

**Built by the Lord—Fall Family Focus
“Unless the Lord Builds the House”**

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

How important is family to you? What are you willing to do to make your family stable and functional? Are you willing to work long hours to provide materially for your family? Are you willing to rise up early and stay up late to accomplish all the goals and activities in which your family is involved? Are you willing to eat the bread of painful labors to give your children a better life? Are you willing to pursue education, material goods, comfort and recreation for your family? Will you read books? ...watch videos? ...visit counselors? How important is a stable and functional family to you?

Is having a stable and functional family important enough to you to let God build your house?

Psalms 127:1-2 cuts directly to the heart of the matter.

*Unless the Lord builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the Lord guards the city,
The watchman keeps awake in vain.
It is vain for you to rise up early,
To retire late,
To eat the bread of painful labors;
For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.*

All of the things we are willing to do to stabilize and functionalize our families are no more than wheel-spinning, unless we are willing to allow God to come into our homes, building them and guarding them His way. Are we willing to allow that?

We are beginning our five week, focus on our families. Our inspiration is the above psalm. We want to have families that are built by the Lord. In parallel to Jesus' illustration in **Matthew 7:24-27**, we want to have homes built on the solid foundation of God that can withstand the storms we will face. Throughout this month, we are going to learn what God says about marriage, family, roles, goals, stewardship, relationships and many other aspects of a God built home. Please, get one of the books that corresponds with this series for your family and read it along with your family. Make sure to attend each of our services over the next six Sundays to hear 12 lessons that will help God build your family. Also, we encourage you to join one of the small groups we have established to coincide with this study. If you are our guest, you are welcome to participate in one of these groups. Please, see me and I can help you become a part of a group that will help you and your family.

As we begin our in depth look at how the Lord will build our homes, we will look more closely at **Psalms 127**. Because of **vss. 3-5**, we have almost exclusively seen this psalm as one on the family. However, when we examine this psalm in its historical context, we gain insight from a different angle that provides a great illustration. This psalm is attributed to Solomon. With that in mind, we cannot help but think of the great house about which Solomon was most concerned to build—the Temple, the House of Jehovah God. Further, as king, I can't help but think that Solomon had a particular city in mind as he wrote this psalm—Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel and the home of the House of God. To add to this picture, note that this psalm is one of the Songs of Ascent. The Ascent Psalms were sung by the Jews as they made their annual treks to Jerusalem to worship God during the annual feasts. They sang this psalm as they ascended the mountains up to Jerusalem. They sang it as they prepared to worship in the House of God in the City of God. First and foremost then, this psalm had a national meaning to the Israelites. This psalm contained the message that was central to all of Israel's history. So long as the Jews allowed God to be the fundamental basis for everything they did, God's House and God's City were protected. However, if they would not allow God to build the House and protect the City, but turned to false gods, no gods, then the House and the City would be destroyed. This psalm was first and foremost about the House of God, the City of God, the Nation of God. Yet, that nation was itself a family. Further, just as God would deal with the Nation, its capital and its center of worship, so does God deal with the individual family. With this historical context in mind, we will examine the God-built and God-guarded House and City, learning some all-important parallels regarding how we can have God-built and God-guarded homes today.

Discussion:

- I. Invite God to be a part of your home building and acknowledge His hand in it.
 - A. When David had the initial idea to build a temple, he called Nathan, God's prophet, and sought his advice (**I Chronicles 17**). As it turned out, God did not want David to build the house; He wanted Solomon, David's son, to build it. God did, however, allow David to prepare for the temple. In **I Chronicles 29:2**, David said he had prepared with all his ability. However, read his prayer in **I Chronicles 29:10-19**. David asked God to complete the work and acknowledged God's hand in all his preparations.
 - B. Then Solomon carried out the work of the temple with which David, by God's order, had charged him. In **II Chronicles 6:10**, Solomon also acknowledged God's fulfillment of His promise. Further, his prayer of dedication in **II Chronicles 6:14-42** asked God to make all their work worthwhile. Solomon, like his father, invited God to be a part their work. In **II Chronicles 7:1, 12-16**, God demonstrated that He accepted the invitation.
 - C. I know this may sound odd, but the most powerful being in the universe will not force His way into your home. **Matthew 7:7-11**, describes God as our kind and loving Father. He wants to give us good gifts. He wants to build our homes up to be stable and functional. But He will not do so unbidden. How many families have yet to receive the blessing of a well-built and well-protected home because they have yet to consistently invite God to be a part of their home?
 - D. Further, the second aspect of this prayer is acknowledging God's work. As **Proverbs 3:6** says, if we acknowledge God in all our ways, he will make our paths straight. Remember **Ephesians 3:20-21**. We ask God to exercise his power but must remember that He will do far more abundantly beyond all we ask or thing by the power working in us. All too often, if we do not see some kind of miracle, we act as though God had no hand in the work. David and Solomon both worked hard, but recognized and acknowledged God's mercy, grace and benevolence in building the house of God.
 - E. If we want God built homes, we must ask God to build and protect and we must acknowledge His hand in all our ways.
- II. Follow God's pattern.
 - A. I don't know how many times I have read **I Chronicles** and missed **I Chronicles 28:19**. When Moses built the tabernacle in **Exodus**, we read of a pattern established by God. In fact, **Exodus 25-31** and **Exodus 35-39** are mostly redundant, as **Exodus** first reveals the pattern and then shows the Israelites step by step following the pattern. There is no such extensive passage about the temple. I have often wondered if Solomon was simply allowed to build it however he wanted. Then I read through **I Chronicles 28** again and learned the answer. In **vss. 11-18**, David gave a pattern to Solomon for the temple. Then, in **vs. 19**, David said, "All this the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, all the details of the pattern."
 - B. The temple, like the tabernacle, had been designed by God. Solomon was not given the freedom to build the temple however he desired. If the Lord was going to build and guard this house, Solomon had to build it to God's specifications. There were perhaps parts that Solomon did not like. I can only imagine what a king thought of building a room he was never allowed to enter, especially if it was the room in which God was going to speak to his people through the High Priest. Yet, Solomon was to follow God's pattern whether he liked it or not.
 - C. That is the case with our homes. If we want God to build and protect them, we must follow His pattern. As God describes the role of the family in the world and the role of each individual family member within the family, we must follow His pattern. We must not turn to pop-psychology or modern culture. Rather, we must turn God's word.
 - D. I trust you see in these first two points the bedrock foundation of a God-built and God-protected family. To drive it home to a practical level—our families must be praying and Bible applying families. Without connection to God through prayer and the application of His word to our families, we labor in vain.
- III. Have a mind to work and put your hand to the work.
 - A. As we learn about the House which God built, we must not push **Psalms 127:2** farther than God intended it to go. The verse teaches that without God in the picture our work is in vain. It further

teaches that God can provide blessing to the faithful servant, even while the servant sleeps. However, this verse was not intended to be the guide for our work ethic. Neither David nor Solomon believed they simply had to study the Law and pray and then they could sit back waiting for God to construct His house. Again we read **I Chronicles 29:2**. David prepared for the temple according to all his ability. Further, **II Chronicles 2-4** describes the work Solomon put into the temple. They recognized that God had to be involved, but God would work through them. They had to work.

- B. Take this a step further and take a look at Nehemiah, as he led Israel to rebuild the city of God that had been destroyed because the people strayed from having God protect the House and City. In **Nehemiah 2:8, 18** Nehemiah recognized every step of his success had to do with the good hand of the Lord being with him. Yet notice what the people had to do. **Nehemiah 2:18**, "Then they said, 'Let us arise and build.' So they put their hands to the good work." Then **Nehemiah 4:6**, "So we built the wall and the whole wall was joint together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work." This was done in the midst of turmoil and opposition. God blessed the people as they worked.
- C. The same is true today. Do not think you can pray, read your Bible and then wait for God to accomplish it all without your real involvement. If you want your home to be God-built and God-protected, you have to have a mind to work. You have to put your hand to the good work. Always basing that work on God's pattern, acknowledging his involvement. God will accomplish more than you can ask or think by the power in you (**Ephesians 3:20-21**). However, He will only work through you to the extent that you are willing to work. Therefore, you may well eat the bread of painful labors. You may burn the candle at both ends. At this point, having the laid the foundation of prayer and Bible application the work is worthwhile.

IV. Don't be distracted by the mundane and procrastinate the spiritual work.

- A. In about 537 BC, the Jews taken captive by Assyria and Babylon were released by Cyrus of Medo-Persia to return to their homeland and rebuild the House of the Lord. According to **Ezra 3**, the Israelites rebuilt the altar their first year back home. In the second year, they began work on the temple itself, laying its foundation with a great shout of praise (**Ezra 3:8-10**). However, **Ezra 4:4-5** demonstrates that the people did not complete the temple right away. They were hindered by their enemies. For nearly 16 years, the bare foundation of the would-be temple lay in Jerusalem. God had sent the Israelites home to rebuild His House and His City, but they did not have a mind to work nor did they put their hands to the work.
- B. What had happened? Certainly, the enemies initially distracted God's people from the work. But that was a small issue compared to the Jews own complacency. In time, the people apparently became accustomed to an incomplete temple. **Haggai 1:1-8** shows what happened. While the temple's foundation lay bare, the Israelites had built their own homes, sown their own fields and continued on with their own lives. As they were busy in their day to day, they procrastinated the work of the Lord's house. "Now is not the time for that work," they kept telling themselves. In fact, it became a vicious cycle. Because they procrastinated the Lord's work, the Lord was angered with them and caused their material work to fail, causing them to spend more time in the mundane, causing them to put off the Lord's house, causing God to be angry with them and bring their work to naught, etc.
- C. How often do we become consumed with worldly pursuits—secular education, careers, recreation and entertainment and keep procrastinating the Lord's work in our families? Like the Jews, we always mean to get to the spiritual work of the Lord in our homes, but now is just not the time for that. We have other issues to deal with. Sadly, once that pattern starts, it produces a downward spiral. We keep thinking extra time to do the spiritual will come up and it never does. We must simply stop and devote ourselves to the Lord's work in our homes, only then will we accomplish His work and only then will the Lord build and protect our homes. As **Colossians 3:2** says, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth."

V. Never stop serving the Lord.

- A. Our final lesson comes from Israel's repeated failure. We can hardly turn a page in our Old Testament without reading that Israel quit serving the Lord. In a matter of weeks from their deliver-

ance from Egypt, the people had made a golden calf as an idol and praised it as the god who had delivered them (**Exodus 32:4**). This was the story of their nation. They would be oppressed, cry out to God humbling themselves before Him, He would deliver them, they would turn back to idolatry, God would punish them by oppressing them with another nation. As God had promised early on, this eventually led to their removal from the Promised Land. At the same time, God did the unthinkable. He abandoned the House and City He had built and protected. Nebuchadnezzar took Judah captive, tore down the walls of the City of God and destroyed the House of the Lord. Then, God allowed His City and His House to lie in ruins for nearly 70 years.

- B. Why? Read Daniel's prayer of confession toward the end of the Jewish captivity to see (**Daniel 9:4-19**). "...we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances...we have not listened to your servants the prophets...open shame belongs to us, O Lord...because we have sinned against You...nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings...indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside...Therefore the Lord has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us."
- C. Why did God abandon the House and City He had built and protected? Because His people abandoned Him. If we wish God to stay with us and our family, we must not bank on a few good years of service, we must persevere in His kingdom doing all the things we have talked about all our lives. Never stop serving the Lord—no matter what Satan hurls our way, no matter what life holds in store, no matter what death filled valleys we walk through, cling to the Shepherd, trust in Him and serve Him. He will bring us through in the end.

Conclusion:

In **Matthew 7:24-27**, Jesus told the story of two houses. One was built on the foundation of what He taught and one was not. The first withstood the storms, the second collapsed in the face of them. I hope you understand that having a God-built, God-protected home does not mean avoiding the storms. But it does mean being given the strength and protection to carry you through the storms. These days we are willing to do so much for our families to make them stable and functional. The question is, are we willing to let God build them?