



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 120-150

Week 2

DAY 8

What Makes Families Work?

Psalm 127

OPENING
up to the Word

According to both sides of your family tree, what for you is the ideal family size? Why that number? Is there a discrepancy between branches?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What does this psalm say about work? (a) sleep or sloth is rewarded; (b) work is useless or vain; (c) all work depends on God; (d) work is necessary; (e) family is more important; (f) when we work, we work—but when we pray, God works.

2. What does the psalmist say about raising children? (a) they're a handful before they're a quiverful, (b) the more the merrier, (c) kids are a sign of God's blessing, (d) God wants to partner with us in parenting. Which verse supports your answer?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Re-examine your work, family, and security issues in light of this psalm. Which one gets your priority attention? Which one *should*?

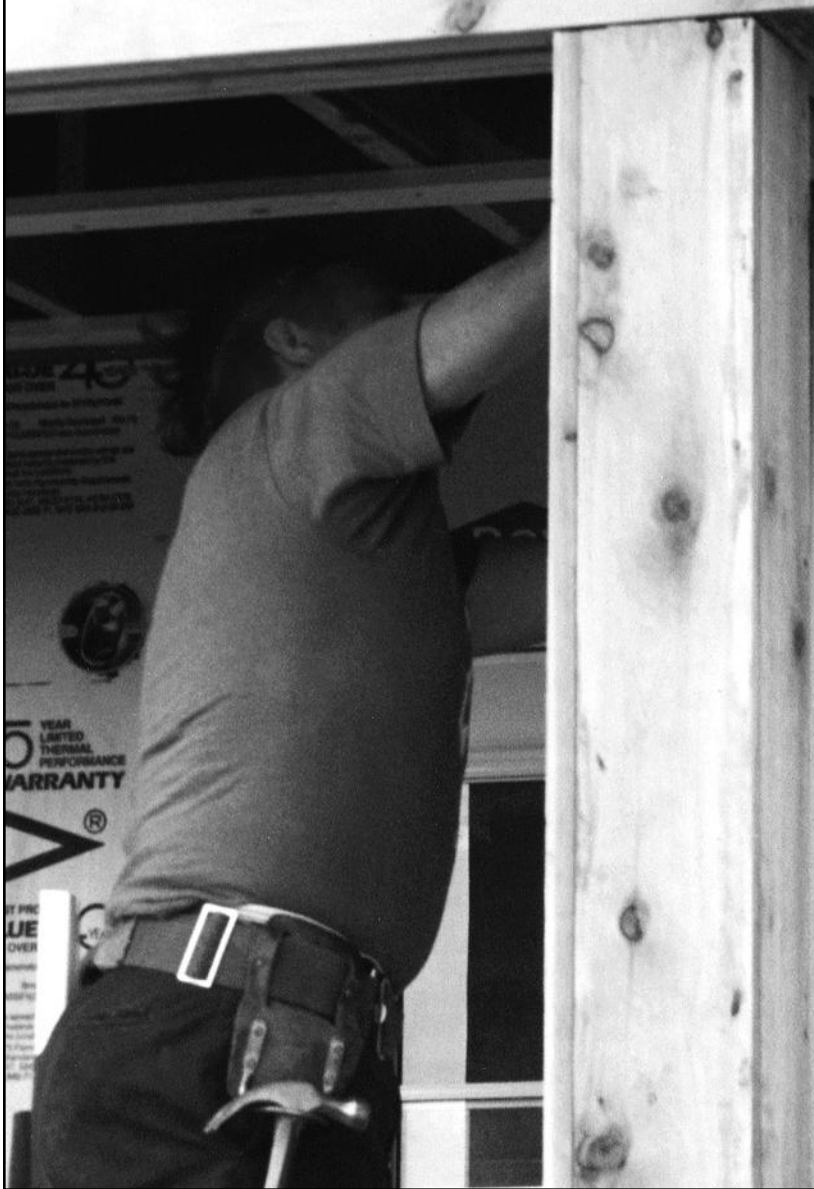
2. In light of this psalm, what legacy do you want to leave?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In tackling the subject of **worthwhile work** and success that lasts, Psalm 127 echoes the two ends of Genesis 11. There humans build in vain the Tower of Babel for their own namesake and security (11:1-9), while Abraham builds a kingdom through relationships that owe their fruitfulness to God (11:27-12:3).*

*“Unless the Lord builds
the house, its builders
labor in vain.”*

Psalm 127:1



Circles of Blessing

Psalm 128

OPENING
up to the Word

Who in your family is the strongest link? The biggest worrier? The fastest growing? The most fruitful? In light of the above, whom do you consider most blessed?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What is the link here between worship (“fear of God”) and work (vs. 1-2)?
 2. ... between fearing God and raising a family (vs. 3-4, 6)?
 3. ... between fearing God and prospering as a nation (vs. 5-6)?
-

LIVING
out the Word

1. It appears that “fear of the Lord” (vs. 1, 4) is a strong link in all the above connections. How does your faith in God affect or strengthen your family ties?
 2. ... your work productivity?
 3. ... your contribution to/from your city or society at large?
-

WINDOW
on the Word

Lest the piety of this psalm be taken too individualistically, note that its focus moves from an inner sanctum with God (vs. 1-2), to the family circle (vs. 3-4), to wider social circles (Zion and Jerusalem), where we live and work and share the good news (vs. 5-6).

Beaten, but Not Defeated

DAY 10

Psalm 129

How does your garden grow? (a) green, (b) brown, (c) weeds, (d) veggie-delight, (e) farmer's harvest, (f) it's cursed.

1. What does it mean that Israel was oppressed but not defeated (vs. 1-2; see note)?

2. How do oppressed people survive? (a) the outer behavior bends but the inner self remains unbowed, (b) self-respect is life-saving, (c) might does not make right, (d) an unbending faith and trust in God.

3. What kind of curse is invoked here (vs. 5-8)?

4. Was Jesus was oppressed like the innocent victim in this psalm?

1. What inspiration could you draw from this psalm if and when you were oppressed for righteousness' sake?

2. Imagine a circumstance when you might withhold a blessing from someone, as this psalmist does. Ask God to enable you to love that person instead (Lk 6:27).

Israel's youth (vs. 1-2) refers to events of the Exodus (see Hos 11:1). Later events in Israel's life would be seen as punishment or consequences, but bondage under Egyptian slave masters was suffering for righteousness' sake (v. 4).

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Sorry About That!

Psalm 130

OPENING
up to the Word

What is hardest for you in saying, “Sorry about that”? (a) to admit you’re wrong, (b) looking the offended party in the eye, (c) accepting the consequences. Can you give a recent example?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Describe the “depths” of despair pictured here (compare Ps 69:1-2, 14-15).

2. Note the amount of waiting (vs. 5-6). Does this imply that repentance is easy, or hard? Why do you think so?

3. Is self-help, a helping hand, a recovery group or even a forgiving third party able to help this person? Why do you think so?

4. In this psalm, what is God’s forgiveness like? (a) free, (b) hard-earned, (c) conditional, (d) begrudging, (e) ceremonial, (f) full, (g) individualistic, (h) community-wide. Which verses indicate this?

5. How does forgiveness in Christ (see Ro 6) compare with the forgiveness described in this Psalm?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How do you express repentance? (a) with a peace offering—food, flowers, notes; (b) with poetic words; (c) I don’t express it, because “love means never having to say ‘I’m sorry.’” Explain.

2. When you recognize that sin is separating you from God, what should you do ASAP?

WINDOW
on the Word

This penitent psalmist seeks mercy for sin and finds it. For other “penitential” songs, see Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 101 and 143.

“O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.”

Psalm 130:7-8



Photo by Barry Stahl—PTM

The Child-Like Spirit

Psalm 131

OPENING
up to the Word

When are you most likely to say, "I'm sorry"? (a) when caught, (b) if you began the fight, (c) when the wronged party confronts you. Give a recent example.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How does the analogy of a "weaned child" apply to the believer's life with God (vs. 1-3; see note)?
 2. How does this believer's humble trust in God play out in terms of his heart? Eyes? Soul? And fellow citizens?
- _____

LIVING
out the Word

1. How does this psalm cause you to think of the day-by-day maturity in grace and knowledge God gives you as you grow in Christ?
 2. How do you feel God weans you from child-like issues as you grow in Christ?
- _____


WINDOW
on the Word

*This psalm anticipates the object lesson of God in Christ accepting the little children into his kingdom (Mt 18:1-4). A **weaned child** in this analogy (Ps 13:2) is one who is freed from what a baby must have from its mother, to a place where the "weaned" soul is content and growing with God.*



*“But I have stilled and quieted my soul;
like a weaned child with its mother, like a
weaned child is my soul within me.”*

Psalm 131:2



*“For the sake
of David your
servant, do not
reject your
anointed one.”*

Psalm 132:10

I Solemnly Swear

DAY 13

Psalm 132

To impress upon someone—a parent, employer, spouse, God himself—that you really mean business or that you’re telling the truth, how do you solemnize your promise? (a) swear on a stack of Bibles (b) invoke Scout’s honor, (c) sign a contract, (d) nothing extra—your word is good enough.

1. What promise and appeal does David make to God (vs. 2-9)?

2. What promise does God recall or reconfirm to David (vs. 11-18)?

3. Does God need a “resting place” in which to live? What kind? Where? (a) no, he stays in heaven; (b) yes, in believers; (c) uniquely in clergy or royalty; (d) especially in church buildings, after years of moving about in a tent; (e) in earthly Jerusalem.

4. Why do you think so (see also “Introduction to Psalms”)?

How do Christ-followers understand the “for ever and ever” nature of God’s relationship with the throne of David? (a) the nation of Israel should return to a theocracy, (b) the nation of Israel should rebuild the Temple, (c) everyone should accept Jesus as King, (d) everyone should embrace the heavenly Jerusalem in eternity. Why do you think so?

This psalm has been variously used in dedicating the Temple, in crowning kings of Israel (as with Ps 2, 72, 110), and by Christians who revere the Messiah.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Why Can't We All Get Along?

Psalm 133 and 134

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you remember the context of Rodney King's question, "Why can't we all get along?" Where in your city might this cry for unity also apply?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What kind of brotherly harmony is called for here (133:1)? (a) family reunions, (b) tribal gatherings, (c) housing projects, (d) church councils, (e) an ideal realized only in heaven.

2. How do the analogies of "oil" and "dew" apply to brotherly harmony and sanctify God's people (133:2-3; see note)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Whom do you need to make peace with?

2. Imagine what "God's oil and dew" would do for this troubled world. Do you think it will ever happen?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The occasion for Psalm 133 may have been the long-awaited coming together of Israelite tribes to **anoint David as king** (2Sa 5:1-10). Alternately, the family discord afflicting David later in life (2Sa 11-21) may have driven him to write this psalm while longing for what he once had (Ps 133:3).*

Precious oil spilling onto the priest's beard, collar and robes signifies total consecration (133:2; Ex 29:7; Lev 21:10). Mount Hermon, highest of the mountains near Zion, was always rich in dew.