

Family Conference: Changing Gears | Session 4 - A Family Who Feels The Lord

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Preacher: Todd Murray

[0 : 00] Well, good morning. So nice to meet you. Some of you I've known for years through the ministry at Church on 99 and to see what the Lord is doing and birthing something new as two churches come together.

I was thinking last night as I was falling asleep, this is a lot like, it's like you're a newlywed couple. You're just getting to know each other. And so all the joys and delights of that first couple of years of marriage and all the growing pains, no doubt, that come in that first couple of years of marriage, that's kind of what it's like.

You've made a loving commitment to one another. And so you're committed and now you're living out the reality of what it means for two to become one. And not two churches joined together, but one new church.

And so we've prayed for you and it's so nice to meet the rest of you and to see what the Lord is doing here. It's a great privilege for us to be here. Of course, you know, Dave and Chelsea and their family are just very, very dear to us.

And it's no chore. It's no formalization that we talk every other week. That's just the longing of our heart and just a unique way the Lord knit us together. My first Sunday at Grace Emmanuel Bible Church in August of 2011 was their first Sunday.

[1 : 13] So we were both feeling displaced and new and we were in the same room together. And that's when I realized, Dave, you're exactly the age of my oldest son, who I also miss by moving to Florida.

I'm far from him. And so that's why we said, are you available for adoption? And he said, absolutely. I said, good. And so we just we've spent holidays together and the Lord just knit our hearts.

And so it's a delight for me to meet this new season, new ministry chapter in his life. So thanks for having us to inherit. Dave, unfortunately, means you're stuck with Todd and Tandy, too. So that's just it's a package deal. So thank you for having us here.

Well, we're we're finishing up, as Dave mentioned, but looking at what the word of God says about how we here's here are these unchanging principles that God teaches about marriage and family life.

And we need to look at those foundations. And then how do we flex and nuance those? We're not changing the truth, but we apply them in different ways in different seasons of our kids lives, in particular as we think about parenting.

[2 : 15] And so I just thought this morning a great way to wrap that up and to include those of you who weren't a part of the Friday and Saturday would be to look at this this beautiful jewel of a standalone psalm that stands here in your Bible.

So if you'll be turning to Psalm 128. And for those of you who might be new to the faith and young in your understanding of scriptures, there is within the 66 books of the Bible, the book of Psalms is 150 songs.

They're prayers. They're like songs without the music. It'd be like looking at the screen, lyrics only. Don't know what the music sounded like. But really they teach us how to pray and express ourselves to God.

About half of the 150 psalms are sad songs. Where are the sad songs? Where do distressed believers, how do they express their praise to God? What does faith sound like when life is confusing or scary or hard and you're tempted to believe you've been abandoned by God and your faith is crumbling?

Well, 75 of 150 will teach you how to talk to God about even your own struggle at times to believe in Him. And the act of addressing Him and admitting, I'm struggling.

[3 : 30] The data, if I look with my earthly eyes, life looks like this. Yet I know that your word says this. And about half of those, you know, the psalms are addressing those kind of moments in the Christian life.

They teach us what does faith under pressure, how does it talk to God? And you should know the book of psalms well because of it. It's why they're so loved by God's people. And then though it's an oversimplification, about half of the other 150 psalms are, woohoo, you answered my prayer songs. So you've got sad songs that say, please come help, I'm desperate. And then you've got happy songs that are just saying, you answered me and boy, how you answered. And so when you turn to the book of psalms, you can tell in the first couple of verses, which kind of song is this?

Is this a sad song in the minor key? Is this the happy song in the major key? Is this the desperate need for intervention from God? Or is this the giant, thank you so much for intervening?

Well, within the 150 psalms, so we'll call it a hymnal. There's a hymnal in your Bible. And within that hymnal, there's actually a tiny little collection of psalms that are called pilgrim songs or songs of ascent.

[4 : 42] They begin at Psalm 120. This is how I remember it. Psalm 119 is the giant psalm of the Bible. 176 verses, the longest chapter in the Bible and the longest song.

That's not a hymn, that's like a whole concert. 176 verses. So that's the big one, 119. Then just remember, right after 119, there's a series of little teeny, they're very short songs that begin with 120 and go all the way through 134.

And they're called the songs of ascent or the pilgrim songs because this was a group of songs that God's people sang during the three times a year when faithful Jewish families were required by God's law to have the privilege to go to Jerusalem for special festival times of worship.

And so families would be traveling from all over Palestine and the journey to Jerusalem, no matter what direction you're coming from, is literally in altitude and ascent. So they're called songs of ascent.

Climbing songs. You guys are perfect for these kind of songs. Everywhere you go is an ascent here. And so think about it, where I live, Florida. I come here, every time we get in the car, Tandy says to the Corinthian kids, look up, look out, you've probably gotten used to it.

[5 : 57] This is spectacular. Hope it's not lost on you. Everywhere you look. So songs of ascent, journeying songs. So maybe you think of them this way. You never sat down to memorize a Christmas carol.

But I'm pretty sure if I began singing verse one of any carol, you could join right in. Did you ever try to memorize the Christmas carols? No. It just happened because over time they repeat themselves and they come at such special times in family life, you don't want to miss it.

And you accidentally memorize them through tradition and repetition. I think the pilgrim psalms were a lot like that. These were the songs they sang while they were traveling.

And so some of them talk about journey safety, like maybe the best known one is Psalm 121. I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

You know that song? Why would they sing? He won't allow your foot to be moved. You won't get sunstroke during the day. You won't get moonstruck during the night. The Lord never sleeps. He'll take care of you.

[6 : 57] So that's clearly a traveling song. Psalm 133 talks about the blessedness of unity. Well, you know why. I mean, God's people are God's people.

And road trips with kids start off great and usually end irritably. And so it would probably be good for us to sing. You could just hear some Hebrew fathers saying, all right, kids, Psalm 133, we're going to sing about unity.

So it's not surprising then that in the middle of this little booklet within the hymnal, these traveling songs where families would experience lots of togetherness and all the joy and challenges that came with that, that in the middle of this, we've got two songs that talk about family life.

Psalm 127 written by Solomon. That's that well-known psalm that says children are a blessing from the Lord. Blessed is the man who has a quiver full of children. Children, they're like arrows in the hand, not of an archer aiming at a bullseye, but a warrior.

The idea that children are warriors of defense in the vulnerabilities of a parent's older age. So that one's well-known, but Psalm 128 gets a little less airplay than Psalm 127.

[8 : 08] So I thought it would be a great place for us to conclude our conference together. Now there's a temptation embedded in this innocent-looking little psalm because it's going to describe the kind of family life that all of us are longing for.

And the temptation is this, to try to produce that kind of family life without meeting the one important prerequisite that the psalm mentions not once but twice.

And that is, if you want this kind of family life, there has to be something that characterizes your walk with God, particularly for fathers and husbands, the quarterback of the team.

Let's see, do you even know what a quarterback is? I just realized this is a cross-cultural metaphor. Never mind, strike that from the record. The leader of the company. And so what we've got here is this tendency.

This psalm will expose a tendency to try to enjoy the fruit of the gospel, the privileges, the fruit of Christianity without embracing Christianity.

[9 : 15] Maybe give me an example and then we'll reread the psalm together and I'll try to explain it to you. We, Tandy and I had a close relative in our family and they don't know the Lord. They have no relationship with Christ.

As a matter of fact, they would kind of repudiate Christianity. And so we're older than they are and when they began to have a family, they love us. We love them. And they would confess, we want our kids to be like your kids whenever we have kids.

And so they had a couple of little ones and they're saying, we want our kids to be like yours. And so how did that happen? What did you do? And so, well, we can't talk about how we raise our family without talking about Christ.

And so when this relative would call my wife and say, hey, we've got kids now. What do we think? And we want them, we like your family. And basically they're saying, we like the fruit of the gospel. We like the fruit that it bears in your life.

And so Tandy would mention Christ and how we've not, not being obtuse, just talking about it and how we think. And so this relative got irritated with that and then started calling my mom and said, hey, can you give me advice on raising these kids we've got now?

[10 : 26] And my mom would say, well, you really should call Tandy. She's kind of in the thick of it. She says, well, I do, but every time I call Tandy, she talks about all this Jesus stuff and I just can't handle it.

And so that's just a perfect example of the way our hearts work. There is fruit in the life of a believer that is attractive even to those who don't know Christ and don't share our love for him.

But sometimes even as believers, we want to take that shortcut. I want that. But I don't want to have to do the heart work that would bear that kind of fruit. I don't want to have to humble myself and come to Christ and admit my need and be forgiven of my sin that would prevent me from ever having that kind of family life.

So that's the temptation. And that's why I think the author of this psalm says, if you want this kind of family life, I'm going to tell you not once, but twice. There is a prerequisite.

There is a condition. There is a posture of your heart that has to exist if you want this beautiful portrait of family life that's detailed in this small, short psalm.

[11 : 33] So let's reread the song together. Be looking for these two prerequisites and then let's unpack it and try to understand. All right, Lord, I don't just want the fruit. I want the heart and the root of this kind of family life.

Psalm 128, a song of ascents. Verse 1. How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways.

When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house. Your children like olive plants or sprouts around your table.

Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed. This kind of family life. Who fears the Lord. So you see it there in verse 1. How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord.

In verse 4. The man who fears the Lord will be blessed in this way. Then he concludes with a benediction. Verse 5 and 6. The Lord bless you. From where? From Zion.

[12:37] From the city we're traveling to. Or the city. Maybe we're singing this song as we go home. From Zion. Where we journey. The Lord bless you from that place. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem.

All the days of your life. Indeed. May you see your children's children. Peace. Wholeness. Spiritual health. Be upon Israel.

Be upon God's people. So here's this short song. That maybe you sang it on the way there. Maybe you sang it on the way home. Three times a year. So probably easily memorized over time. A psalm that promises a certain kind of family blessing. You'd probably want to sing that on the way home. A little bit too much togetherness over the last week. There's been some tension. Siblings have argued.

Dads have gotten irritated behind the wheel of the wagon. And so there you are singing. Let's remind ourselves again. If we want this kind of family life. We have to be known.

[13:33] Particularly. You can tell men are being talked to here. Because he says your wife will be. Your children will be. Which doesn't mean it's not true for women in the house. He's just saying I want to talk to the leader of the home.

And here it is men. We must be men who fear God. First and foremost. If we want this kind of prosperous family life.

So we'll spend the bulk of our time this morning. Actually just trying to get our head around. What does it mean to fear the Lord? And so the psalm opens in verse 1.

And I would just say this. Here's the prerequisite. Here's the condition. For you want this kind of blessing. You want God's blessing on your home. Then there's a spiritual posture you have to adopt.

And it's described as a man who fears God. And a man who walks in his ways. Meaning he obeys God. One is internal. Something's going on on the inside. Invisibly. You have to be a God-fearing man.

[14:32] And then it shows on the outside as a man who obeys God. You can observe that in his life. So let's talk about fear of God. I think the fear of God is a confusing and elusive concept.

And I'm not complaining saying God said it wrong. I'm just saying we have trouble getting our minds around. What does it mean to fear God? I think there are two reasons for that. One is because most things in life that I fear I also hate.

And now I'm called to fear someone that I love. And that seems weird. I am scared to death of spiders and snakes. And I hate them. You know people talk about that's a good snake. No he's not. There's no such thing as a good snake. And so the spiders they're just creepy. And they're small. And they're quiet. And some of them are poisonous. And you know the closer you get to the equator the more dangerous things become.

We live pretty close to the equator. We had a dog killed by a rattlesnake. I have reasons to be afraid of snakes. And yet God calls me to fear him and love him. And so one of the reasons I think it's hard to get our mind around it is because the normal way we talk about fear has nothing to do with things I love.

[15:44] Things that I tend to hate. I think that's one reason. The other reason I think the fear of God is a little bit elusive. And if this is the prerequisite to a happy family life. The kind of life and family that God's going to pour his blessing on.

Then I have to get clarity. And then the other reason I think there's a lack of clarity about it is because of this. It's complicated. Because there's one set of fears that the Bible teaches me that the gospel delivers me from.

There are fears that went away when I knew my sin was pardoned. When I knew that God through Christ had satisfied his own anger.

Righteous holy anger towards my sin. And that God's frown of disapproval on my train wreck of a life has been turned into a smile of approval. As he robes me in the righteousness of his son. And so the gospel made some of my fears experience a giant. That's over. I don't dread the judgment of God anymore.

[16:43] I'm not afraid to die anymore. And so the gospel delivers me from some fears. The cringing fear of punishment and judgment. That I rightly had.

A good fear that has been taken care of through Christ. But there is another kind of fear of God. That I will carry with me into all eternity in heaven forever.

That we will together perfectly continue to love him. To worship him and to fear him. That kind of healthy awestruck fear of our great God. That doesn't change when you become a Christian. So can you see why there's some complexity here? How do I fear and love instead of fear and hate? And there are some fears that the gospel delivers me from. And some fears that continue with me.

That are a healthy thing in my relationship with God. Let me just quote a couple of passages. I won't have you turn there. But in Exodus chapter 20. And the Lord says to his people.

[17 : 41] Right after the giving of the 10 commandments. So the 10th commandment has just been given. And listen to what happens next in Exodus 20. All the people of God perceived the thunder.

And the lightning flashes. And the sound of the trumpet. And the mountain smoking. And when the people saw it. They trembled and stood at a distance. And they said to Moses.

Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not let God speak to us. Or we will die. What were they scared of in that moment? They're literally scared of death.

That God might wipe them out. And listen to Moses' complicated response. It's ironic. It sounds self-contradictory. Listen carefully to what he says.

Moses said to the people. Do not be afraid. For God has come in order to test you. And in order that the fear of him may remain with you.

[18 : 38] So that you may not sin. Well which is it Moses? Don't be afraid. God has come to test you. In order that you'd continue to be afraid. Right?

That's not really helpful Moses. So maybe if I just add one word. It helps clarify. Now remember the verse before this said. Do not let God speak to us or we will die.

And Moses said to the people. Do not be afraid that God will kill you. Do not be afraid of judgment and death. You are the people of God.

Do not be afraid of that. But rather God has come to test you. In order that the fear of him may remain. So that you may not sin. Don't be afraid of God killing you.

Just be afraid of sinning against him. Be afraid of sinning. The way a child is afraid of disappointing. Or grieving their father.

[19 : 37] When my kids would sin against me as a dad. Or disobey me. You know. Or maybe they're hiding a sin from me. I don't even know about. So they're withholding eye contact at the breakfast table.

And they're not themselves. And I know something is up as a dad. And so you know. Let's say eventually they confess. Whatever it is they were hiding from me. The issue here is not. That my kids were afraid to tell me.

Because they were afraid they'd be kicked out of the family. They weren't afraid they'd no longer be a Murray. And what were they afraid of? It's just. They know their fellowship with me is now hindered and distorted.

Because they're covering and hiding something. In that sense. It's a great insight into what the fear of God is not. It's not afraid of God's judgment and wrath.

Because if you're trusting Christ. If Israel was in a right relationship. Walking with God by faith. Then they didn't have to worry that God would kill them. They just needed to have another kind of fear that remained.

[20 : 34] And what is that? The fear of sinning against the Lord. That fear of grieving him. That fear of disappointing him. That fear of wronging a God who's been so wonderful. John Newton said when he looked at his life.

A notorious sailor and slave trader and sinner before he was saved. He said you know. I look back at my past sins. And I'm grieved by them. But he said I'm far more grieved now.

Because now that I'm a believer. Now that I follow Jesus. At least in my past. I sinned in the dark. I was ignorant as Paul would say in 1 Timothy 1. But Newton said this.

Now I sin against light and love. I'm more grieved by my sin now as a believer. I'm not sinning in the dark. Now I sin in the light. And I sin against the love that I see.

Is worthy of my obedience. That's the tone of what Moses is saying. Don't be afraid of God killing you. Jesus through his sacrifice has delivered us by faith.

[21 : 33] From the fear of judgment and punishment and hell. But I retain in me a fear of sinning against the Lord. Not because I'm worried I'm going to get kicked out of the family. Because now I'd be sinning against light and love.

And that's insight into what does it mean to fear him in a healthy way. Similarly don't turn there. But in the book of 1 John. The apostle John is trying to help us grasp the nature of a healthy fear. And an unhealthy fear when he writes this. He says in 1 John chapter 4. Beginning in verse 17. By this love our understanding of God's love is perfected or matured or completed in us. So that we have confidence in the day of judgment. Because as he is so also are we in this world. Listen to what he says. There is no fear in love. Well you might read that and say well I shouldn't fear God.

He says there's no fear of God. No. Listen carefully to what kind of fear he's saying. There is no fear. There's no certain kind of fear in love. Because perfect or mature views of God's love.

[22 : 40] Cast out fear. What kind of fear? All fear? No not the healthy fear. This unhealthy fear. There is no fear in love. Mature views of love cast out fear.

Because fear involves punishment. And the one who fears in that way. Is not yet perfected or mature. Doesn't have really clear views of God's love yet.

See the love of God delivers us from fear of punishment. But the awestruck fear that we sort of have of maybe a hero.

Or if you've ever been in the presence of a celebrity. Or a coach. Or a teacher that you really admired. And so you just admired them. And thought so highly of them.

That there was always this simultaneous repulsion and attraction. You wanted to be near that coach or that teacher. Or that author or that celebrity. And you were also intimidated at the same time.

[23 : 37] That's the kind of fear that Psalm 128 is saying. When a man has been delivered from the cringing fear of punishment of his sin. Because he's placed his faith in Christ to forgive his sin.

He retains throughout his Christian life. Another kind of fear that ushers in blessing in his family. And it's the kind of fear that we would have of someone.

A hero. Someone we admire. And in our case here. A God that we worship. So in that sense. You must retain that kind of fear of God.

One of my colleagues has defined this fear of God. That we retain in a healthy way. As simply this. The fear of God. Is believing that God is who he says he is.

And that God will do what he says he will do. Really men. Women. Young people. The fear of God is really just an Old Testament synonym.

[24 : 37] For faith. If you want the blessed family life. That we're about to look at in some detail. That's portrayed here. Then you must be a man of faith.

Or as the author here has chosen to say it. You must be a man who fears God. A God fearing man. So what does the fear of God do? Well it displaces the fear of punishment.

It also displaces all my other fears. You fear God. You have nothing else to fear. If you don't fear God. You really have everything to fear. So a God fearing man. No longer cares too much what people think.

Fear of man is dismissed. Fear of death is dismissed. Hebrews chapter 2 says. Every man ever born. Was born a slave. An enslaving fear of death.

You know what? The gospel has removed that. I don't fear death. I don't have to fear cringingly. Fear persecution. I don't have to fear calamity. I don't have to fear disaster.

[25 : 35] And I don't have to fear what man could do to me. As Jesus says. Don't fear man. What's the worst he can do? Kill you? No. I got to admit to you.

As a human. When Jesus says. What can mere man do to you? And I think. A lot. He could destroy my reputation. He could take away my earthly goods. He can hurt me physically.

He can hurt me emotionally. Jesus. Why are you so dismissive? What can mere man do? A lot. But not compared to eternity. Jesus says. Don't fear man.

The worst he could do is kill you. Fear God. Who could destroy. Not only your body. Like man could do. But could also destroy your soul. And hell. Fear that God. Walk with that God.

Walk to please that God. Because of what he's given you. In Christ. And so. It was interesting. The reformers in Europe. You know.

[26 : 29] In the 16th century. Some of the. Those who were persecuting. Those who were preaching. The true gospel. Would often say things like this. They were frustrated. By the lack of fear of death.

When they persecuted. And threatened God's people. Those preaching the true gospel. And those who were persecuting them. Were frustrated. And would say things like this. How do you scare a

people. Who aren't afraid to die?

Exactly. Exactly. So men. We want this kind of fruit. Of family life. We must be. God. Fearing men. Read verse 1 again.

How blessed. Is everyone who fears the Lord. Who walks in his ways. Look at verse 4. Behold. For thus shall the man be blessed. Who fears the Lord.

And in between those two bookends. In verses 2 and 3. Are the blessings. The way that showers down on family life. But if you'll permit me. Before we go there. Let me encourage you.

[27 : 29] All right. How do I develop this kind of fear? And for that. I need you to turn away from Psalm 128. For a moment. Turn over a few pages. To Proverbs chapter 2. In essence.

I'm saying. Well I'm glad you've asked the question. All right. If I need to be a God-fearing man. How do I. How do I get rid of the. The fears that are wrong. And how do I retain. The fears that the God would have me have.

Well I'm glad you asked. Because Proverbs chapter 2. Gives the answer to that. Proverbs chapter 2. I'll just survey it with you now. I would commend you to go back. And look at it more closely later. But Proverbs chapter 2. Begins with three if statements. If you do these things. Then you will discern the fear of the Lord. And so.

Let's look carefully. Because Solomon is answering the very question. That should be going through our minds right now. How do I retain the appropriate. Healthy fear of God. The awestruck admiration.

[28 : 28] That a son has for a father. How do I do that? Well Solomon answers. Look at Proverbs 2 verse 1. My son. Here's the first if. If you will receive my words.

And treasure my commands. Within you. We can resupply the if in verse 2. If you make your ear attentive to wisdom. And you incline your heart to understanding.

You understand. What he's saying here. The first condition. The first if. If you want the fear of God in your life. Is that you must be rightly related. Have a teachable. Humble posture before divine revelation.

You've got to be a learner. A humble learner. Under the scriptures. And so. You will never obtain the right fear of God. Apart from being rightly related.

Humbly teachable. And hungry to understand. What God says about himself. You know how we'll say. To know him. Some people. To know him is to love him. I would say this.

[29 : 26] To know God. Is to love God. And fear God. That appropriate fear of God. Will simply be naturally produced in you. When you let God speak.

And describe himself to you. Then you will obtain this healthy fear. That spills over into a blessed family life. So that's the first condition. Be humble and teachable under the word of God.

Look at verse 3. Here's another if. For if you cry for discernment. And lift your voice for understanding. There's a level of desperation here.

And I would say. It involves this. If the first condition is. Be humble and teachable under the word of God. The second condition. You want to fear God rightly. Would be this. Pray about it.

Urgently and desperately. And brothers and sisters. If you start going after all your other fears. And just say. I'm not going to fear that stuff anymore. I'm only going to fear God. Oh you will be desperate to pray.

[30 : 24] Because if you're like me. You'll obtain this appropriate healthy fear of God. In five minute increments. And then you'll lose it. And another fear will come in and compete. And intrude.

It's just staggering. How quickly we're made afraid. By different things. And your set of fears may be different from mine. But the Bible makes it pretty clear. There are some common denominators.

For us. And he says. Desperately pray. I need the discernment. I need understanding. And I'm desperate for it. That's why he doesn't just say. Pray about it. What does he say?

Intensified versions. Cry out for it. Lift up your voice. Please God. These other fears. Plague me. Help me. Sometimes I'm praying alone in the car.

And when I'm alone in the car. I pray out loud. And I've often thought. Well I'm kind of going after it sometimes. What. Is there somebody else watching me at the traffic light? What is wrong with that man? It helps a little.

[31 : 23] Because nowadays. They'll probably assume. Oh he probably has an earbud in. And is talking. You know. Just. I don't see anyone in the car. But he's talking to someone. And whatever it is. He's pretty intense about it. Are you.

You're going to have to bring some intensity. To your prayer life. If you want to fear God. And have the blessings of family life. God's smile on your family. Be humble under the scripture. Be passionate and desperate in prayer. Look at the third if. If you seek her as silver. And search for her. As hidden treasures.

This third condition. Has to do with expending effort. And it also has to do with being. Don't expect a quick and easy answer. This is. If you're going to be a treasure hunter.

Tandy and I live on the part of Florida. That's called the treasure coast. The reason it's called the treasure coast. Is because of how many shipwrecks happened. The place we live in Florida.

[32 : 19] Is the eastern most bulge of Florida. Puts us closest to the gulf stream. Puts us closest to. Puts us closest to the dangerous sharks. As well.

Which is why it's kind of a scary place. To actually swim. But it also just meant. There was tumultuous water. And lots of shipwrecks. Particularly Spanish galleons. Sunk all over the place. And men will spend months.

They'll go to Europe. And research. And they'll try to map out. After this many centuries. Where would that be? And they'll spend millions of dollars. Hoping to make hundreds of millions of dollars. And once in a while.

They get lucky. And he's saying. You need to search for this. You need to plan. To expend some effort. And some time. To invest in this. If you want this rare gift.

Of a God fearing. A God fearing heart. Expend some effort. Break a spiritual sweat. Plan to. Maybe just think of it this way. Persevere.

[33 : 17] Because what will happen is. You'll dunk your mind. Into the word of God. You want to be humble. And teachable. And then you'll pray desperately. God help me. Grow me. And get rid of these other. Ungodly fears.

And help me retain this. Healthy fear of you. And when it doesn't happen. And you don't mature. As quickly as you were hoping. You're going to tend. To throw in the towel. It's no use. I'm never going to get better.

I'm stuck. And then self-pity. Give up. This is a call. To perseverance. Now finally. In verse 5. We have the then. If you'll be humble. And teachable.

Under scripture. If you will urgently cry out. Desperate in prayer. For God to grant you. This. This kind of faith. And maturity. That we call. The fear of the Lord. And if you'll.

You'll persevere in it. As a. As a treasure hunter. Would persevere. Verse 5. Look what it says. Then. Then you will discern.

[34 : 08] The fear. Of the Lord. Then you'll. You'll get it. You'll differentiate. Between unhealthy. And healthy. Fear. You'll discern. The fear of the Lord. And you'll discover. The knowledge.

Of God. We'll look at verse 6. Because. Or for. The Lord gives wisdom. From his mouth. He's the source. Of this wisdom. And this fear. From his mouth.

Come knowledge. And understanding. He's the source. He stores up. Sound wisdom. For the upright. And then I'll just. Tease you. With how the rest. Of the psalm works.

The rest of the psalm. Begins to talk about. The rewards. So you put yourself. In that humble posture. You're humble. You're prayerful. And you're persevering. And then God grants you. A degree of.

Of the fear of him. You discern it. That's. That's a principle. He's guaranteeing it. But then what happens next. He talks about. The blessings that come. And it's primarily this.

[35 : 03] Words like. Guard. And protect. Are used. Over and over again. In the rest of this chapter. To tell you. Look. There are vulnerabilities. Against certain kinds of sin.

That you're protected from. When you have. Assumed this spiritual posture. And become a God fearing man. So. Psalm 128 is saying.

There are blessings. That come in family life. When you fear the Lord. Proverbs 2 is saying. There are protections. You'll be less vulnerable. It talks about being protected. From the evil man. Who perverts.

Doctrine. With his words. You'll be protected. Less vulnerable. To immorality. You'll be protected. From what's called. The seductress. The evil woman. Why? Because you're a God fearing man.

So. Proverbs chapter 2. Has done more. To demystify. Any lingering confusion. In my mind. What does it mean. To fear you. And how do I get it? This is about.

[35 : 57] As specific. A passage. In the entire Bible. That say. If. If. If. Then you will discern it. And then you'll experience. The protection. And the. From particularly.

Patterned sins. That plague most men. Amazing. Amazing passage. So come back now. To Psalm 128. Now let's look together. So what is the fruit?

If. If verse 1 is. Here's the condition. You want God's blessing. On your home. Then you must fear God. And you must walk in his ways. Obeying him. Internally. I fear him.

Externally. You see me complying. With his word. And now in verses 2 through 4. Here's the description. Of the blessing. That God promises. First he says. That you'll be blessed.

In your vocation. There'll be something. Fruitful. In your work. Not that your work. Itself. Is necessarily thrilling. Stimulating. Or satisfying. But look what he says. In verse 2. When you.

[36 : 51] The God fearing man. Who walks in God's ways. When you eat the fruit. Of your hands. You will be happy. And it will be well with you.

The God fearing man. Has a satisfaction. In the payoff. For his labor. That no unbeliever. Can ever have. It's the opposite. Of what. When Dave read earlier.

From Psalm 127. That says. It's vain. To rise up early. To retire late. To try to keep up. With the Joneses. Burn the candle. At both ends. Motivated by. Worldly success.

He says. That is utter vanity. Because the Lord. Will give rest. To his people. Even while they sleep. You don't have to burn. The candle at both ends. Doesn't mean. Don't have a good work ethic. He's just talking about. The motive.

Why would you work. So long. And so hard. Well. Usually because you're afraid. Of something. Besides God. You're afraid of what others. Would think. If you don't keep up. You're afraid of. A financial disaster.

[37 : 47] You're trying to. Avert. A future. Imagined tragedy. By working hard. And having plenty of money. But he mentions. In Psalm 127. Eating the bread.

Of painful toil. Here is the antidote. To that. In Psalm 128. No. The God fearing man. When you work hard. And then sit down. To whether it's a meal.

Or. Something you've saved for. A purchase. Or be able to bless your family. With. With some time away. Or something. Something that you've looked forward to. And you've labored for. You have a satisfaction.

As a God fearing man. That no unbeliever. Could ever have. And for them. Greed will keep them.

On a treadmill. That says. It's never enough. How much money do you need. To be satisfied. I don't know. What the rich man would say.

Just a little bit more. Not the God fearing man. When he eats. The fruit of his labors. It's happy. It's what he's. It is well with him.

[38 : 41] Your vocational life. Is put in perspective. And blessed by God. There's a contentment here. This is not saying. When you work hard. You make more money. It's not a promise of.

Of financial prosperity. It's a promise of. Inner contentment. And thank you Lord. For this meal. Thank you for this home. Thank you for this provision. That.

A man who fears disaster. Could never have. Peace. Contentment. When you work. And experience the reward. From work. Work. So blessings on work.

Our promise. Our vocational life. Men. In verse 2. In verse 3. Look. Blessings in our marriage. First half of verse 3. Your wife. If you're a God fearer. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine.

Within your house. So now he's using poetry. To describe. That's here. We're sitting around the table. And here. In the center of my home. My wife is a thriving. Fruitful vine.

[39 : 36] The idea. Your wife thrives. Under the leadership. Of a God fearing man. So a woman. Who's married to a man. Who fears other things. Is going to be married.

To an anxious man. Probably a crusty man. A grumpy man. A man with a guilty conscience. Who's not any fun. To be with at all. Why would a wife thrive.

When a man fears God. Because a wife. Has her own set of fears. And when a man. Is modeling for her. And encouraging her. And speaking words to her. Of gospel hope.

And realities. He just has the joy. Of recalibrating. Her own imagination. Capturing thoughts. As Paul would say. To the obedience of Christ.

And of course. Of course. Wives. You've done this for us. A thousand times. And you. You have the exact same ministry. In the life of children. When you're a God fearing woman. But here.

[40 : 29] Particularly. He says. Your wife will thrive. And bear fruit spiritually. When you. Are a God fearing man. Who doesn't want that? Everybody wants their.

Home life to be contented. And you know. Happy wife. Happy life. And he's just saying. Wow. That's as. That turns out to be. Thousands of years old. Just saying. Your wife will thrive. Under your leadership. When you fear. Not man. Not disaster. Not death. Not punishment. You just fear God. You have faith.

Life. All wives would thrive. Under that. And so he's just drawing. A picture that. All of us want. Here's the fruit. Secondly. He says.

Not only a wife. But look at our family life. So your vocation. Is blessed by God's smile. Doesn't mean you always get a raise. Doesn't mean you always get a promotion. It means. You're content and happy. And it means your wife.

[41 : 24] As a result. Is also. A fruitful vine. By the way. That little preposition. Within. The house. I think what Solomon. Is pointing. Because he could have just said. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine.

At home. But he uses this word. Within. That has to do with the center. Of the house. And I think what's being contrasted here. Is particularly in the book of Proverbs. Where ungodly women. Are depicted as people. Whose feet are never at home. Scattered. And distracted. And out. And about. Not at home. So I think. What she's saying is here.

Her heart is anchored. And she is anchored. And content. In the center. Of the house. Here's the center. Of her life. This. This portrait. Who doesn't want that kind of life.

And in the second half of verse three. He moves on to children. So if your wife is like a fruitful vine. Your children are like olive plants. Or olive shoots. Around your table. So now you're picturing mealtime.

[42 : 21] And poetically saying. I'm surrounded. So here's the real picture. The gnarly old oak tree. Sometimes drops some of its olives. And around those.

Spring up these little plants. And so the picture is. Children will surround you. And at your table. Maybe you could picture it this way. Like the mature olive tree.

Is surrounded by little olive trees. Springing up around him. We have two olive trees. In our yard in Florida. They're not native. They're just pretty. And they don't bear fruit.

Because you have to have. Freezing temperatures. In order to. To produce olives. But last year. We're very excited as a family. Because we had. A rogue. Tiny little olive. On our trees.

And we planted it 15 years ago. When we moved there. And we kind of can mark. The growth of it. As this season of ministry. The Lord brought us into. And so. But. And it's a. It's a cultivated olive tree.

[43 : 17] But I did some research. This is what I found out. Non-cultivated olive trees. In Italy. Or the Middle East. Do you know how long it takes. To go from an olive pit.

A seed. To olives. On branches. Forty. Years. It'll be 40 years. Before a mature olive tree. Will produce any fruit. You want to talk about. Long-term investments. And as you know. Those who were singing this song. In the ancient Near East. Olive oil is used. As a measure of wealth. It's used. To be eaten. And enjoyed. It's also used. Medicinally. So. To say your children. Are like olive plants. It's just a picture of. Family prosperity.

And joy. And fruitfulness. But it's also a reminder. To a God-fearing parents. That. This is a 40-year project. You know.

[44 : 11] For. I certainly thought. You know. When I was a young dad. That okay. The men. 18 years. And then they'll go off to college. And things certainly do shift. As they become adults. But. I carry my kids.

And their burdens. In my heart. More deeply today. And the stakes are way higher. In my kids. In their late 30s. On down. Than they were. You know. A toddler.

I'm just worried about them. Falling. And busting their lip. There are much higher stakes now. With young adults. And jobs. And family. And distractions. And. Brothers.

Sisters. You. I don't have to tell you. The family's under assault. The family's under assault. You. Couldn't do a family conference. Too often. Because.

Think about it. If. If. If. I'm the enemy. If I'm Satan. And I want to destroy. God's people. And. And I just want to destroy the world. Then I'm going to.

[45 : 05] The way to do it. Is go for it. At a molecular level. And you need to think of the family. Marriage and the family. That is. That is the molecule of society. And our world. So. Attack it at a molecular level.

You know what happens. When you split atoms. Nuclear bombs. So. Satan is. After your marriage. He is. After your family. To destroy it. So. We must.

Shore up. And we've got to have a solid understanding. Of what it means. Because the world keeps. We're redefining gender. Much less. Marriage and family. The rebellion. Against God's plan. Runs that deep. So you must be a God-fearing man. If you want children. Who sprout up around your table. Like olive plants. It's a long-term project. And it doesn't end.

When they graduate and leave. It doesn't stop. When they get married. You carry. The burden. For those. Children of yours. And grandchildren. To the grave. And you do it.

[45 : 59] Through prayer. And witness. And support. And sometimes you give the advice. They ask for. And once in a while. You give advice. They didn't ask for. That's our job. Blessings.

On vocation. Blessings. On marriage. Blessings. On family. And then he just repeats himself. Because he knows our temptation. To say. Yeah. I want that job. I want that fulfillment. I want that contentment.

I want a happy wife. I want those kind of kids. I want that heritage. He says. You can't get that on your own. You'll have to be a man of faith. Do you believe men.

That God is who he says he is. And that he'll do what he says he'll do. And the things he do. Some of them are promises to be cherished. Others are warnings to be heeded. That's the key to it all. Your faith in God. As he reveals himself in scripture. Not the God of your making. Not the God you've edited to your imagination. But God as God declares who he is.

[46 : 57] So he reiterates at the end of verse four. Behold. For thus. Shall the man be blessed. With this kind of vocational contentment. And this kind of marriage.

And this kind of relationship with kids. Behold. For thus shall the man be blessed. Who fears the Lord. And then the psalm transitions to a benediction.

You can almost feel the raising of the hands. Of an older man. So. Singing of the song. In caravans. Families traveling together. Traveling together. By the way.

I meant to say this at the beginning. Do you remember the scene. Where Mary and Joseph lose Jesus. At age 12. And they find him in the temple. You remember that. Have you ever wondered. What kind of parents were these.

That just let their 12 year old disappear. Now. This is the context. These songs. And these times. What happened is. Families traveled together. In huge caravans.

[47 : 50] For the sake of their protection. And men would stay up at night. If you had to sleep. There were no inns and motels to stay at. That you'd just be camping out. And men would stay up. I'll stay up from 12 to 4. You get from 4 to 8.

And then we'll journey on some more. So. So it was vulnerable. They needed protection. And. So they traveled together in large groups. And I think all that happened is. Mary and Joseph thought. Everybody thought. I thought Jesus was in your car. I. I'm sorry. I thought he was in grandma's van. I thought he was in uncle Tom's van. And it turns out. Nobody can find him anywhere. That's the. That wasn't bad parenting.

It was just. Real life. Family life. When you travel with a big group of people. And so. What happens next is. You can just imagine. They're traveling there.

Or they're traveling back. And I just picture some patriarch of the family. Praying for this blessing now. And what this part of the psalm does. You could just read it and say.

[48 : 44] Oh what a nice quaint Hebrew tradition. I think. I think what we're being pushed to here. Is to say. You know what could happen. Is you could narrow the way. Your life so much.

That it's just you and your little family. And now you've secured this thing. You're a God fearing man. And you've secured it. You've got it all going the way you want it. You've protected it. You've hemmed it in. And it's all going swimmingly. And then you can almost. Idolatrise it. Or just get your world so narrow. That you no longer have any broader gospel concern. And so the end of the song. Is saying. Look this blessing. Is not just for you. And your wife. And your kids. It's meant to extend through your lifetime. And into the next generations. And beyond you. To other people. Look I don't just want a happy family life.

So that I can enjoy it. I want to be a God fearing man. Who complies with God's word. Who has the kind of family. That has a gospel heritage. Beyond the family name of Murray.

[49 : 42] And so look. Look what happens in verse 5 and 6. We've gone from the condition for God's blessing on the home. Then you had the description of God's blessing. I just call this part.

The scope of God's blessing. It's bigger than you think. The gospel's at stake here. So look what he says. Where's the source of the blessing? Well the beginning of verse 5 makes it clear. The Lord bless you from Zion.

Any of this kind of blessing. And you have caught on now right. Verse 1 has the word blessing in it. Verse 4 has the word blessing in it. And verse 5 has the word blessing in it.

This is what's on the heart of the psalmist. The Lord will be the one. To bless you from Zion. What's Zion? Jerusalem. What's that all? It's the temple.

The place of the source of the glory of God. That's where the oracles of God would be spoken. That's where you would bring your sacrifices of worship. It's the center of your spiritual life.

[50 : 42] Which for them was a place. And for us as a person. For them it was a person and a place. The place part has been displaced now. As God calls us his temple.

We are now the strangely the seat of the glory of God that showered on us. But he says the Lord bless you from Zion. If you're singing it on the way there.

You're saying I can't wait to get there. And experience the blessing of God. That's inherent in the glory of God. Or if you're singing this on the way home. You're just saying wasn't it true?

Weren't we blessed? So the source of this blessed family life is the Lord. The source of the blessing. And now the rest of the psalm closes with the extent of the blessing. May the Lord.

May you. Rather verse 5. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem. All the days of your life. The extent of the blessing. How far does it reach?

[51 : 39] Throughout your whole life. That's the desire. That's the blessing. So the patriarch prays. As they sing together as a family. May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem.

All the days of your life. And then beyond your life. The scope of God's blessing. Look at verse 6. Indeed. Through your lifetime that's not enough.

Indeed may you see. Your children's. Children. I read these verses. Almost every time I pay a hospital visit.

To some couple who's just had a baby. And I remember the years when I couldn't imagine. What it would be like to see my children's. Children. And it is.

Amazing. And now we can't quite imagine. We have friends who have great grandkids. And now I'm trying to imagine. My oldest grandchild is 10 years old. I'd say. Danny. Can you imagine? Our grandson's name is Fox.

[52 : 35] Can you imagine Fox? Having a baby and being a dad? And she's like. Yes. I can. Maybe we see our children's children. Maybe we see our children's children's children.

In the New Testament. It's made explicit. That. Domestic holiness. Holiness at home. In the privacy of your family.

Is a gospel issue. That's why in Titus 2. Older women are to teach younger women. Because the gospel's at stake. The world. Is watching. Our imperfect families.

This fear in God. That we. The posture we put our hearts in. That then makes us a candidate for God. To just pour the blessings on our family.

Not perfection. Not nirvana. Not heaven yet. But as close to heaven as you're going to get. In family life here. This side of eternity. He doesn't pour that on us.

[53 : 31] Just for our enjoyment. But your family ought to stick out. Like a sore thumb. Whereas Paul said to the Philippians. You ought to shine like stars.

In a dark universe. Not by being. Externally pious. Not by being. Insistent on rules and regulations. But by a heart driven relationship with God. That's characterized. We can call it faith. We could call it fear. We could call it belief. But when you're living in that way.

The world looks at your family. And will see a difference. There's more than your mere happiness at stake here. So. This little psalm sits there innocently on your page.

Challenging us. To be God fearers. Then to experience the blessing in our family. That comes with that. Imperfect as it may be. Messy and complicated.

[54 : 29] And that's real family life. It still feels like herding cats. After all these years. It's not simple. It's not a Cinderella story. Everything doesn't end the way we'd like it.

It's confusing. And you know what God is using all that to do? To make you dependent. And humble. What if he just poured out blessings in absolute perfection? You know what you'd do with that?

You'd abuse it. And you'd neglect God. And say thank you very much. Appreciate the fruit. See you later. That's our heart. That's what we do. So instead he includes these weaknesses in it.

That just keep you clinging. As Jesus would say. Abiding in me. Staying vitally connected. Because you're desperate all the time. That's what it means to fear God. But it doesn't stop with you.

It extends to other generations. And ultimately your family is meant to be a witness to the world. Do you want to see what it looks like we're saying to the world? Do you want to see what it looks like for Jesus?

[55 : 27] Our Redeemer. To love an imperfect, unlovely people like us? Then just watch how our family treats each other when one of us is not at our best.

And we'll show you a little teeny micro portrait of the gospel. That's what it's all about. Not just your happiness. But your gospel witness in the world.

And it's all contingent in this psalm on one thing. Men leading homes. And as men who have faith that God is who he says he is.

I don't care what the optics say. And God will do what he says he will do. I don't care if it's been over 2,000 years since Jesus said he would come back. I believe he's coming back.

And that purges me from love of the world. And keeps me from rooting myself here too deeply.

That's what God is calling us to be as men. As women. As wives.

[56 : 25] As mothers. As husbands. As fathers. As grandmothers and grandfathers. As spiritual parents to others in this church who don't have believing parents. As spiritual grandparents to kids who would normally be in the nursery.

And instead they're in here with us today. That's what God is challenging. You want that? Don't look for the fruit of it without the root. The root is a vital God-fearing relationship.

And we can fear God and love him. Because Christ has removed the gnarly fear of punishment.

And all we're left with is a kind of awestruck worshiping hero worship.

That kind of fear of God. I heard a story once about a high schooler who was a Christian. And some unbelievers were tempting him to go astray.

And one young man said, I can't do that. My dad would kill me. So a non-believer just said, I'm not going to do it. So he left the party.

[57 : 29] And the believing young man said, I can't do that. It would kill my dad. That's the healthy fear. That's a fear of dad.

One is afraid his dad's going to kill him. The other is afraid, ah, break my dad's heart. That's the healthy fear you want to retain. That leads to this kind of family life. And all the blessing for you.

And the gospel witness in multiple generations that come with it. You want that? Who doesn't want this life? Avoid the temptation to try to imitate the fruit without pursuing the root.

Let's pray together. Gracious God, to know you is to love you and to fear you. And the fact that we have to work to wrap our minds around what does it mean to fear God, just means we don't know you as we ought to know you.

And so, Lord, thank you for telling us in Proverbs 2 that we'll never fear you. We'll never discover it. We'll never discern this healthy fear of you apart from Scripture.

[58 : 31] So help us press in to know you so that we can enjoy the fruit of this kind of family life and the powerful gospel witness that would come with it.

Do this for your glory and our good, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.