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A Home Blessed of the Lord By Jeff Noblit

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Grab your Bibles and go to Psalm 128. Would you do that? Psalm 128 is a Psalm of ascent. It's one of the Psalms that was written and sung by the Jews as they're returning from captivity back into the Promised Land. It's a very simple, straightforward truth, but in effect, the Jews were singing the kind of Psalms to remind them of what it takes to have a blessed land and be a blessed people and that all builds on having a blessed home. That's what this is about, a home blessed of God. A home blessed of God. Let's look at it. Very simple, very straightforward but we need it for our day when our culture is believing everything but the truth about the home, believing everything but the truth about marriage, about children. So let's look at it afresh. Psalm 128, beginning in verse 1.

1 How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. 2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you. 3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. 4 Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD. 5 The LORD bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. 6 Indeed, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel!

So let's look at this together, just unpacking it this way. I., a home that is blessed of God is a home that has a father that fears the Lord. It starts with the father. It starts with the head of the household and we know he's talking to fathers here because in verse 3 he refers to "your wife." So he's really addressing this to the heads of the household though, of course, the admonition is for all of them there, and subpoint A under a father that fears the Lord is he has a faith in the Lord. He has a faith in the Lord. His faith rests and resides there.

Now, the word "fears the LORD" in our text, "How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD," is that concept of loving, devoted reverence. A father needs to be one that when his wife looks at him or the children look at him, they say to themselves, he reverences the Lord. He's not perfect. No father's perfect. But he fears the Lord, not in a fear of holy terror, though there is a sense of trembling before the Lord for all of us, but that he deeply respects the things of God. It's a loving fear. You see, there's no faith where there's no fear of God, and there's no faith without the fear of God. If you fear God, it means above

everyone else, all other opinions, all other viewpoints, I fear God and respect God. A humble father. You see, loving fear is the strongest motive to obedience. We are just convinced as fathers, God and God alone has wisdom. Let God be found true and every man be found a liar. That's where we reside.

Now men may stumble upon some of God's truth, but it begins with God. He's the God of all truth and God of all wisdom and happy is the home where the fear of God is the regulating principle. Fathers, that fear the Lord, they have to have faith and it says here, "blessed is everyone who fears the LORD." So that means it applies to any father, anywhere, anytime. You can fear the Lord. You can have faith in the Lord. You don't have to be of a certain lineage or a certain heritage or uh some aristocratic background or some personal esteem, or a right part of the neighborhood. It just doesn't matter. Any father that wants to honor the Lord can honor the Lord and so it's for everyone. Some say, "Well, now I I I'm from a bad family." Well, well, Isaiah said God is the God who gives beauty for your ashes. A lot of us are from, quote, bad families. "Well, I'm not educated." Well, neither was Peter or John, yet they became leading apostles for the Lord Jesus Christ. There are fathers who say, "Yes, but I've I've squandered a lot of my life and I've failed and I've lived selfishly and in pride and in sin." He's the God of the second chance. No, the third chance and the fourth chance, and the hundredth chance. Aren't you glad of that?

So it's a father who who has faith in the Lord. Secondly, a father that fears the Lord is a father that trusts in the ways of the Lord. He's a father who knows God works in mysterious ways, but that God has revealed much about how he works. He's a father who trusts the ways of the Lord. As Adrian Rogers says sometimes that we know the works of the Lord, but he said, yes, but wait a minute, do you know the ways of the Lord? We can all look at the Bible and see the marvelous works of the Lord from creation all the way through the coming of his Son, all the way forward to the the revelation when he comes and unfolds the eternal state. The works of the Lord are marvelous, but a father who fears the Lord is a father who's learning to walk in and trust in the ways of the Lord.

Can I just give you this as one of the foundational elements of the ways of the Lord? He's a father who knows that God loves us with an eternal love. Our God is a God who loves us with an unconditional love. All fathers need to walk in that before their children. They need to exhibit that confidence before our children. He's a God who loves us with a correcting love. He humbles us. He brings us low. He brings us to the end of ourselves, but only out of his eternal and unconditional love for our good. We understand the ways of the Lord that even those things that seem to us bad, God is working together for our good and his own glory. Understanding the ways of the Lord and he loves us with a joy producing love because we know all these things are working together for the good to those who love him and are called according to his purposes.

Trusting in the ways of the Lord, he uses the word walks. It means in our everyday life, "Who walks in His ways," last part of verse 1. It means that we follow the dictates of Scripture in our lives. We don't look to this world, we look to God's word. What does God's word say? When it comes to the decisions about our household, about our children, about our time priorities, what does the word say? That's a home that's blessed of the Lord who has a father who trusts the ways of the Lord.

You know, we have a weak nation because we have weak churches and, my, do we have weak churches. I saw the United Methodist Church in their annual national meeting the other day, and each person that got up had to tell which pronouns they were referred to by, as if God hadn't already given them their pronouns. What's happening in our culture, folks? Falling apart. We have weak nations because we have weak families and we have weak families because we have weak fathers, and we have weak fathers because we have weak pastors who are not leading the men according to the word of God. It always works that way.

Fathers need to model the life of faith before the family and that means being humble and honest when we mess up and when we fail. I've said it many times, but I think it's so foundational to raising children: you need to tell your children when you mess up. You need to ask them to forgive you when you mess up and remind them, "You see, daddy needs a Savior too." Amen? Daddy needs a Savior too. That's true of Jeff Noblit and that's true of all of us. That's the kind of faith and trust and trusting in the ways of the Lord we need to model. You see, you can't teach the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, it's hard to teach that, but you can model it. You can model it and let them see it. We want our wives and our children to see authenticity in our lives so that they themselves will desire to honor the Lord.

Well, hurrying on, a a father who fears the Lord is a father who has faith in the Lord. He's a father who trusts in the ways of the Lord and he's also gloriously and wondrously a father who receives the favor. He receives the favor of the Lord. Look at verse 2. If a man is like this, it has an influence on his wife and God begins to turn her heart to the things that matter most. "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house and your children like olive plants around your table." You see, a holy home is a happy home. Let me say that again. Your goal is not to have a happy home, your goal is to have a holy home. A holy home is a happy home. He says, the fruit, your wife shall be like a fruitful vine and uh uh the producing of more than children, I know that's very foundational, but the producing of many things in the home that are blessing to all that are there.

You see, God will bless you not just in the amount of stuff perhaps that he gives you, but in the realization that you've honored the Lord and he's blessed you and blessed your home because you have honored the Lord. This is a man who has plenty, he has sufficiency. He's a man that does not have to go around as a regular pattern living off the charity of others. Listen, a man that's always living off the charity of others is a man who has a spiritual problem. It's a spiritual problem. That's why we can't fix the homeless problem in our country and all of our major cities around our country that have this horrible problem because there's spiritual roots to these things. Matter of fact, I don't know what percentage, but there's a good percentage of people living on the streets that need to hear this simple admonition from the word of God: if you don't work, you don't eat. Miss a few meals and all of a sudden um you'll be able to to work again. Now we should have compassion, of course we should, but some of these people are are seriously mentally uh ill, if you will, and there should be love and compassion, but a whole lot of our problems are because we are not addressing the spiritual heart problem. Our text again points out that the man who's right with God, he is blessed and he is prosperous and his his home is blessed. This man is the man who eats the bread of the blessings of God, and those are much sweeter than the bread of the charity of other men.

So not only is a home that's blessed of God, a home that uh has a father who fears the Lord, but secondly, has a mother whose ministry is the home. Doesn't mean she's locked up in the house all day long. Doesn't even mean that she can't have some sort of employment outside the home, that that's between you and your husband and the word of God. But it means her ministry, her heart, her devotion, her joy is in her home. Notice what it says here in verse 2 again, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your home." Now I think there's a contrast here when you think about it. The ungodly woman, the immoral woman in in Proverbs chapter 7, verse 11 says, she is boisterous and rebellious and her feet do not remain at home. She wants to run and chase this, and she wants to run and chase that, and she wants to run and chase this and that, and when she has time, she'll piece in her devotion to her home. Nothing wrong with the lady doing a lot of things outside of the house, particularly, the Proverbs 31 woman had enterprising things all over the place, but they all were an extension of her chief and continual devotion to her home. Her home, her ministry is the home. Her heart is on her husband. Her heart is on her children. Her heart is on her home. She's of noble quality and of spiritual maturity. She possesses character and specifically the character of self-discipline to pour her time, her talents and her energies toward her husband, her children, her home.

Listen, if the home is not properly run, the fabric of society begins to unravel. If the home is not particularly and carefully taken care of, then that will slosh over to a devolution, if you will, need a word, I make one up, of the culture itself. If our country is falling apart, listen to me, our homes fell apart first. Our homes fell apart first, and then our country falls apart. Uh I'm going to vote for Republicans in this next election. My grandfather told me he he only voted for one Democrat his whole life, but he had to, it was his third cousin. Now now I matter of fact, I I'd like to go back and get some of those old Democrats. I could almost vote for some of them, but the new ones are crazy. But no Republican's going to fix this country. Donald Trump Trump is not my champion. He's on his third wife. He's got a little homework to do himself, but he's the best choice I have. Amen? He's better for the church and he's better for the nation than that other bunch. At least he still knows what a man is and a woman is.

If the country is falling apart, the home fell apart first. I read some time ago that most teenage pregnancies occur between the hour of three and five o'clock in the afternoon because daddy's not home and mama's not home. Keeping the home is a real tough job. If you have a job outside the home, then you've got two jobs. I've told you ladies for years, I think most of you have too much on you. You've just got too much. And I marvel over some of you. There's some super women in this church. Uh you do such a good job, I don't know how you do what you do, but be careful modeling yourself after superwoman because there's only a few of those. The rest of us are pretty mortal.

There was a study done in a major university not long ago that said that modern women today have a 65% greater chance than usual of being depressed. All of this feminism and all of this liberalism and all of this throwing away God's ideal, all of this this throwing away of God's wisdom, women can get out there and mix it up in the the world of men and do just as good as men. That's not the the question. The question is, does it please God and does it bless them? And the women who are buying into that lie are more miserable, more unsettled, more anxiety-ridden, and more depressed than ever before. A lot of our ladies just have too much on them. A lot of you men need to help get that fixed.

We need God's blessing on this generation. Studies at Yale and Columbia and Rutger University show that today's older adults born into relative affluence and peace and health are not at all happy people because we're not doing things God's way. We're not living in homes blessed of God. And the rate of clinical depression among 15 to 24 year olds has tripled since my generation, since I was a young man. Tripled because homes are not the way God intended them to be and homes are not being blessed of God and it has a negative reciprocal relationship.

Well, a home that is blessed of God has a father who fears the Lord fears the Lord, has a mother whose ministry is the home, and thirdly, some fruits of the blessed home, some fruits of the blessed home. Notice he he lists three things here I want to point out. First of all, notice well-adjusted children. Well-adjusted children. In verse 3 again, "Your children like olive plants around your table." Now to you that might be an odd thing, but it was a normal thing in the ancient homes of the Israelis. Uh it it meant olive plants that were pruned and and layered and and flourishing. Flourishing. And the olive plant was a particularly luxurious plant, so just pleasant and pleasing and healthy and flourishing children is what this is picturing. The children prosper as a result of parents fulfilling their God-given responsibilities.

You know, about 50 years ago, our children lost their innocence as they gave into the sexual revolution. About 40 years ago, our children lost authority as they all decided, we'll be our own authority. About 30 years ago, our children lost their ability to love anyone as the "me first" thing. And boy, that one has just kept going and going and going. Self first. And about 20 years old ago and up until today, our children have now lost hope. Hope. I think we're seeing a a something of a revival. Have you been seeing some of the revivals on the college campuses going way into the night and all these students being baptized? And I'm not saying I would do it that way, but I'm not going to criticize it. I thank God, I thank God that children, young people, college age people are looking at what mom and dad did and they said, "I don't think, I love mom and dad, but I don't think they they were hitting on all cylinders perhaps. I I see what my professors are telling me and that's bizarre and weird. We gotta get back to something that is of an objective moral standard and authority, not subjective." So maybe God's doing something. Maybe we're circling back to revisit our roots a little bit more.

But these children of of Psalm 128, because of the dad's commitment, because of the mom's commitment, it's a home blessed of God and the children are vigorous and healthy

and strong both spiritually, emotionally and and physically. Now don't look at this as a law, this is not an absolute. We are all grieved that there's some of the finest parents I know have a rebellious child sometimes, that does happen. But generally speaking, when the home is right, the children do their best. It was just a recent study that showed that children of conservative parents, that is parents who are more likely to live these principles, are far less depressed than the children of more liberal parents.

Well, well-adjusted children. Secondly, another fruit is uh a prosperous and blessed nation. There's only one way to have that prosperous and blessed nation and that's to have homes in that nation that are blessed of God. Notice how he words it here in verse 5, "The LORD bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life." Think for a moment with me. If half of the parents of our nation got serious about dads being dads who fear the Lord, about moms being moms who say my ministry first and foremost is my home, meaning my husband, my children, if half of our homes returned to those convictions, we could erase a whole great swath of the problems that we're struggling with in this country today. That's where it starts. That's where it starts. In 10 years, we could see a miraculous revolutionary change for the better in our country if we return to the simple... Look, is anything more simple or straightforward than this, these simple, basic truths? We believe the lies of the devil and then our our marriages crumble, our our emotional health begins to crumble, our children do not do well.

Well, a prosperous and blessed nation is one of the fruits. Well-adjusted children, a prosperous and blessed nation. And thirdly, the fruit is blessings that exceeds or rather extends to succeeding generations. Blessings that extend to succeeding generations. Look at verse 6, "Indeed, may you see your children's children." I'm seeing some of that. Oh, what a joy it is. "Peace be upon Israel!" John said in 3 John 1:4, "I have no greater joy than to hear my children walking in the truth." You know, something used to intrigue me. I would I would read this and study this and I would preach this and I would go somewhere and I'd meet meet a family or two somewhere. I don't know what it might be, but somewhere, uh sometimes it's on an airplane or something and I'd be talking to a fella and he'd be talking about his wife and how well his kids are doing, and and obviously there were some good character traits and respect and love and sweetness in that home, and and yet the man's lost as a goat in a hailstorm. He didn't know the Lord. And I think, now wait a minute. Here's here's a home that seems to be wonderfully blessed, but they don't know the Lord. In every single case, mark my words, you can ask a person, who was it, your parents or your wife's parents that were devoted Christians? Or maybe one of your grandparents were devoted Christians. Somewhere there was a godly influence that started that lineage starting. It's always true. It's always true.

In finishing this up, I I was just thinking and meditating on what's happening in our our culture and thinking about motherhood and children and you won't find this in any book, but let me let me give you eight things about children. It's going to be quick. Eight things about children. Now let me preface it by saying this. A a few years ago in a survey, they found that young people who have far less money than older people, yet spend twice as much on themselves as anyone else, or any other demographic you could say. Twice as

much. That's because we're in this self-is-king generation. We live in this self-absorbed culture where duty and responsibility as given by our Creator has become taboo. It's all about self-advancement. It's all about self-realization, self-actualization, self-esteem. On and on and on we can go. Children, therefore, are now viewed not as a part of God's plan, but children today have become a an optional personal preference. "We will have children," they say, "if we deem it convenient compared with more important things in our lives." No wonder it is true that the percentage of women who have never had children has doubled in the last 40 to 50 years. Folks, that's astounding. Doubled. They tell us in six years, in six years, there'll be more motherless women than women who have children. Folks, that is astonishing when you know that God gave women that high and glorious and holy calling of bearing children. How rapidly and wholesale we're moving away from God's design for our lives. Since self-advancement and selffulfillment is is now the God of our lives, we just, so many deem children as just being in the way. John MacArthur's right, he just wrote a new book called "The War on Children," and that's where we are. This is a time when children are regarded as an optional accessory to maybe the good life, or maybe an obstacle to it completely.

Well, that's what this world thinks about children. What does the Bible say about children? You need to remember these eight things and Brother Nathan went by and he jot these down and he used these some in our parenting. Number one, the Bible says that children are a gift from God. They're a gift from God. Psalm 127 verse 3, "children are a gift of the LORD." And my friend, to refuse a gift that God has given you, to view it with ingratitude would be a sin. If God says something is good and is a gift, who are we to usurp his authority and believe and practice otherwise? Children are gifts from God.

Secondly, same verse, children are a reward from God. It's God's reward to you. They are precious. They're not in the way. They're not a difficulty. They're not a problem. They're not a hindrance to your self-actualization or realization in this life. They're your reward from God. The Bible says God only gives good gifts and if he gives a reward, it's a good and needful reward and we should gladly receive this reward and glory in this reward. Psalm 127, verse 3, "The fruit of the womb is a reward." Again, if God in his infinite wisdom and eternal love for you gives you an exceedingly good reward, and by the way, that's the only kind of reward he can give, an exceedingly good reward, then how foolish it would be for us to reject such a reward. Psalm 128, our very text, verses 3 and 4, reminds us, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine Within your house, Your children like olive plants Around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD."

Number three, not only a gift and not only a reward, but children, thirdly, are a stewardship. At the end of the day, brothers and sisters, your children don't belong to you, they belong to God. They're given to you to raise for him. They're given to you to be raised for him. "Well, I feel I need to raise my children this way." I don't care what you feel. God tells you how to raise your children. "Well, I think this is best that..." Well, there's a lot of things we can have a difference of opinion on. You may raise yours to be Auburn fans. You may raise raise yours to be Alabama fans, but that that doesn't matter. There's some essential foundational things that we don't have a vote on because God's

wise and they belong to him. 2 Corinthians 12:14, stewardship. "Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children." They're a stewardship from God, care for them, to love them, to feed them, to protect them, to joy in them, to treasure them, and to raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4, that's our stewardship.

So let me say to all of you moms and dads here, all of you with these precious brand new babies, teach your children the things of God at home. Teach them the things of God within your household. I've asked Brother Nathan to to to pull out the old Baptist Catechism. We're gonna get it together again and I want all you moms and dads to take that Baptist Catechism home. Don't use it as a a legalistic thing or don't make it a burden, but it gives you something to talk with your children about, to pour into them the great truths of God's word. Teach them within the home. Protect them. Protect them from the ungodliness of the culture.

Brothers and sisters, your children have no business ever having free access to the internet. Ever. Do not do it. Take it away today. And when they say, "Why are you taking this away?" Because Brother Jeff told me to. Come bring them, let them talk to me. No, wait a minute. Come bring them in, let them talk to Brother David Young. Don't do it. Protect them. Protect them. And pour your lives, pour your lives, dads, into a solid Biblebelieving, glory-of-God-focused, Christ-honoring, Bible-saturated local church. You need the influence of the other families who love Jesus to help you in this journey. They're a stewardship.

Number four, they're a gift from God, they're a reward from God, they're a stewardship from God, they're progenitors given to us from God. They're progenitors. That means God gave them to us that they might have more children and fill the earth and particularly for us, fill the earth with God-fearers. Fill the earth with those who love Christ. In Genesis 1:27 and 28, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."' God gave us children so those children would have children, and those children would have children, and it would stain sustain the human race on this very planet.

You know, the uh the Chinese decided for a few decades there that they're gonna have a one child policy. They thought we got too many people, one child policy. And so abortion was rampant and now very serious thinkers are saying that China has a very serious problem. They don't have enough young people to take care of the old generation. Every time you think you're getting ahead of God, you're smarter than God, it backfires on you. And you know right now in America today, married couples are averaging 1.6 children per married couple. We're not replenishing our own selves. That's gonna show up in about 10, 15 years when you get on Social Security and not enough workers paying in Social Security to keep it afloat. God said be fruitful and multiply. Folks, it's part of our duty to do that. They're progenitors.

Number five, they're preachers. Oh, what good preachers our babies are sometimes. Matthew 18:3 and he said, Jesus says, "Truly I say to you, unless you're converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." He says watch this child, this child will preach to you. They'll teach you what you need to know. Uh Miss Pam could tell us the exact words, but I remember one time one of our girls went up the steps, she was just a little bitty, but she went up the steps because Pam or I, one, had a bad attitude, and she went up the step quoting the verse we quote to her when she has a bad attitude. They're little preachers and little creatures. They are used of God to reprove us, to rebuke us, to correct us, and no more clearly than when they act like us and we see our reflection. God gives us children, we need them, gives us little preachers.

They're evangelizers, number six. Psalm 78 verse 6, "That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, That they may arise and tell them to their children." We've got to train them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. We've got to reach them with the gospel. We've got to bring them to the place. Of course, we can't do it, but we can be instruments God would use so that the Spirit of God and the gospel of Christ apprehends their precious hearts and from a young age, they begin enjoying and treasuring in Jesus so they will teach the same thing to their children. Evangelizers. We're raising little evangelizers. You see how important children are? How foolish we are when we don't treasure these precious gifts and rewards from the Lord.

Well, they're our strength and our protection. Our strength and our protection, number seven. Psalm 127 verses 4 and 5, "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; They will not be ashamed When they speak with their enemies in the gate." You know, the kind of the tongue-in-cheek thing, well, how many is a quiver full? It all depends on whether your last name's Clotfelter or not. But they have good children, so they did a great job. But the point is the strength. I I remember my my maternal grandmother was about as simple a country woman as you'll ever find. I mean, country country. She had 16 children. Four died in childbirth. Most of them girls. But she so devoted herself to that home, to her husband, to loving those babies, when she got older, her life was surrounded with strength and protection. Those alpha female daughters, buddy, you didn't mess with mama. She was taken care of. I remember so distinctly when she was just probably just a few months before passing. Every time I went over there, three to five of those daughters, they're caring for her. They're like arrows in your quiver for your protection and your strength. We need children. As far as I'm concerned at Grace Life Church, the more the better. The more the better.

Number eight, they're miracles. They're just, every one of them's a miracle of God. Have you seen the little video out? You know, you don't know what you see on these things if it's all real, but I I'm convinced it is. Well, they show the the sperm fertilizing an egg in the moment, the moment it happens, there's a flash of light as if God just steps in and puts his special miracle touch on it because it's a human being, listen, made in the image of God. They're miracles, miracles of God.

Well, I just jotted that down probably in 15 minutes but we would be good to remember when our culture tells us these these are obsolete little uh uh uh options, these children, they might get in your way, they might trouble you, they're not in your way, they're not troubling you, they're not a problem, they're the plan of God and may we glory in the wisdom and goodness and plan of God.

Just one quick word and I'm gonna close. I don't have a number nine because I don't want to list it with this list. Just make sure you don't make them idols. Don't worship your children. Don't live your life through your children. Don't make them the center of the universe. You know what you'll find out? Now, this is this is profound. Are you ready? If you make your child the center of the universe, they'll grow act up acting like they're the center of the universe and nobody will want to be around them. Oh, love them with all you got but love them and teach them the ways of God and the things of God and the truths of God and to treasure God, and I promise you and I think we have a strong track record somehow in the grace of God, we have a strong track record, we've given you the arena and the environment of this church to make your children the the children of God. I can't guarantee that but we've worked hard to keep this church the kind of place where you can raise your children for the glory of God. I tell young couples, I say this all the time when they're considering membership here. I say, "Well, you know what? Grace Life Church is a good place to raise your children and here's why: because what we are is what we have been and what we are and what we have been is what we're going to be. We don't chase fads. We don't chase gimmicks. We don't chase this latest new thing. We go back to a 2,000 year old book and that's what we're going to follow to raise our children for the glory of God."

Happy Mother's Day. Thank you, moms, for being what you are and viewing these precious babies as a gift, as a reward, as miracles from God given to us. It gives me chill bumps talking about it. Thank you, moms. Thank you.