

# Heed Godly Wisdom

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[ 0 : 00 ] I want to begin by asking you, what's the best New Year's advice you've ever received? What's the best New Year's advice you've ever received?! What's the best New Year's advice you've ever received? At this time of the year, the heirs of many people are wide open to hear any advice that they believe can help them as they embark on a new year.

And there's a lot of New Year's advice going around, especially over social media. Much of it unsolicited. Many experts and so-called experts, they're offering financial advice and relationship advice and personal development advice and career advice, health and fitness advice.

I've seen in particular, there's a lot of people, everybody's going vegan. They want to do this and how to do it and here's how to stick with it. And a lot of advice is just floating around.

The list goes on. But I thought that I would add my voice to the other voices giving advice.

And here's my advice for this year. Heed godly wisdom. Heed godly wisdom.

[ 1 : 22 ] And in truth, my voice and my call to heed godly wisdom is really not just my advice. It's really more than advice.

It is a command that is rooted in the pages of scripture. And it applies to all people everywhere. And it applies throughout the whole year, not just at the beginning of the year.

And this morning, I want us to consider the godly wisdom that we find in Psalm 127, the godly wisdom that we are called to heed.

So Psalm 127, please follow along. As I read, I'm reading from the English Standard Version.

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 vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil.

[ 2 : 32 ] For he gives to his beloved sleep. Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb are 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. Would you pray with me? Father, we are grateful that we are able to gather this morning and prepare our hearts for the preaching of your word.

Lord, we need godly wisdom. And your word calls us to heed it. I pray that you would grant us the grace to heed the godly wisdom that we find in the pages of scripture, but in particular in this passage this morning.

Lord, speak to us in ways that we need to hear from you. You know us individually and in our families and broadly in this church family. I pray you enable me to be faithful and to submit myself to the authority of your word.

[ 3 : 50 ] And I pray that above my voice, we will all hear your voice. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Psalm 127 is really one of the most sobering passages of scripture in the Bible.

It was written by the wisest and richest man who ever lived apart from Jesus Christ, and that is King Solomon. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, King Solomon wrote these words of Psalm 127 to every generation of people, which obviously includes us.

And in these words of Psalm 127, what Solomon tells us is that we can be wasting our lives on this earth based on how we approach and live our lives.

It's a reality that he addresses in this psalm. We can live our life, come to the end of our life and realize, you know what? It was all in vain. We don't know exactly when Solomon wrote Psalm 127, but it would appear that he wrote these words towards the end of his life, and you who know the story of Solomon would know that that he started out well, he drifted from God and disobeyed God

in so many ways.

And it would appear that he came to his senses and he would be writing this psalm. And while we see words of advice, we can also hear a tinge of regret.

[ 5 : 33 ] Psalm 127, though, is not only a psalm of Solomon, it is one of the 15 psalms that we find in a section of the psalms called Psalms of Ascent.

From Psalm 120 through Psalm 134. These 15 psalms are called Psalms of Ascent. And these are short songs that the nation of Israel would sing as they made their annual pilgrimages up to Jerusalem, to Mount Zion for the annual feasts.

The Lord commanded that they would come three times a year. And they would sing these songs in their tribes as they would go up. And when you look at these songs, you see that they were God-focused.

They were upward songs, but they were also songs that spoke about life, the realities of life and God's involvement in those realities. And what's interesting about Psalm 127 is it sits right in the middle of these 15 psalms.

It's the eighth. It sits smack in the middle, so that it seems like it holds this apex position, this summit position in the midst of the psalm.

[ 6 : 44 ] It seems to be the psalm of ascent of psalms of ascent. And when we consider the words of Psalm 127, I believe the point that Solomon makes is this, true success can never be achieved apart from God.

True success, whatever it is, however big it seems, can never be achieved apart from God. And the reason for that is that God alone gives success, and so apart from him, there's no success. People have and they may achieve all manner of things, but without God, Scripture describes what they achieve in two words, in vain.

It's all in vain. In Psalm 127, we find three pieces of godly wisdom about true success, and in our remaining time, I want us to consider them.

The first is wisdom for our endeavors. Wisdom for our endeavors. I think that's the point that Solomon is addressing in verse 1.

[ 8 : 02 ] Notice again what 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.

We don't know the context in which Solomon wrote these words, but he uses two common examples of two kinds of endeavors we undertake.

Building a house, watching a city. And he says, if God doesn't build the house or watch the city, those who are building, those who are watching, they're doing it in vain.

It all goes down the tubes. It is of no moment. It doesn't matter what it is they're building. It doesn't matter what it is they're watching. If God isn't building, if God isn't watching, it's nada.

It's nothing. That's nada, right? Demetria, nada. We won't go there.

[ 9 : 08 ] So what does it mean? What does it mean? What does it mean for the Lord to build a house and watch the city?

Have you ever seen a house that was just going up? Building, you know, in your neighborhood or something, you just see it going up and you don't see any people around. It's just going up.

Or what about the idea of having a security company? You call it God security. security. And you tell people, come to me and I'll have your house watched.

God will watch your house. But no securities show up. Have you ever seen or thought that that could be possible? No. It doesn't happen that way.

When we consider what Solomon is saying, he's obviously talking about something that's more than a physical building or a tangible watching.

[ 10 : 11 ] He makes it very clear that we are to do things. He says we are to labor. He says those who build it, those who build it, they'll be laboring in vain if God isn't building it.

Or those who watch, the watchman watching, it'll be in vain if God isn't watching. So he is not doing away with the labors that we do, but he seems to put the accent on what God does. That it is what God does that makes our endeavors successful.

We are at the beginning of a new year and no doubt, many of us, plans and initiatives and taking decisions.

Whether we should engage in them. And really, when we think about this whole issue of building and watching, even before it comes to that activity, it begins with a thought.

It begins with the decision. It begins on a very foundational level. And even in that, God must be. Because we don't get to decide to do things and then say, come Lord, bless it.

[ 11 : 26 ] It doesn't work that way. He needs to be building from the outset. So if you think of a set of plans, for example, he is helping to do the blueprint, to lay things out.

You are involving him from the very outset. So the point must be that whatever our endeavor is, they are only worthwhile if God is with us in them and we recognize our dependency on him for the success in our endeavors.

Now, this word for vain is a very interesting word. It means empty.

It means worthless. It also means deceitful or fraudulent.

And the idea is that sometimes we see things and they have all the trappings of success, but they could very well be deceitful. Very well be fraudulent.

[ 12 : 37 ] Why? Because God's not in it. And so the idea is that if God is not involved with what we're doing, it is a waste. It is empty.

Indeed, it can be fraudulent or deceitful. In other words, the endeavor is not all that it appears to be. So let me kind of illustrate this. You can have two persons, two different people, engage in the same endeavor and they both look alike.

God is in one, he's not in the other. One is trusting God and depending on God and looking to God in his endeavor.

And Solomon would say to us, you're not laboring in vain. God is with you in that. And then somebody else, on the other hand, doing the very same thing, looking to themselves, pursuing their own glory, pursuing their own desires, seeking their own ambitions.

[ 13 : 45 ] And Solomon would say, it's all in vain. It's all empty. You're doing your own thing. God is not engaged in it. He says, it's all in vain.

And so I want to ask us this morning as we are gathered here, is God with you in your plans and your initiatives and your endeavors that you are contemplating for this year?

Whatever it is, is God building with you? Or is it something that you want to invite God and say, Lord, just bless this? Have you sought him in prayer?

Have you sought him in his word to whatever extent is possible? Have you sought godly counsel? Brothers and sisters, these are gifts from God to us.

These are not to make our life difficult. These are to make our lives a blessing. They're to be a blessing in our lives.

[ 14 : 51 ] The universal rule is, 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.

Here's what I don't want you to hear. I don't want you to hear that what Solomon is saying is, if you go and you do your own thing, it's just going to crash to the ground. Things won't work out.

He's not saying that at all. Things may very well work out. Things may go according to your plans. But in the final analysis, it will all be vain.

Because you are building by yourself. You are watching by yourself. And God is not in it. You know what?

As hard as it is, it is far better to have a house knocked down on the foundation level than to finish the whole thing and find out it is all in vain.

[ 15 : 50 ] There was some major problem that you didn't address and so you lose the whole house and still, instead of getting part of it. And so, even as we hear these words this morning, and even as you perhaps run through your mind or run through, take your plans and run them through the grid of these words, if you need to make adjustment and even what disappointment that may bring to say, you know what?

I didn't pray about this or I didn't seek the Lord concerning this or I didn't pursue godly counsel about this, it's far better to make the adjustment now than to keep on that path and to find out one day that all your labor was in vain, all your watching was in vain.

And we can think about this in so many ways. It could be pursuing an education. It could be building a business.

It could be whatever. God needs to be in it. God loves us enough and cares about us enough that there's no aspect of our lives that he wants us to live separate and apart from him.

You know, that's why he counts here on our heads. He counts here on our heads because he wants us to know, I'm concerned about every detail of your life. As I contemplated Psalm 127, I was really

humbled by it.

[ 17 : 23 ] I'm humbled this morning as I see the kindness of God to us as a church. To have us to be reflecting on this truth at the beginning of a new year in multiple ways.

In the providence of God, table talk this month is finding the will of God. How do we know it? There are great articles in there on how we can discern what God's will is.

Listen to how Burke Parsons in the opening article in table talk titled Knowing God's Will. Notice how he, this is just a part of what he writes that I think is just excellent for us to consider as we look at this year and consider our plans and seeking God's will concerning them.

He writes, when we look to God's word to help us make decisions, we learn to ask the Lord for wisdom and for guidance, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

To walk by the Spirit in humility and holiness. To seek wisdom from trusted, wise counselors and elders. To listen to and honor our fathers and mothers.

[ 18 : 37 ] To consider our gifts, priorities, and means. Not to walk through a door, especially like this part. Not to walk through a door merely because it is open.

And sometimes to knock down a door when it seems closed. To sometimes just do something and to sometimes wait on the Lord until a path becomes clear.

For as Paul writes, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

And then in God's providence, the very first verse that we are remembering for this year and verses to remember is Ephesians 5, 15 through 17. Look carefully then how you walk.

Not as unwise, but as wise. making the best use of the time for the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

[ 19 : 50 ] Brothers and sisters, this is God's care for us. This is God's kindness to us that we don't have to be down a path just doing things in vain.

Doing things that no matter what they look like, no matter how successful they seem, in the end, they are worth nothing. And you see, because God is God, he doesn't just jump on our bandwagon because we're just so far down the road.

No, he is God. And this is the way he calls us to live life, to involve him in every single aspect of it. And so I want to say to us this morning that if we're not committed to prayer, if we're not committed to reading God's word in a serious, ongoing way, if we're not committed to brothers and sisters from whom we can receive godly counsel, we will most likely make the kinds of decisions that will be described by Solomon as in vain.

we would most likely get in the kinds of endeavors that at the end of it all, when we would have spent ourselves, it's all in vain. Brothers and sisters, this life counts very little.

[ 21 : 16 ] In the grand scheme of eternity, in the grand scheme of things, this life really counts very little. And here's the sad thing, and I say this myself as well, we live for this life too much.

we make too much of this life and we make too little of the life to come. And it is in the life to come when the verdict will be spoken over many of these things that we're doing, the endeavors that we engaged in.

But sadly, what we hear was all in vain. Sadly, we hear that we pursued our own glory and not God's glory. We hear that we did our own will and not God's will.

And so, brothers and sisters, let us embrace this kindness of the Lord. Let us, let's read Table Talk this month. Let's read those articles. Let's meditate upon and memorize Ephesians 5, 15 through 17.

To do otherwise, here's what we will be relegating ourselves to being fools. Because he ends it by saying, don't be foolish. Understand what the will of the Lord is.

[ 22 : 23 ] Don't be foolish. Let's be wise. Let's live wisely. Let's use our time wisely. I call you to this.

I call myself to this. May God help us to do this. Next in Psalm 127, we find godly wisdom for our work. Wisdom for our work.

We find it in verse 2. it is vain. But you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives to his beloved sleep.

Notice what verse 2 doesn't say. Verse 2 is not speaking against getting up late, sorry, getting up early or staying up late or working hard. It's not speaking against that.

What it is saying is that it makes no sense to toil by getting up early, staying up late to make a living because God is the one who ultimately provides for us even as he gives us the gift of sleep.

[ 23 : 44 ] The idea is that you have a person who is working out of anxiety because they believe that by working and accomplishing and achieving they're going to take care of their needs, their future needs.

It's the anxiety that drives some people. Am I going to have enough to meet my needs and my family's needs tomorrow? And Solomon is saying to us that working our fingers to the bone and burning the candle on both ends is worthless and unnecessary because God cares for his own. He gives them sleep, he gives them rest, and he also gives them provision. And what in particular is being corrected in this verse is anxious toil.

toil is to be joyful toil. And so the point is not you mustn't get up early and work late.

That's not the point at all. If you can do that joyfully, if you can do that and not neglect your responsibilities that you have otherwise, it's a wonderful thing. You can find joy in your work in that way.

[ 25 : 06 ] But when our toil is anxious toil, when we are fearful because we are looking to our work to take care of us and not God ultimately, because how many of you know that work is just work?

Work is just a means, a channel that God takes care of our needs, but it's not the source. I think many of us have lived long enough to experience that.

Those means change all the time, but the source never, never does. And so we're getting godly wisdom here that when we live that way, it's all in vain.

You know, God has a way of bringing us to that conclusion, and it's no fun when you come to that conclusion to experience.

It's far better to have it based on instruction. You know what's interesting about Adam? Adam's first day on the earth was a rest day. He was created on the sixth day, and he rested on the seventh day.

[ 26 : 20 ] He rested because God was providing for him, was taking care of his and Eve's needs. But here's the practical reality.

The practical reality is that if we are in the habit of working so excessively long, that other important things can easily be crowded up because we only have 24 hours in a day, and we have to soberly evaluate what we are doing with our time, and soberly evaluate our work.

we have to ask ourselves, are we working with the wisdom that we are being called to in verse 2, the wisdom that tells us it is vain and empty to allow anxiety to cause us to work excessively.

We all need the wisdom to show restraint and to trust the Lord. Solomon then moves to another subject in this psalm, and it seems like an unrelated subject, but on close inspection it's very much related, and the topic that he goes to talk about is that of children, and he offers godly wisdom for parenting.

notice what he tells us in verses 3 and 5. Behold children, verses 3 through 5, 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.

[ 28 : 07 ] 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.

Against this backdrop of achieving and working, Solomon raises the issue of children. He has several things to say to us. Those of us who are parents in particular, we need to remember these things.

We need to remember these things as we live life this year and beyond. First thing he tells us is that children are God's heritage. Children belong to God, God, and they are entrusted to us, and so we will give an account for them.

Children belong to God. When we say my child, we should say that advisedly, knowing ultimately this is God's child. And see, this is why the issue of abortion is such a horrific, a horrific issue.

sin. It's such a horrific sin because children are not ours to do what we think about them. They are gods. And they are gods even when they are born into this world with some of the most difficult deformities and complexities.

[ 29 : 30 ] Solomon says they are a heritage. One translation says they are a gift from God. The gift that God gives us in our families.

Next thing Solomon tells us is that children are to be directed when they are young. Children are to be directed when they are young. He tells us that they are like arrows in the hand of a mighty warrior.

And the idea is the same way a warrior takes arrows and he purposefully aims them and shoots them and directs them to particular targets, we must do the same with our children, doing it with the wisdom of the Lord, raising them in the instruction of the Lord, remembering that unless the Lord builds the house of our parenting, all of our parenting is in vain.

It matters not what good education we give our children. It matters not what privileges we give our children. It matters not that we give them all the opportunities that we've never had.

What matters most of all is that we are stewards of our children and we are doing our best to raise them for the Lord and we are doing our best to direct them in the way we believe the Lord would have us to direct them.

[ 30 : 53 ] The other thing that becomes very evident from this passage when we look at it is that children are to be a burden, sorry, not a burden, but a joy. Children, we are to see them as a joy and not a burden.

And so the psalmist, he says here, blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them. And I heard a man who had one child, he said, his quiver was only big enough for one.

And a quiver is the bag that you hold the arrows in. And God entrusts these children to us.

And it's a blessing when we have lots of them, as many of them as we're able to have, bearing in mind the sovereignty of God and all that goes with that.

Ultimately, all that is in God's hands. But they're to be a joy, not a burden. We're to say they are a blessing because they are a blessing.

[ 32 : 12 ] But it's unfortunate that today especially, and this will probably continue to increase in our fallen world. For many children, our burden they say that one of the practical observations among this group they call millennials is that they don't have much value for children because it interferes with vacations and careers and things that they want to do.

Unfortunately, many children sacrifice their, many parents sacrifice their children for their endeavors, for their work.

And the irony is many times they say they're doing it for the children. But God's great blessings to us are not our education and our careers, not our homes and our cars, not our bank accounts.

The real blessing is children. The real blessing are the children that God entrusts to us. But it's interesting that Solomon would put this section about children right after talking about the kinds of things that we can engage in, the endeavors that we pursue, talking about the kind of anxious tour that we can engage in, trying to provide for ourselves and trying to provide for them.

And it reminds us in that context, hey, children are a gift from God. Children are a blessing because we can lose sight of all of it in our endeavors and in our work.

[ 34 : 17 ] But here's the truth, if God is with us, if we're putting God first, if we're putting the first button in the first button hole, we're more likely to have all these things to fall in their rightful place.

Not perfectly, none of us does it perfectly. perfectly. There's nothing that God calls us to do in the Christian life that any of us will do perfectly.

And that's why we need Jesus, and that's why we need the grace of God. But we still give it our best effort. We make our greatest aim to please him.

And I wonder this morning, amidst all of the plans and decisions that we have made for this year, those of us who have children, how many of those plans include our children?

Where do our children factor in in those plans? The idea of a warrior directing a bow as a picture of parenting, speaks about hands-on parenting.

[ 35 : 28 ] But we live in a time where so much of parenting is being delegated. Being delegated to the schools, being delegated to extracurricular things.

Many parents who do little more than physically provide for their children, their financial needs and other needs. children, even now, when they are with us, they're not with us.

Because they can be so distracted doing all manner of other things. And we're not investing the time that we need to invest in our children. And you know what?

It's very evident in society. Parents are spending less time today raising their children than in yesteryear.

And so I encourage us this morning to heed these wise words of Solomon in verses 3 through 5. And may we direct our children as arrows, seeking to be purposeful, seeking to raise them in the fear and in the instruction of the Lord.

[ 36 : 41 ] I would be the first one to say that the wisdom that Solomon lays out here is easier said than done.

It's easier said than done. I think Solomon's own life proves it. Here he was, the wisest and the richest man in the world, and he himself did not live up to the wisdom that he lays out here.

You can read about Solomon's disastrous backslidings in 1 Kings chapter 11. He engaged in endeavors God told him not to get engaged in.

He got involved with foreign kings and married their daughters just trying to play politics. He turned to idolatry.

He literally built high places for people to worship idols. He amassed horses and gold and silver because he didn't trust the Lord to take care of Israel.

[ 37 : 49 ] He wanted his horses to fight. But victory is of the Lord. We need more than horses to win battles.

And he amassed gold and silver because they gave him some sense of security for the future. But we read in chapter 11 that God was angry with Solomon.

And God tore the kingdom from him during the reign of his son Rehoboam, who continued in Solomon's godlessness as a vivid example of Solomon's failure as a father.

God did not follow his own wisdom. I don't think any of us should believe that in and of ourselves we can.

And the reason that we have this in our Bibles is to show us why Jesus needed to come. Jesus needed to come because there's none of us who is able to take these instructions on our own and live them out.

[ 39 : 00 ] We can't. Jesus came to enable us to heed godly wisdom that we otherwise could not and would not heed.

Listen to these words from the Apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 22 through 24. He writes, Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God.

And to receive him is to receive God's wisdom. It is in him and through him alone that we're able to heed the godly wisdom that we find here in Psalm 127 and elsewhere in the pages of scripture.

Without Christ we don't have a chance. We have no desire. We will pursue folly because that's our nature. So may God help us.

this year and beyond to live wisely in and through Christ. And why do we do that? Not so that the world could look at us and say wow he is wise wow she is wise.

[ 40 : 27 ] Look at their family. That's not the reason. The reason we do it is our aim is to glorify Christ. When that is our aim and people were even to make the point and to say to us oh you're wise in this way or you've done a great job with your children we can point to Christ and say he is the wisdom of God.

He is the reason that we live the way that we live. And this is why 1 Corinthians 10 31 needs to be a scripture on all of our hearts. All of us will belong to Christ.

We should seek to memorize it and live it out daily. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do do all for the glory of God. Do all for the glory of God. And see this is this is God's will for us.

Read the articles and table talks. They're very good. They're very practical. But here's what I can tell you about the will of God. God's will for every single one of us is the same.

It is that whatever we do whatever that may be whatever your job is whatever your station is in life in a family married or unmarried. Whatever kind of work that you do God's will for us is the same.

[ 41 : 47 ] He simply says glorify me in all that you do. You stay at home your will for God's will for you is the same. Glorify me in all that you do.

That's what we need to do. Eat or drink. And think about this even as we have meals after church today. Realize that we can glorify God in how we eat and drink. how we are grateful for what we have.

Whatever it is. How we prefer one another. How we serve one another. We do all of this for the glory of God.

And so may God help us in all of our plans for this year. All the decisions that we make to say God my aim is to glorify you.

my desire is that you build it. My desire is that you watch it. My desire is that your fingerprint is on it. And God like Solomon like like Moses said if you're not with us if you're not going to go with us Lord don't lead us from this place.

[ 42 : 53 ] Lord don't let these decisions come to anything if you're not with me in them. I want your will. I want your way. And most of all I want your glory.

Let's pray. Father we are grateful this morning. That on this first day of a new year we can hear your word calling us to heed godly wisdom.

Help us to lay all of our plans at your feet. Help us to accept the truth of scripture that unless the Lord builds the house those who labor labor in vain unless the Lord watches over the city.

The watchman wakes but he does so in vain. Help us to remember the gift that children are.

Children that we are stewarding in our families and indeed stewarding in this church.

Help us to direct them in the way they should go. All for your glory in your great name. We pray in Jesus name.

[ 44 : 03 ] Amen.