

# Work, Rest and Kids

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Psalm 127. As you're turning there, I want to encourage you tonight to take this psalm, and the way I look at this message is I think we're going to take some time to wrestle with this together, because this psalm, I believe, addresses some fundamental beliefs that are common to our society, common to our lives, but frankly, God may need to reshape them. At least that's what I believe God really has done in my life in a number of ways. You know, six years ago, I was like very, very, very, very close to being completely done with ministry, completely done.

Um, on the outside, you might not have known that, because, you know, I'm showing up, doing my job, doing the thing, but, um, man, on the inside, the dream was dead. Hope was gone. I firmly believed, and it took a couple years of God really just dealing with me in some very particular ways.

I firmly believed that God was done with me, and I believe that because I, I looked at, at my, my life and my work and said, um, man, God, I, this is up to me, and if I can't make it happen, then I am a failure, and there's no coming back from that.

And at the core of that is the idea that, ultimately, it all depends on me. Ultimately, if, if I cannot accomplish it, then I guess I couldn't cut it. I guess I couldn't make it.

You know, I knew at that time, and I could have told you this, I could have taught this, I could have showed you this, that the, the highest and the greatest motivation to, for, for all of our lives, uh, for, for our work, for our service to Jesus, for all of those things is, is motivated by love for Christ, that, man, we do what we do because we love Jesus. However, I did not truly believe that that was motivation enough.

[ 2 : 2 6 ] It wasn't enough motivation to accomplish things, right? Because people who accomplish things, people who get things done, they are driven to press through any obstacle, and they're, they're driven to make it happen because it ultimately depends on you.

You ever seen this pop up in life, pop up in what people say? Uh, as, as Pastor Trent and I were talking about this message and, and working through things, one of the things he shared with me was when he worked in a call center, and the manager would walk through the room and would say, listen, get a sale or work at Taco Bell. Get a sale or work at Taco Bell. And what's the messaging in that? What's the belief underneath that? If you can't cut it, you're a failure. You might as well go work at Taco Bell.

Is that not the messaging? In life, the belief is that there are winners and there are losers. And if you can't be a winner, then you're doomed to be a loser. And that's basically it. The belief is that the strongest motivation for people, for, for employees, or even this, this moves into, uh, children, right, is that you have to push people harder. Push, push, push, go, accomplish, do, succeed. Because if you don't have that, that push, that motivation, that oomph to, to get in there and, and grind it out and do whatever it takes to get it done, then you are a failure. You ever heard somebody say this? Maybe someone said this to you. These words are incredibly painful for a kid to hear.

Uh, you better do good at school, get good grades, or you'll end up like, fill in the blank. Usually it's uncle so-and-so. Why do uncles always get thrown under the bus?

You better make something of your life. Otherwise you'll, you'll end up like that person over there. And what's the belief? There's winners, there's losers. And if you don't have what it takes, you are a loser. Because ultimately it all depends upon you. That's a pretty miserable way to live.

[ 4 : 34 ] It really is. Because here's what happens. I think there's really only two conclusions to that idea that it's all up to you. Uh, some, uh, and I think this is where I got to, you come to the point where it's like, you know what? I don't think I can make it. I don't think I have what it takes. And so you live in defeat. It's all over. It's hopeless. There's no reason to, to, to, to dream, to believe that God can do something in your life. Uh, or you take it, you take that belief that it's all ultimately depends upon me. And that turns into drivenness where, uh, no matter the cost, I will strive for success regardless of the fallout in other areas of my life. It doesn't matter how my body suffers. It doesn't matter how, uh, my soul suffers. It doesn't matter how my family suffers. I have to achieve success.

And really, it's not even really so much about achieving success. It's running from failure because I don't want to end up like uncle so-and-so. That's what it's really about. Because ultimately, can you say it with me? It all depends upon you. Is that a biblical thought? Is that a, is that reality? Uh, I don't think God would say that. And I don't think God says that in Psalm 127.

Now there's nuance to that, right? Because obviously in the Bible, if man doesn't work, he should not eat. We've got to work, right? We've got to be diligent. Uh, there's so much in the scripture about that. However, there's a core belief that you might find underneath so much of what happens in your heart and soul. That ultimately, it all depends upon you. And I hope that God's word will dismantle that at some level, uh, tonight. And as you meditate on these scriptures, because here's the thing, um, I don't believe that's how God expects for us to live. Um, it's not reality and it's not how God designed us. Um, and I believe that what the Bible does is it shows us a more powerful motivation than pushing yourself harder or pushing others harder. Um, a more powerful motivation. And it took me a long time to believe that this truly was a more powerful motivator. And the more powerful motivator is this, is that, that our relationship with God can and should be the most powerful, motivating, and sustaining force in our lives. Think with me back to the Garden of Eden.

God creates Adam, places him in a garden, and gives him a job to do. And that work, right? Again, this is one of those things that we can't forget. Work happens when? Pre-fall or post-fall? Pre-sin, post-sin? Pre-sin, right? Pre-evil, pre-fall, God gave Adam work. And that was for meaning, that was for purpose, that was for fellowship with God, because Adam was to work in fellowship with God, in relationship with God to, uh, uh, carry out his responsibility within the creation. It was meaning, it was purpose.

And think about this, like, I don't, uh, I think it's, I don't know if it's even possible for us to imagine this, but try to imagine with me for a second. What would it be like to carry out your job, your work, your, your purpose in life, without restlessness, without worry, without fear, without competition, without insecurity, and without struggle? What would that be like?

[ 8 : 16 ] That's what it was. That's what it should have been. That was what it was designed to be, that Adam would live and work and, and, and do the, carry out the responsibility that God gave him in perfect relationship, in perfect harmony, in just a beautiful, wonderful world. But you might be saying, okay, great, so what? That was then, this is now. We obviously don't live in the Garden of Eden, uh, so what's, things are different, and you're right, things are different, right? What happens as a result of the fall? Uh, sorrow entered into work. Sorrow entered into work. God curses the ground and says, by the sweat of your face, you're going to toil and, and scratch out a living, scratch out survival in this world. It's no longer going to be, hey, let's go over to this tree and have this fruit, and just, it wasn't abundance, it was scarcity, and it was sorrow, and it was work. That's different than Eden. However, some things, I believe, are the same. Some things are the same, and here's the things that are the same. Your life, my life, still rests upon God. I want to say that again, because that's like core to this whole thing. I believe it's that the core of Psalm 127. Your life rests upon

God. My life rests upon God. That's one thing. Another thing is that you and I, we know this, we are meant to live in relationship to God. That daily, our lives, they, they come from a place of relationship with God, of, of closeness with God. And finally, your life, my life, can be full of peace and joy in the middle of work. In the middle of work. Because in reality, we're not alone. We're not left alone.

God is with us in our work. He is there, and it's a good thing, because here's the thing about God. He is far more capable than you and I will ever be. And so that's a really good thing, that God is with you in your work, with you in your life. Second, He loves you far more than you can understand.

That's one of those things that also is highlighted in this passage, that just love, we're going to get to this in a second. I keep referring to it. We need to read it, don't we? We need to get there. He loves you far more than you can understand. He's with you, and He loves you. And so we can live and work from a place of restfulness. Let's read Psalm 127.

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh, but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so He giveth His beloved sleep. Lo, children are in heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gates. And so tonight, if you care to write down a title, here's the title. And this is just a conundrum to me. Work, rest, and children.

[ 11 : 29 ] Especially rest and children, and work and rest, they don't go together. But I believe that's all mixed together in this passage. Let's pray. Father, we come to you tonight. God, we just ask that you would help us to grasp and get a hold of what you have for us from Psalm 127. Lord, I pray that any lies that we might be believing about the way life really is, that God, you would dismantle those.

And you would help us to find that higher, greater, stronger, more powerful motivation where we follow you and carry out the duties and the responsibilities of our life from a place of rest and from a place of dependence upon you. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

As we've been going through these pilgrim Psalms, there's a cycle that Pastor Trent mentioned in the very beginning. And that cycle is trouble, trust, and then triumph. And in this, it's kind of amazing as you study through this and think about those three themes. Trouble, trust, triumph. This Psalm comes right in the middle of that. It's a trust Psalm. It's a trust Psalm. It's all about dependence. It's all about trusting God. And this passage is going to talk about trusting God, sleeping, and children.

Now, if you're like me, you've probably heard this Psalm in two sections. Either it's the first two verses, right, except the Lord built the house, or it's the last couple of verses where it talks about children and arrows, right? We've heard those separated. But the thing that kind of blew my mind is like, they're right there together. They go together. How do they go together? Well, it's all about trusting God, depending on God. And so the first thing that I'd like to ask you to take note of is this, that my life, your life, rests completely upon God. And that's where we're going to start.

Our lives rest completely upon God. Would you read back with me verses one and two one more time? It says, except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh, but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Now, think about the things that are taking place right there. And we need to walk through these a little bit quickly. It says, unless, except God builds the house, if we're working on the house, nothing's going to happen. It's vain.

[ 13 : 56 ] We can work and build and put all of our effort into a project of construction, of creating something useful. But if God does not build that house, our work is vain. It's empty. It's worthless. It's futile.

And he also says, except the Lord keep the city, unless God protects the city, the watchman, again, this is, we got to think Bible times, right? We're not thinking about coming. Coming doesn't have a wall. But oftentimes when you're talking about Bible cities, the idea is homes, authority, trade, protected by a wall. Because you don't want animals coming and eating you or eating your stuff, your livestock or whatever. And you don't want your enemies coming with swords and spears and arrows and killing you. And so the idea of the city is wall, protection, defense. You put people up on the wall in shifts so that if an enemy comes, you can protect yourself, that you have a chance to survive in this world. And he says, listen, you can have the best protection. You can have people who watch.

But if God does not protect your city, it's all worthless. Might as well not even worry about it. Because if God doesn't protect it, it won't be protected. So he says, it all rests upon God.

Now, there's a part of this that we can't forget. Because what did he say? Unless, except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Are there people building? There are, right?

And they are building. And God is assuring that this construction project has value in meaning and has substance and has value in the world. So we can't neglect the building, right? Because if there's no one building, a house will not be built. We build, God builds. He says, listen, watching.

[ 15 : 52 ] There are watchers. There are people who should watch. And it's amazing that that term watch is used so often in the New Testament, especially related to spiritual things, how that we're to watch over our lives, how the church is watching spiritually and all of these things. There are watchers and God is watching. And that's the two ideas put together. I build, God builds. I watch, God watches. It doesn't mean that I get a, get out a, what do you call that, get out of jail free card.

Like I don't have to, I can abandon my responsibility. That's not how this works. But it brings our work, our labor into perspective that my whole life, what I'm trying to build, what I'm trying to protect, it really all depends upon God. Man, I'm going to build, I'm going to protect the very best I can, but I'm going to trust God in the process. That's the idea there. And then he goes on in verse two, where he says, listen, it's, it's vain for you to, what does he say? To rise up early, to sit up late.

It's kind of amazing where he says, you can try to stretch out the day, but he says that's vain. Now, why is he going to say that's vain? Let's continue reading. To sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Isn't this a thing that we see and hear in, you know, you know, in the culture around us that's, hey, you need to make sure, like if you're going to be successful, again, this goes back to the idea of it all depends upon you.

If you're going to be successful, you better be the first one in and the last one out. You better not sleep. People said stuff like, what do they say? I'll sleep when I'm dead, right? Right? Sleeps for wimps, sleeps for losers, right? We are going to rise up early. We're going to sit up late. We're going to push out the boundaries of the day. You see, here's the thing about sleep.

Think about this with me for a second. God designed us to need sleep, to run on sleep. Okay, if you sleep seven, eight hours, roughly one third of your life will be spent unconscious, immobile, and helpless.

[ 18 : 09 ] Okay? Has anyone ever taken a small child out of a car seat when they're sleeping? How many of y'all have had that experience? Okay? If you've not had that experience, it's really interesting. It's kind of fun too. Although, maybe that's just me. But you pick this little person up and they're just passed out, right? They're just asleep. And my favorite thing to do is this, just like lift up the hand. This is the test. How asleep are they? You just drop in, just, I mean, limp. They're out.

They don't even know what's going on. It's like, how'd I get in my bed? I mean, I don't know what's happening. That's you and that's me when we're asleep. Helpless. Powerless. I mean, we're not doing anything. We're just laying there. Probably annoying if you're, you know, if your spouse just gets annoyed with you, right? Because you're snoring. I don't have that problem, but someone else might. One third of your life and my life is going to be spent in that state. What does that teach us about how God desires for us to operate? God, he's the one that does not slumber and does not sleep.

Right. Psalm 121 talks about how he's the one who protects Israel and he doesn't go to bed. He's always watching. He's always available. He's always powerful. Even when we're just, you know, we're that kid that's just, I mean, we can't do anything in that time. And so look at what he says. He says, it is unwise, it's vain for you to try and push beyond the natural boundaries that God has established in your life. Could it be that when we are neglecting rest, we are doing it from a place of not trusting God?

Because it all depends upon me. And so I better get up early, stay up late, work hard on everybody else. I got to make it happen because it all depends upon me. He says, no, it doesn't. If God doesn't build, it doesn't get done. If God doesn't watch, it's not protected. And so you know what? In your building, in your watching, it's God. And so when it's time to sleep, you can go to sleep.

Did you notice what he said in that verse? He said, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. That's a pretty wild verse. He gives to each one of us, every day, Lord willing. I mean, sometimes there's sometimes when you just can't sleep for, for nothing. And those are, those are rough days and they make for the next day makes rough.

[ 20 : 41 ] But every day God's giving to his children, the ones he loves sleep. That's a gift from God. And it's a gift that's not to be rejected or to be belittled. It's really a gift to be embraced and say, man, God, thank you that man, I'm for the next eight hours, I'm out, I'm gone. I ain't going to be doing nothing. But God, you're awake and you're working and you're doing things that I can't do.

Thank you, Lord. Did you notice what else he said in that verse? It's vain for you to rise up early, simply to eat the bread of sorrows. I believe this speaks to the idea that just like people eat bread, right? We, we take this thing and we shove it in our face, all right? We, we consume it, okay?

Just like we eat bread physically, there is a way that people like you and me can take sorrows and just start chomping away on those sorrows. And the idea is that these are things that you don't have to eat. You don't have to eat the bread of sorrows. Yes, we need to work. Yes, we need to labor. Yes, we need to do our responsibilities. But there are worries. There are problems. There are unforeseen circumstances that are way beyond my control and they're way beyond your control. And so for me to sit there and take all these sorrows and just shove them in my mouth and ruminate on them and think about them and worry about all the problems and the things that could go wrong and might go wrong and there might be an asteroid or, you know, there's all these things, right? I can take all these things and just shove them in my mouth. He says, put the bread of sorrows down. It's vain for you to eat the bread of sorrows because God is awake. God is working. God is watching. You go to sleep, go to bed, enjoy some rest because that is God's gift to the ones he loves. That's pretty wild, is it not? Now, we need to take the last couple minutes and talk about how does this, how does this relate to kids, right? Because he goes on and he talks about how children are a heritage of the Lord. They're his reward. They're all these things. Now, again, think about what goes, what is the common thread between all these things, between the building, between the watching, and between the kids. They all come from God. They all depend upon

God. Now, I do want to say something that I think is really important to say any time we talk about this, this topic, that, you know, children are a gift from God, because it might be that just those words just really stir up some turmoil in your heart, where it's like, man, I wanted to have children, or I expected that I could, should have children, but it's just, for whatever reason, it ain't happened.

I think one of the mistakes we make is we say, okay, if children are a gift from God, then that means that no children is a curse from God. And I don't think that's the idea of what's going on here.

[ 23 : 39 ] He's saying, listen, just like it's all, building, it all depends upon God. Watching, it all depends upon God. Children, that all, that depends upon God. It all depends upon God. All of our lives depend upon God. And God is the one who comes to us in, in the, the most difficult and painful parts of our lives. And he shows up in those moments, and he knows us, and he cares about us. He knows you, he loves you, and he knows your pain. And so please, please don't, don't go there where it's like, okay, well, if children are a gift from God, then no children is a curse from God. I don't think that's the idea of what God's trying to get across. What he's trying to say is, listen, in all of life, no matter what domain it is, we got to depend upon him. We got to depend upon him. That's the message here. That's the thrust here. That's the idea for the people in, in, in Bible times, and even many places of the world today. And even this might be a spoken or unspoken expectation, even in our own families. Children were also a source, a source of like retirement, a source of protection. Did you notice that there in the last part? He says, they're like arrows in the hands of a mighty man. These are the children of the youth are like this. They will, they will, the, the man will meet his enemies in the gate and he won't be ashamed. Why won't he be ashamed? Because it's almost like, think about somebody like Jacob, Israel, right? He had those 12 sons. If he goes up and talks to somebody in the gate, he's got 12 boys behind him, backing him that are ready to take up for their dad and they're ready to fight and they're ready to, to do whatever it takes to take care of the family. That's like another layer of protection, right? We even might say it today, like a safety net, right? Family is kind of like a safety net for when things go really bad. And so he's saying, listen, all of these things, all of our life, our future, our posterity, it's all in the hands of God. So will you decide to depend upon him? And that's really what this whole thing comes down to.

Do you believe that it all depends upon you? Or will you trust God deeply to the point of being able to lay your head down at night and just sleep, just rest, to put down the bread of sorrows and to say, God, I, I believe that my whole life, my whole life, it all rests on you. Yeah, I'm going to show up.

I'm going to build. I'm going to watch. I'm going to do all the things that I need to do, but I'm going to do them from a place of, of resting upon you, resting in you and receiving the, the sustenance that comes from that relationship with God. Namely in this passage, sleep. How funny is that? That God says, listen, you know what I got for you tonight? I got a pillow and I've got a, a, a, a heart that can rest and not be anxious because you know what? While you're sleeping, I'm awake and I've got everything you've need. So that's really the, the application tonight. You know, Jesus said it this way, come unto me all you, ye that are labor, that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Those are good verses. Now it might be that if you, you believe that lie that it all depends upon you, I think it really can only kind of end up in one of two categories. You might be here tonight and you're defeated. Like, you know what? I've been told that I can't measure up and you know what? Uh, I believe it. I ain't going to be able to cut it. And so I'm just going to give up on trying. I think what Jesus wants to say to you is come to me. I will give you rest and get in the yoke with me because that's the other part of this passage, right? He says, take my yoke upon you. You see, the thing about Jesus is he's not relieving us of our responsibility, but he's encouraging us, strengthening, strengthening us and holding us up and saying, listen, you don't have to live defeated. You can get in the yoke with me, follow my leading, rest when I tell you to rest and let's go. I've got something for you. And it might be that you're here tonight and you're driven, driven, driven, where it's like, I have got to make it happen no matter the cost. I think what Jesus wants to say to you is come to me. You're there weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. You don't have to live from a place of rising up early, sitting up late, eating the bread of sorrows. He wants to give you sleep. Don't reject the gift, the love gift that God wants to give you. Rest in him, rest in him. Would you bow with me this evening? Father, we come to you and we just thank you for your word. And Lord, we ask you to help us as we grapple with these things because we swim in waters that tell us that it's all up to us. In a sense, it's like a practical atheism. It all depends upon me. But the fact of the matter is,

I'm not the Almighty. You are the Almighty. You've given me a role and responsibility. And I'm to work in relationship, in dependence upon you.