

Balancing Life's Priorities

Principles from Psalms 127 & 128

Gregory A. Smith

Objectives

1. To remind participants of the relevance of the Bible to everyday life.
2. To lead participants to a clearer understanding of Psalms 127 and 128.
3. To motivate participants to recognize and practice the biblical formula for balancing life's priorities.
4. To encourage participants to trust in the sovereignty, wisdom, and power of God.

Introduction

It seems that our society's pace increases at every turn. We struggle to keep up with things we have to do, ought to do, and want to do. We find it difficult to strike a balance between work, church, home life, and leisure. And all too often the activities that clutter our lives deplete our spiritual vitality.

Does God have anything to say about the rat race in which so often we find ourselves? The answer is a definite "yes." In fact, we find in Psalms 127 and 128 some wonderful insight on balancing life's priorities.

Text

Psalm 127

1. 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. 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.
3. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
4. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.
5. 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 gate.

Psalm 128

1. Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.
2. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.
3. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.
4. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.
5. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
6. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

Greatest Priority: *Fearing God*

Our entire lives should be governed by our relationship with God. Success in every aspect of life depends on success in the spiritual realm. Therefore, maintaining fellowship with God should be our top priority.

Both of the Psalms under examination begin with a statement concerning our relationship with God. Psalms 127:1 emphasizes that our efforts are vain unless God is blessing them. Psalms 128:1 makes it clear that fearing God is the path to blessing.

Lesser Priority: *Sleep*

It may seem odd to name sleep as a priority to be balanced, but we are prone to abuse this aspect of our lives. God intends for us to rest. Psalms 127:2 stresses the importance of balancing work and sleep. God does not approve of a lifestyle that is overwhelmingly work-oriented. When our lives are in tune with His wisdom and guidance, He gives us sleep. Sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is pillow our heads!

C. H. Spurgeon on Psalms 127:2

[T]hose whom the Lord loves are delivered from the fret and fume of life, and take a sweet repose upon the bosom of their Lord. He rests them; blesses them while resting; blesses them more in resting than others in their moiling and toiling. God is sure to give the best thing to his beloved, and we here see that he gives them sleep -- that is a laying aside of care, a forgetfulness of need, a quiet leaving of matters with God [. . .].

Lesser Priority: *Marriage*

The marriage relationship is not the primary focus of these two psalms. It is mentioned specifically in 128:3. The fact that children are in view in both psalms presupposes marriage. This is undoubtedly a vital segment of our lives, one that no less than any other should take its cues from our relationship with God.

Lesser Priority: *Family*

The segment of life that receives the most attention in Psalms 127 and 128 is parenting. Children are referred to as God's heritage and reward (127:3). They are described in two figures of speech: as arrows whose trajectory is determined by a mighty man (127:4-5), and as fruitful olive plants (128:3).

C. H. Spurgeon on Psalms 127:4

A man of war is glad of weapons which may fly where he cannot: good sons are their father's arrows speeding to hit the mark which their sires aim at. What wonders a good man can accomplish if he has affectionate children to second his desires, and lend themselves to his designs! To this end we must have our children in hand while they are yet children, or they are never likely to be so when they are grown up; and we must try to point them and straighten them, so as to make arrows of them in their youth, lest they should prove crooked and unserviceable in after life.

Another aspect of family life mentioned here is grandparenting (128:6). Interaction between grandparents and grandchildren is God's design! In fact, its development is a sign of his blessing (cf. 128:5).

Lesser Priority: *Work*

The above is not to be construed as a condemnation of work. Work is as much a part of God's plan for human existence as sleep, marriage, and family relations. Before Adam fell into sin, he was instructed to go about the business of tending to the garden.

However, we must be careful not to lose balance in the matter of work. God does not want us to spend every waking moment toiling to satisfy material needs (127:2). Rather, we should trust Him to provide our needs. One of the primary results of fearing God is enjoying the satisfaction of productive work (128:2).

C. H. Spurgeon on Psalms 127:5

We need not doubt that if God gives us children as a reward he will also send us the food and raiment which he knows they need.

Conclusion

God desires to fill our lives with His blessings, bringing us joy and satisfaction. His intent to do us well appears repeatedly in both psalms.

- He blesses us with sleep (127:2).
- He rewards us with children (127:3) and grandchildren (128:6).
- He grants us happiness (127:5; 128:2).
- He rewards our labor with food (128:2).
- He makes our families fruitful (128:3).
- He blesses us in every way (128:1, 4-5).

So how are we to fit ourselves for these blessings? We can only do so by viewing our relationship with God as our highest aim. Seeking Him first is imperative. When we value Him above all things, He helps us to discern what activities are truly worthy of our time and how to balance them properly. Blessedness comes from walking in His ways.

Work Cited

Spurgeon, Charles H. The Treasury of David. 1865-85. Crosswalk.com. 2001. 9 Mar. 2001
<<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/TreasuryofDavid/>>.