

“The Full Quiver”  
Psalm 127  
(Preached at Trinity, August 11, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last time we began looking at this psalm. **Verse 1** sets the tone:  
**Psalm 127:1 KJV** - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain."
  2. There are many things men give their attention to. We are builders. We have endless projects. But what good is it to build marvelous structures if God is not in it. What good is it to guard a city, to seek to preserve all that we have built, if God’s blessings are not upon it?
  3. Men work long hours seeking to accomplish their plans. What good is it to rise before dawn and stay up well after the sun sets if God is against your plans?  
**Psalm 127:2 KJV** - "*It is vain* for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows:" It is vain, empty, nothing.
  4. **Psalm 127** has particular application to the man regarding his family. Of all of the projects a man can give his attention to none are more important than his family. **Psalm 127** is among the group of psalms called the Psalms of ascent – psalms written for the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. They often traveled in family groups. This psalm has been called a “Family Psalm.”  
**Psalm 127:1 KJV** - "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
  5. Last time we began looking at **Psalm 127** with particular attention to the importance of building our homes with God’s blessings.  
"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"
  6. **Psalm 127** gives us three principles of God being Lord in our families
    1. Allow God to build your house
    2. Allow God to protect that which you have built
    3. Allow God’s blessing of children
  7. Tonight I want to limit our focus to the third – “Allow God’s blessing of children”  
**Psalm 127:3 KJV** - "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward."
- I. Children should be seen as a blessing and a reward – a wonderful gift from God.
- A. Few today see children as a gift from God
    1. The lost man is self-centered. His life is focused upon satisfying himself. Many see children as an inconvenience – they demand your presence, baby-sitters can be hard to find, they are expensive, they can be hard to control.
    2. So many in our generation have little interest in the sacrifice demanded by children.
      - a. For some the priority is career and so they delay having children  
Some choose to remain childless – DINKs

- b. Albert Mohler said the trend towards childlessness is disturbing. “Parenthood is a part of helping to create adults. We grow up by having children. Without that responsibility, we have a generation of perpetual adolescents just growing old”
  - c. Some ladies have babies but have little interest in raising children I compare them with the puppy syndrome. Who can resist a puppy? That cute face, lovable brown eyes, soft and cuddly. But they soon become just a dog. They love puppies but have little interest in caring for a dog  
Some love babies but they aren’t interested in the sacrifice of raising children. They are immediately placed in daycare so they can get back to their career.
  - d. And many men see raising children as the woman’s responsibility. They come home and play or watch TV
- B. For the Godly children are seen as a gift from God
- 1. What an amazing miracle that a man and woman get married and become united to one another and this union produces an eternal soul. As God’s people we see these eternal souls as glorious gifts but also a solemn responsibility. What a privilege it is to raise up a Godly seed.
  - 2. **Psalm 127** describes children as a wonderful treasure, a glorious gift  
**Psalm 127:3 KJV** - " Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward."  
**Psalm 127:5 KJV** - "Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them"
  - 3. Herman Bavinck – “Children are the luxury of marital life, the treasure of parents, the wealth of the family life. Their presence develops a great number of virtues in the parents, the father and mother – love, devotion, and self-sacrifice, the care for the future, interest in the community, the art of education. Children check selfishness in parents, reconcile the contrasts, soften the differences, bring the hearts of parents ever closer to each other, give them a common interest that lives outside themselves, and opens their eyes and hearts to their surroundings and posterity. Family life turns the selfish into servants, misers into heroes, coarse men into considerate fathers, and tender mothers into courageous fighters.”

II. What about the issue of family planning? How are we to understand the “Full Quiver” statement of **Verse 5**?

- A. This is a subject that needs great clarity in our generation. There are many views of how to interpret **Verse 5**
  - 1. There is a small minority of Christians today who have taken **Psalm 127** as a mandate for having as many children as possible.
    - a. The Duggar family has captured the imagination of many, complete with their four washers and dryers. We cannot allow a reality show to direct our theology.
    - b. There is no Biblical mandate to have as many children as possible

2. There are some who take a slightly different approach – While not seeking to have as many as possible, they don't believe it is proper to place limits on their reproductive life. They believe they should have as many children as God gives. They take a neutral approach. Is this the Biblical approach? Are we to shift into neutral without any other consideration?

- a. The Biblical model in every aspect of a Christian's life is to make intentional decisions. In other words, we seek God's wisdom in everything we do. It isn't enough to say, "I'll trust God." Of course we trust God, but this never absolves us from making wise decisions.
- b. If I am diagnosed with cancer I know that God has determined it and I will trust Him in it. But I will also engage myself to make wise decisions regarding the treatment.
- c. God says it is not good for man to be alone, but it is important for a young person to give great energy in the process of selecting a mate.

B. We must not ignore the context of **Psalm 127**

1. It is in the context of the Old Covenant. Part of God's promise to Abraham was an immense posterity

**Genesis 22:17 NAU** - "indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore"

**Genesis 26:4 NAU** - "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;"

- a. This had a great fulfillment  
Abraham did indeed have an innumerable posterity
- b. By the time they left Egypt they numbered over a million. God raised up a mighty nation from which came kings

2. Knowing God's promise under the Old Covenant, great importance was placed on the bearing of children.

**Psalm 127:3 NAU** - " Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward."

- a. It was essential for the Nation of Israel to become great and powerful. They had to survive as a nation in order for God's redemptive purpose to be fulfilled in Christ. Children were seen as the fulfillment of God's promise and tribal distinctions were essential.
- b. To be childless was seen as being barred from participating in the promise. Bearing children was of great importance.  
**Genesis 30:1 KJV** - "And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die."
- c. God's promises to Abraham have found their fulfillment in Christ. The church is being blessed by an innumerable host of converts

- d. We have converts from every tribe, nation, and tongue. The Gospel is going forth as a powerful, unstoppable force. We should hunger and cry out for an innumerable offspring. And we should labor towards its accomplishment. This is a part of our inheritance. Spurgeon – “Not only shall the faithful be blessed with converts, and so with a spiritual seed; but those who are their spiritual children shall become fruitful also, and thus the multitude of the elect shall be accomplished; God shall increase the people, and shall increase the joy.”
- e. **Psalm 127** is in this Old Covenant context
- 3. We need to also recognize other aspects of the context of **Psalm 127**
  - a. This was an agrarian culture where a large family was important for maintaining the land. A large family was also for the protection of the family
  - b. Notice the military language of the Psalm  
**Verse 4** describes children as arrows  
**Verse 5** describes confidence when facing enemies
  - c. We can see this when Abraham went to war against Chedorlaomer with servants from his own house  
**Genesis 14:14 KJV** - "And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained *servants*, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued *them* unto Dan."
- 4. One other point. Infant mortality was common in pre-modern times. And they nursed much longer than today. Overall health today makes conception and healthy births much more likely. It isn't at all unlikely for a family to have children spaced 18 months apart. With an intentional effort to have as many children as possible the size of the family can far exceed even the numbers possible in the OT, even with multiple wives and concubines. Jacob had twelve sons, but he had them with four wives.
- 5. Children today should be seen as a wonderful blessing from God. They are a treasure of God's grace. But we must never look to the Old Covenant as a mandate for large families.

### III. Does the Bible provide us any guidance on family planning?

- A. We must not ignore the principle taught here – Children are a blessing from God
  - 1. They are not to be seen as an inconvenience. They must not be seen as a hindrance to our happiness. We must receive them as God's gift; a great reward.
  - 2. And we can see that God smiles upon large families.  
**Psalm 127:5 KJV** - "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them"
- B. But this doesn't mean we should not be wise regarding our family. Let me set before you some Biblical principles on family planning

1. The Bible does not give a mandate regarding family size.  
 There is no command that I must have as many children as possible.  
 There is no command that I must limit the size of my family  
 There is also no command that prevents me from limiting the size of my family.
  - a. **Psalm 127** is not in the form of a command to have as many children as possible
  - b. Without such command Christians are given liberty – but this doesn't mean we are not responsible for making wise decisions.
  - c. Every aspect of our life must be under God's dominion. We must be intentional in seeking His direction
2. What are some considerations for evaluating the size of your family?
  - a. Husbands must know and understand their wives.  
**1 Peter 3:7 NAS** - "You husbands likewise, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."  
 Will they be overwhelmed by having more children? A simplistic statement of "We'll just trust God" is not sufficient.
    - (1) God has made each of us differently. Just because a man does well at managing a small local company doesn't mean he could be the CEO of a large corporation.
    - (2) God has placed me as a pastor in this small church. Does that mean I could pastor in a church of 2000? But at least we have a plurality of pastors. A home only has one mom.
    - (3) What is the capability of your wife? If she is overwhelmed with four children should you have a fifth? (or wait?)
    - (4) This is where strong leadership from the husband is essential. Women want babies. God has designed them that way. They will want babies even when everything else in the home screams, this isn't a wise decision.
    - (5) And this is why it is inappropriate for us to try to involve ourselves in the individual decisions of families on this issue? Do we know their family situation?
  - b. What is physical condition of your wife?  
 A woman of a frail constitution would be unwise to risk unlimited pregnancies. Few obstetricians would recommend a woman have 10 c-sections – major surgery every two years.
  - c. What is the nature of your calling? A couple called to the mission field in a dangerous part of the world may decide it isn't prudent to have seven children.  
 What is the condition of your life? Famine or war or social disorder might dictate limiting a season of childrearing.  
**Matthew 24:19 NAU** - "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!"
  - d. How many children can you give the personal care and attention and individual discipleship that are so important to their development?

- (1) What kind of a father was Jacob to his daughter?  
**Genesis 34:1-2 KJV** - "And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. <sup>2</sup> And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her."
- (2) Some parents have the wonderful ability to shepherd and care for a dozen children. But there are some who are just not equipped.
- (3) Several years ago we had a well-known speaker come to our church and in the course of his sermon he spoke of teaching his son the skill of archery. Afterwards a young man from a large family approached him and said, "My dad doesn't have time to teach me to shoot a bow and arrow because we have a large family."  
He told me later, "What kind of man would have so many children he doesn't have time to train them up as individuals?"

#### Conclusion:

1. These are very personal decisions that each family must make after careful prayer and examination.
2. Regardless of your decision you must be cautious about seeking to impose your position upon others. The Bible forbids making a law where no law exists.
3. Whatever your decision regarding the size of your family, you must see your children as wonderful treasures, as gifts from God. You must have intimate involvement in the life of each one. Each one must know that you consider them as a wonderful gift. They must come to know that they are unique individuals created in the image of God.