

# Wisdom for Life

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

[ 0 : 00 ] It's good to see all of you here this morning. So good that we are able to gather in the Lord's house. And as Brother Shambi said, it is a privilege that we have.! The Southern Grace Church is in Australia.

And it appears that for the foreseeable future, that is their lot. So we thank God that we can gather as we're doing this morning.

Well, we are continuing our sermon series in the Psalms of Ascent. So if you have not yet done so, please turn in your Bible to Psalm 127. The psalm that we have come to this morning.

And please follow along as I read. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. Psalm 127. 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.

[ 1 : 34 ] For he gives to his beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb, a reward.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them.

He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. Please pray with me.

Heavenly Father, we bow our hearts this morning and we do so acknowledging our need for your help to grant us illumination in your word.

Lord, would you open our eyes that we might behold wonderful things in your word this morning. Lord, would you open our hearts that we might be transformed by it.

[ 2 : 37 ] And Lord, would you enable our minds that we might obey all that we read in it. We ask that you would glorify yourself, Lord, and you would build this church through the preaching of your word.

It's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Those of you who are familiar with the Psalms would recognize that Psalm 127 is somewhat different from the Psalms that we are accustomed to reading.

It is not a Psalm lifting up prayer or praise or lament to God. Instead, it is a wisdom Psalm. And from the superscription of the Psalm, Psalm 127, we are able to tell that it was written by King Solomon.

And apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. But although Psalm 127 is different, we find it among the Psalms of ascents.

And you'd recall as we've been working our way through the Psalms of ascents, I've been reminding you that these are the Psalms that the children of Israel were told historically when they made their journey to Jerusalem from wherever they were in the Promised Land three times per year at Pentecost, at Passover, and at Feast of Tabernacles, they would sing these songs on their way to the place of worship in Jerusalem.

[ 4 : 20 ] And it is instructive for us, it is a blessing to us, to read these Psalms and to consider the themes that got their attention as they prepared to go and worship the Lord.

And in Psalm 127, in all of his God-given wisdom and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, King Solomon addresses three foundational themes or activities which all of us know too well.

And they are the activities of engaging in work, embracing rest, and raising children.

And although these activities can seem somewhat unrelated, Solomon helps us to see that they are related. And the sobering point that he drives home for us is this.

Earthly labors that ignore God, neglect rest, and devalue children are meaningless.  
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[ 5 : 47 ] Yet I believe all of us would agree this morning that it is so easy to do the exact opposite of what Solomon is soberly warning us about in Psalm 127.

I think because the reality is that the world that we live in makes much about human accomplishments with little regard for how they are achieved and with little regard for the price that we pay to accomplish them.

And so we need to hear the message of Psalm 127. And by God's grace, we need to live our lives informed by it. And so whether we need to hear this as a reminder this morning and recommit ourselves to it, or whether we need to hear this for the first time and commit to it, I think it's a message that we all need to hear this morning.

And so what I want to do this morning is I want to consider this message that Solomon brings to us in Psalm 127, that earthly labors that ignore God, neglect rest, and devalue children are meaningless.

I want us to consider it under three headings, which are a single word. And the first one is work, the second is rest, and the third is children.

[ 7 : 16 ] So let's consider the first one, work. Solomon addresses work in verse 1. Notice what he 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. This is a sober and universal call to all.

It is a call to be aware of the reality that whatever we accomplish without God's help is in vain. It's a call to recognize that only those endeavors that we give ourselves to, that the Lord is involved in, are worthwhile endeavors.

And we need God's help to accomplish them in a primary way. Now I think we'll miss Solomon's point if we think that Solomon is only talking about building something or watching over something.

I think Solomon was using these two as representatives of work in general. So his point is, whatever we are engaged in, whatever the activity, if the Lord is not engaged with us, it is all in vain.

[ 8 : 43 ] And so we can think about any and every legitimate human endeavor. Whatever it is we're seeking to accomplish, we need God's help in a primary way in order for that to not be in vain.

There needs to be an awareness as we give ourselves to various endeavors that we're not working in isolation, that we are working under submission to God. An awareness that if God doesn't help us, all that we're doing is we're spinning our wheels and it's all in vain.

It's a posture of humility. It's a posture of recognizing those words of Jesus, that away from me you can do nothing. Nothing of worth or nothing of value.

It's insightful to consider what Solomon means when he says it is in vain. Solomon uses this word vain, and those of you who are familiar with the book of Ecclesiastes would know it's a word that he uses there repeatedly.

And the word actually means mist or vapor. A mist or a vapor.

[ 10 : 06 ] And I think that makes the point even clearer. No matter what we accomplish or give ourselves to, no matter how grand it is, if we are doing it away from God's involvement, it is a fleeting mist.

It is a vanishing vapor. It amounts to nothing. And this is true of the greatest endeavor. This is true no matter what we're building.

It is passing in the grand scheme of things if the Lord is not with us in it. In a sense, we need to be working under his superintendence.

Otherwise, it's empty, it's meaningless, it's purposeless. And if you want to have a full appreciation for what Solomon is saying about work, I encourage you to read the book of Ecclesiastes, in particular, chapter 2, where Solomon, who many believe wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, gives this list of projects that he undertook and the things that he built.

And humanly speaking, he had no restraints. He had no restraints of resources. He had no restraint of wisdom. He had no restraint of his desires. He said, whatever I desired to do, I did it.

[ 11 : 36 ] And in the end, his conclusion was, when he considered all the work of his hands, all the toil that he expended in accomplishing it, he said it was all vanity and striving after wind.

And if you really want to get an appreciation of what that really is, just go outside and start to run after the wind to try to capture it. That is the futility of work with our God's involvement.

And that's because, despite the wisdom that God had given to Solomon, for a considerable period of his life, Solomon turned from the Lord, and he engaged in self-centered, self-absorbed work.

And his conclusion in the end was, it was a vapor. It was a mist. And brothers and sisters, if we don't hear the wisest man who ever lived regarding work, and the other themes that we'll consider this morning, in essence, what we're saying is we're wiser than Solomon was.

But in truth, we're not. Solomon was right. We need the Lord's help in our earthly endeavors. But not only does Solomon give us wise counsel regarding work, but he also gives us wise counsel regarding rest.

[ 13 : 07 ] And that's my second point. Look again at verse 2. 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.

As he gives his counsel on rest, Solomon still has work in view. And he points to an all too familiar practice that we humans engage in, and that is working unnecessarily long hours in an attempt to get ahead, in an attempt to accomplish things, getting up early, working late, getting to bed late.

And behind such an approach is the view that ultimately it is our work that gets us ahead. It is our work that provides for our needs.

Solomon is saying that not only is not following the Lord in our work and trusting him in our work and allowing him to help us in our work, but so is not trusting God and our rest.

That's also in vain. Not only is the work in vain, away from God and his help, but also rest, not trusting God with our rest and overworking ourselves is also vain, in vain.

[ 14 : 41 ] Solomon refers to the bread of anxious toil in verse 2. And it's another way of speaking about earning a living by worrisome work, by anxious work, whereby we are looking to ourselves to provide for our needs.

We're putting all the pressure on ourselves to provide for our needs and not ultimately looking to the Lord. That brings anxiety, brothers and sisters. That brings undue pressure that God never intended.

Yes, God has given us work and he's called us to work, but he's never called us to work with any awareness that that is the absolute way that we are taking care of and that our needs are met.

God is the one who is the source for everything that we need. And so the ability to stop working and get adequate rest is an expression of faith and trust in God.

Believing that he is the one who is working with us. He is the one who is prospering us. And he is the one who is giving us rest.

[ 16 : 01 ] I think we all know how hard this is and I start with myself. But we come face to face with the futility, with the vanity of working so hard that we wear ourselves out and not resting enough.

And when we do whatever we accomplish, it's all in vain. And it's an expression of a lack of trust in the Lord.

When we don't trust the Lord to meet our needs, our diligence in working long days by rising up early and working late will only make us sleep-deprived wrecks who live empty lives, who believe that they are accomplishing something, but in the end, the Lord says, it's all in vain.

So I want to ask you this morning, how do you hear these words? How do these words land on you and your own attitude towards work and rest?

Are you working with the awareness that ultimately it is the Lord who provides both for your needs and gives you rest? or are you engaged in anxious toil, nail-biting toil?

[ 17 : 43 ] If you are working with the awareness that the Lord is the one who ultimately provides for you and that He gives you the gift of rest, then you are living by God's wisdom. But if not, then we are living by the world's wisdom.

We're living by the world's belief that what we need to do is work as hard as we can and accomplish as much as we can without any awareness that it is the Lord who ultimately provides for us and who meets our needs.

And we get on that merry-go-round every day, work as much as we can, as hard as we can, rest as little as we can, trying to accomplish what Solomon says is all in vain.

So may we hear these words this morning that are calling us to find the balance, to find the faith, to find the trust in the Lord, in our balance of work and our balance of rest.

But as important as these two particular themes are, this theme of work and this theme of rest, I think they are secondary to what Solomon is actually addressing in the most important sense, in the grand scheme of things.

[ 19 : 23 ] It is really the third theme that Solomon addresses that is the overarching important theme that the two that we have already covered, work and rest, are actually supporting.

So Solomon addresses work, he addresses rest, and then third and finally he gives us godly wisdom for raising children. And this is my third and final point.

In verses 3 to 5, Solomon helps us to see that we can be overly busy working, we can be anxiously trying to make a living and get ahead, and in the process we can overlook the most precious gift that God gives us, and that is the gift of children.

And so what we find is in verses 3 to 5, Solomon shares three important truths about children. First, in verse 3, he tells us that children are a gift from the Lord.

Notice again how he says it, Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward. the way Solomon says this, he is actually saying it to us convinced that we don't understand that it is true.

[ 20 : 58 ] Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Solomon communicates this in a way that shows that he believes that we don't understand the truth of this statement.

the new, the new, sorry, the new American Standard Bible translates heritage, use a different word, use the word gift.

And that's what it means. It's an inheritance, it's a gift, it's something we receive. And it is almost as if Solomon comes to us and he holds us on the shoulders and shakes us.

And he says, listen, look, that's what the word behold is. He's calling us to see something we would ordinarily miss. He says, behold, children are a gift from God.

Listen, children are a gift from God. Don't you see? They're a gift from the Lord. And the implication is that in our busyness, we can so easily overlook and neglect them.

[ 22 : 14 ] But they are a gift from God and they are to be received by us as gifts from God. And it matters not the circumstances of their birth, whether they were born in marriage or out of marriage.

It matters not what their physical or mental disabilities may be. every child is a gift from God. Every child from the moment of conception in the womb is a gift from the Lord.

Solomon says, behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. The gift, sorry, the fruit of the womb a reward. And brothers and sisters, if there's anyone who should be pro-life, because there's no other legitimate position to have is those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We should be at the front of the line standing for the sanctity of human life and especially for the protection of helpless babies in the womb.

Every child is a gift from God, the most precious gift for which we will be accountable. And I think we can all pause here to think, especially those of us who have careers and work and so on.

[ 23 : 43 ] We can be so aware of how we can get lost in our work that we can forget. behold, these children are more precious than work.

They're more precious than any endeavor that you can give yourself to. They're a gift from God and they're a gift that we overlook and we take for granted and so Solomon shakes us and says, behold, they are a gift from God.

The second truth that Solomon tells us about children is they need to be guided. They need to be guided. We don't just have them and let them go on their merry way.

No, children need to be guided. Notice how he says it in verse 4. He uses figurative language to speak about it. In verse 4 he says, like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth.

What is he saying? And the implication is he's referring to a young man primarily because he wants us to think about very young children.

[ 25 : 00 ] A young man almost obviously will have young children. He's not going to have old children. He's a young man, typically speaking. And what Solomon is saying is that in the same way that a warrior takes arrows and aims them to a particular destination, it's the same way that he has in view a man who has children is to take his children as arrows and purposefully and intentionally aim them in a certain direction.

And although Solomon doesn't tell us the direction, the direction should be obvious. The direction should be back in the direction of the one who has given them to us in the first place.

God gives them to us and we redirect them back to God in his ways and in his purposes. Even if we don't know those purposes specifically, we want more than anything else to say, God, I want your will to be done in my child's life.

And that's the unspoken desire behind dedicating children. We are giving them back to God and say, God, this child is yours. Fulfill your purpose in the life of this child.

But Solomon says they need to be guided. And guidance takes time. And I'll never forget in my own parenting, when I came to the conviction, I came to see, it's very easy to bark orders.

[ 26 : 36 ] It's very easy to command children in a particular way. And sometimes we need to do that. But if that defines your parenting, in the broad way, that's not the way that it's done.

They have to be guided. And so sometimes rather than barking that command, we take the time to teach and to instruct and to guide. And it's not enough to be satisfied that the child has done what we've asked the child to do.

If there's no learning in the process, if there's no guidance in the process. And so what Solomon is addressing here is time invested in guiding and directing the children whom God gives to us.

And again, they're only 24 hours in a day. And part of it is for work and part of it is for rest. And this endeavor that we are called to of raising children is critically important.

And yet, it can easily just fall to the wayside. You know what we tend to do? We tend to respond to what screams at us the loudest. And you know, parenting doesn't scream at us, especially when the kids are young.

[ 27 : 59 ] It doesn't scream at us. And so we can easily push it aside and we can invest the time in work. But you know what happens? We'll invest the time. We invest the time one way or the other.

We invest the time on the front end or we invest the time on the back end. And in the later years, parenting can begin to scream at us if we have neglected it in the early years.

And so Solomon is saying that those whom the Lord blesses with children are to see them as arrows and to purposefully guide and direct them in the ways of the Lord.

And third, Solomon says to us, not only are they a gift, not only do they need to be guided, Solomon says, children are such a blessing that we should have as many of them as we're able to manage.

Now, I really wish I had the opportunity to look into all of your minds, especially the women, when you heard that. I really would like to just, and I might some of y'all be right.

[ 29 : 21 ] That, I don't mean that, but it means what it says. This is the plain word of God. Look at what he says in verse 5. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them.

Again, speaking figuratively, he shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gates.

To get a picture what Solomon is referring to, we have to understand what a quiver is. And the quiver was the container or the pouch that the warrior would put his arrows in.

And obviously they had different sizes of quivers and it depended on the size and the strength of the warrior, how many arrows he would put into his quiver. So, quivers varied in size.

And what they could contain. And so Solomon seems to be speaking here about a man just filling it as much as he is able to.

[ 30 : 29 ] The figurative quiver of his home, of his parenting, to fill it with as many as he is able to carry, as many as he is able to manage.

And here's the point. The point is not so much to wonder about the number of children. The point is that we need to have a different attitude towards children. He's getting at how we view children.

We need to see them as a blessing and if we do see them as a blessing, we will have as many as we possibly can in terms of being able to manage them. If we truly believe it is a blessing.

And really I think that's where our starting point needs to be. We need to become convinced, yes they are, this is what God's word says, we do see children as a blessing, not a burden, but as a blessing.

And then we would seek to receive as many blessings from the Lord in the form of children, as he in his providence would grant to us, and we are able to manage.

[ 31 : 48 ] Solomon says, for the man who receives children as a blessing and invest time in raising them and directing them, here's the promise, the promise is he will not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gates.

Solomon says this in a kind of roundabout way, he says it in a positive way, not in the negative way, and I think we know the negative way, that as much as children can make us proud, they can make us ashamed.

I think if we talk to a lot of parents, we would find that the source of shame, the source of pain, is often parenting, is often from children.

And it is not to say that if we perfectly raise our children, if that's possible, that this heartbreak of disappointment and let down, would never be apportioned.

That's not what Scripture is teaching. This is a wisdom psalm. And so just speaking in terms of principles as opposed to absolutes, the story of Cain and Abel, two brothers, same parents, one godly, worshipping the Lord, the other turning out to be a murderer.

[ 33 : 26 ] But the principle here is true. The principle here is that we are called to raise our children and the principle is that they will be a blessing to us in our lives, both in our homes and outside.

These are wise words this morning. I think if we're interacting with them the way that we should, there should be a sense of neediness in all of us, an awareness that none of us in and of ourselves can truly attain what we are hearing this morning.

Indeed, the man who penned these words himself fell short of his own counsel. Solomon did not faithfully keep these words.

You read the account of his life and he did not keep these words. things. And what it points to is that we need one who is greater than Solomon.

We need one who is able to do more than give us these instructions but enable us to live out these instructions. By the grace of God, there is one greater than Solomon.

[ 34 : 53 ] And he is the Lord Jesus Christ. And he spoke more wisdom far more soberly than Solomon ever spoke.

And he spoke to us about life in general. Not just the aspects that we have covered here this morning. Not just work and rest and children. He's spoken to us about all of life.

And he said to us, if you in all of your endeavors gain the whole world and you lose your own soul, you have gained nothing.

You have profited nothing. And friends, the greater Solomon this morning enables us and empowers us to do these things that we are considering in Psalm 127 this morning.

we can desire these as much as we want, but without the power of the Holy Spirit, without the grace of God at work in our lives, we cannot do these things.

[ 36 : 01 ] And it begins with a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone who does not have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, who sees these noble ideals and say, you know, those are wonderful, I'm going to go after them and do them, it's almost like putting a person on a construction site, tying their hands, and telling them, go to work.

You just can't do it. It is only by the power of God and the work of the Lord in our lives that we can have a fighting chance of doing these things.

And because of our own humanity, because of our own flesh, we will still fall short to one degree or another. But friends, our only hope this morning of living out these words is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will help us to put our work, our rest, and our raising of children in the right perspective. So let us look to him this morning.

Those of us who know the Lord, let us lean on him more to do this. And those who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, I say, come to Jesus. Come to Jesus as you are, bringing your burdens, bringing your disappointments, bringing your sin.

[ 37 : 24 ] And he has promised that he will never turn you away, and he will receive you to himself. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word this morning, and we trust in your providence that you are causing us to hear what we need to hear in this moment.

I pray, Lord, that you help us all to put in perspective the things we give ourselves to, remembering that if our endeavors ignore you, if they neglect rest, if they don't see our children as the gift that they are, it's all in vain.

We ask for your help, Lord, would you forgive us where we have lost sight of these things, and would you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and minds to live in accordance with the wisdom of your word.

And we ask, Lord, that you would do this for the glory of your great name. And now the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all as you lead.

Amen.