celebrated. Not having children may be a grief and a lesson in trusting God, even when he does not move in ways we desire. Just as we depend upon God to build our house (Ps 127:1), so we depend upon God to fill our house with inhabitants. God is good in his provision and in his deprivation (Job 1:21). This is hard wisdom, but good wisdom.

Beyond natural families, followers of Jesus can experience the joys of family as described in Ps 127 through spiritual relationships relating to other followers of Jesus. Jesus said "Whoever does my will is my brother, sister and mother" (Mk 3:35). A spiritual connection with fellow believers can be an environment where we can celebrate healthy family dynamics and traditions even if we do not have the gifts of a healthy natural family. Spiritual parents, siblings and children can be a heritage and reward from the LORD similar to natural family members. What is missing in the natural can often be remedied in the spiritual.

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *song of ascents* “Songs to be used both in organized pilgrimages in the context of the annual pilgrimage feasts and also for recitation (with musical accompaniment) during worship services in communities at a distance from Jerusalem, but also in family and private devotions. It is possible that the composition was musically performed as a kind of ‘Zion cantata’ during pilgrims’ worship services in the Temple. In its themes and motifs, the composition presents some artistic variations on the Aaronic blessing, with the four key words ‘bless,’ ‘protect,’ ‘graciousness,’ and ‘shalom’” (Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, Hermeneia – A Critical & Historical Commentary, 294).

v. 1 *builds* “*Yhwh* built a house in the heavens (Amos 9:6) and built ‘his sanctuary’ in Jerusalem (Ps. 78:69). The OT often speaks of *Yhwh*’s building a household (e.g., 1 Sam. 2:35; 2 Sam. 7:27; 1 Kings 11:38) and also of *Yhwh*’s (re)building David’s fallen shelter (Amos 9:11). The notion of building a household might be stretched further. *Yhwh* builds Zion (Ps. 102:16), the cities of Judah (69:35), and Jerusalem (147:2, there referring to the building up of the community). *Yhwh* needs to build Jerusalem’s walls (51:18), *Yhwh* builds David’s throne (89:4 [5]), and *Yhwh* will build Judah and Israel after the exile rather than demolishing them (e.g., Jer. 24:6; 33:7; 45:4). Any of those connections in which one might speak of house building have their equivalents when the second colon moves on to speaking of human house builders” (John Goldingay, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Psalms 90–150*, vol. 3, 499).

v. 1 *house* “All the connotations of the word ‘house’ in 2 Sam 7 pertain to its meaning in Ps 127. This word can refer to a place where a family dwells, the temple where Yahweh dwells, and to a line of descent. ...When David wanted to build Yahweh a *house* (temple), Yahweh promised to build David a *house* (dynasty), culminating in a king whose throne would be established forever. Psalm 127 is ‘of Solomon’ (cf. Ps 72; Song 1:1), which seems to indicate that Solomon wrote it. Solomon was the seed of David who built the temple, activating thoughts of 2 Sam 7 and 1 Kings” (James M. Hamilton Jr., *Psalms*, vol. 2, Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary, 401).

v. 1 *vain* “Occurs three times and thus serves to link the proverbial statement in verse 1 to the claim made in verse 2. Although the English does not reflect the word order, the word ‘vain’ (*shawe*) appears as the first word in three different lines. ... The psalmist, however, is not assessing a value on building a house or guarding a city; rather, the psalmist is claiming that the success of such work is contingent on whether God is involved in the activity.” (W. Dennis Tucker Jr., *Psalms*, vol. 2, The NIV Application Commentary, 792).

v. 1 *watches* “Such a futility curse is here angled in a God-ward direction. Yahweh’s smile of favor, or rather active involvement in the enterprise, is essential. Both the prophets and the covenant sanctions of Deut 28 associated futility sayings with hostile invasion. Whether independently or not, the same aura of meaning lies implicitly over the first line, in view of the continuation in terms of a threat to communal security. The secret of such security – or its negation – rests with God (cf. Ezek 28:26; Amos 3:6), over and above the sentry on the lookout for enemy attack” (Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, vol. 21, Word Biblical Commentary, 238).

v. 2 *food* “‘To eat the bread of sorrows.’ And ‘sorrows’ is also a genitive after the construct ‘bread,’ referring to the struggle that produced the bread. ... So the picture is one of someone laboring with anxieties and painful toil to be able to eat bread. This artificial lengthening of the day in anxiety is vain. ... A long, industrious day is not wrong. In fact, this is held up as profitable in wisdom literature. But if the food is produced through tiring labor, anxiety, and stress, and the family eats of food so produced, it is a life of fear and worry without trusting the LORD and it is futile” (Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms (90–150)*, vol. 3, Kregel Exegetical Library, 683).

v. 2 *sleep* “Sound, peaceful sleep as a real symbol for a contented, calm, and fulfilled life and an expression of trust in the protecting God is, in fact, according to Old Testament tradition, a gift of God. While the one praying Psalm 6 covers his bed with tears and sighing ‘all night long’ because of his multiple sorrows, those who pray Psalms 3–4, though surrounded by enemies, can sleep peacefully and without care through the night because YHWH is their guard (cf. Pss 3:6–7; 4:9)” (Hossfeld and Zenger, 390).

v. 3 *offspring* “The second stanza then praises the blessing of children (the Hebrew indicates that specifically sons are meant in verse 3a), although verse 3b broadens with a phrase (offspring; lit. ‘fruit of the womb’) that would include all children, suggesting that the house spoken of in verse 1 refers to more than the physical structure, but also to the family” (Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, vol. 15, TOTC, 426).

v. 5 *court* “The psalmist refers to the gate (*sha’ar*; NIV ‘court’) in verse 5b, suggesting that a quiver full of children will prevent the father from experiencing shame in that public forum. The gate was the place of public assembly but also the location for business and commercial activity, as well as the location for settling legal disputes. ... The psalmist explains that although the gate holds the potential for injustice and false accusations, the blessed man and his quiver full of children will thwart any forms of injustice or abuse attempted by his enemies” (Tucker, 794).

# 4

## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Work hard building your family/faith legacy, trusting God for his rest, blessings and protection.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## PARENT CONNECTION

A few weeks ago, I celebrated Easter with a huge gathering of friends and family. We were all having a grand time catching up and enjoying the delightful company when suddenly the whole world tipped on its axis. Baby Charlotte had finally arrived. This one-year-old queen and unequivocal ruler of the entire universe charmed us all with her smile, limited vocabulary, and uncanny ability to toss pink balls out of her own personal ball pit. Everything she did was magical and to be praised. I caught myself thinking children truly are a blessing to parents and the extended family. Isn't it interesting that a psalm that speaks this truth begins with a warning? At first glance, Psalm 127 seems like two different psalms that don't have much to do with each other. If you zoom out, however, you'll see the deeper meaning – building a life, home and family apart from God is futile; it will come to no good end and it's just not worth it. Trying to raise children apart from the firm foundation of God's Word will lead your house to eventually crumble and fall apart. Our children need the security of being raised according to the truth of God's Word. They need to understand the pleasant boundaries God has set in place for healthy and wise living. They need to be able to return again and again to a home built on His sovereignty, faithfulness and grace. Assess your foundation today. Are you building on solid rock or shifting sand? What about your parenting do you need to change to ensure you're building on strong foundation? We're praying for you!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 127

1. Put verse 1 in your own words.
2. What word is repeated in verses 1 and 2? Look up the word and write down the definition.
3. To whom does God grant sleep?

### What Do You Think?

Why are children a heritage/  
reward/blessing to a family?

### What Do You Do?

Try to name one part of your life that you think the Lord doesn't care about. Now, name parts of your life that you know the Lord cares about.

### CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

### MEMORY VERSE: Galatians 6:9

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I completed my Bible Study
- \_\_\_\_\_ I memorized this week's verse
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought my Bible to church
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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**OUR MISSION**  
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.