

# Our Changeless Lord's Instructions To A Married Couple

## Series: Our Changeless Lord (3rd Message of 5)

by Ron R. Ritichie

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We are living in a day when the family unit is rapidly disintegrating because of the tremendous pressures the modern world is exerting upon us. When I was growing up it was very clear that my father was the provider in our home. I would watch him get up early in the morning to cook breakfast for the whole family. He would make a Pennsylvania delicacy called "scrapple," which is pig fat with eggs and fresh pepper. We would do some jobs around the house, then he would leave for work and be gone all day. I would go to school, returning in the early afternoon to find my mother waiting to feed me one of her famous pies. As she worked around the house she'd teach us many things about life.

That is the way life used to be. Today, however, we are facing tremendous challenges to this concept of the family. Inflation and social trends are forcing mothers out to work in the job market. Traditional home life, where the father provides and the mother rears the children, is disappearing. Children are being placed in day care centers. Wives and mothers are being taught that in order to achieve their full potential they should plan a career. In some cases wives are remaining behind to pursue their careers while their husbands are transferred by their companies to other cities. These couples see each other on occasional week-ends. By 1990, according to some sociologists, 70% of young married couples will be working. The next generation will have to face psychological, emotional and spiritual problems that you and I have never heard of. We are going to become a nation of orphans, not knowing who our fathers and mothers are because someone else will be training our children.

This kind of pressure is incredibly hard, especially on the Christian family. But God is still in charge of this world. He is aware of the social trends and the pressures facing his people. He has not changed his character, and neither has he changed his desires for those who follow him and his concepts for the family. So that we might stand in the midst of the storm of all the various philosophies blowing against us he has given us the unchanging word of Scripture. Our God is changeless. What he said 5,000 years ago is as up-to-date as your local newspaper. Scripture speaks to us from the heart of the changeless Yahweh. It is consistent, reliable and true. So in the midst of all the controversy and change raging about the family today, the only solid ground remaining is the Word of God. Let us see what Scripture has to say about some of these problems.

Psalm 127 is a psalm about the family, written by Solomon, King David's son. This is the man of whom God said, "You will be the wisest man that ever was, is, or will be." (In the Book of Proverbs and the Book of Ecclesiastes you can see the incredible wisdom, the insights into humanity, which God gave this man.) This psalm of five simple verses was to be sung to the Lord and to the married couples in the Jewish community in the Tabernacle, or, later, the Temple which Solomon built. The psalm has a lot to say to the couples in our community too. Solomon is speaking on behalf of our changeless Lord, conveying to us our Lord's instructions to married couples.

The psalm breaks down into four sections: First, Solomon says, allow the Lord to build your house (verse 1); second, allow the Lord to guard your city (verse 1); third, allow the Lord to provide your needs (verse 2); and fourth, allow the Lord to fill your quiver (vs 3-5).

### 1. Allow The Lord To Build Your House (verse 1)

**Unless the Lord builds the house,  
They labor in vain who build it;**

I think Solomon made this statement because he was remembering his father, David, and his plan to build the Temple. When David had defeated all his enemies he was sitting in a house of cedar which he had built for himself, and, speaking to Nathan, the prophet, he said, "I've always had a desire to build a house for the Lord. Ever since the days of Moses the Ark of the Covenant and the presence of God has been in a tent, while I'm sitting here in this gorgeous house of cedar. It's time to build a house for the Lord." Nathan said, "What a great idea! Go ahead and do whatever your heart desires." So David began dreaming that night, getting all excited about the materials he would use to build this house for the Lord.

While David was dreaming about building the Temple, however, the Lord appeared to Nathan and said, "I don't want David to build my house because he is a man of war and has shed much blood. But his son Solomon will be a man of rest. I will let him build my house." David heard that news and he accepted it as being from the hand of the Lord. Later, when Solomon had grown up, David recognized that it was time to build the Temple. As the materials were being gathered, he told Solomon, "The Lord gave me the whole pattern of his Temple. This is exactly what he wants. I wrote it down, and here it is." David had gathered the materials for the building; the Lord had provided the plans, and Solomon was now ready to build the Temple

In this verse, Solomon issues the first of three warnings. Referring to the Temple, the place where God lives, he says, "Unless the Lord builds the house it is a waste of time; it is vain, empty, a chasing after the wind." Solomon is saying that there are houses built by men, and there are houses built by God with men. The houses built by men without God are made from stone, wood, bricks, straw, mud, etc. They are designed to meet our physical and emotional needs, to protect us from the elements. Those houses are also designed to impress people, to demonstrate social status, etc.

One of the first things most young couples think of when they first get married is how they can acquire this kind of a home. They ask each other, "Where are we going to live? Where are we going to raise our kids? What kind of house shall we build?" They put a lot of time and effort into planning, getting the right contractor, the right materials, etc. By the time they move into their new home they are exhausted, but happy--until the very first crisis comes along. Then they discover they've built the wrong house. The crisis may be an illness, the husband may have lost his job, some moral problem arises, whatever, and suddenly their dream house turns into a tomb. Unable to take the pressure, the family breaks up. A "House For Sale" sign goes on the lawn. That is the kind of house, one that is built without the Lord, that Solomon is warning against. Do not begin building a house by thinking of material things. I recently asked a real estate man how many houses listed for sale in the community are listed because of divorce situations. "Fifty per cent," was his immediate response. Those are the houses men build without God. It's important to understand and to remember Solomon's words, "Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it." Psalm 49 says of such foolish men,

**Their inner thought is, that their houses are forever,  
And their dwelling places to all generations;  
They have called their lands after their own names.  
But man in his pomp will not endure;  
He is like the beasts that perish . . .  
Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,  
When the glory of his house is increased;  
For when he dies he will carry nothing away.**

Solomon's instructions by the Spirit of God to married couples are: Don't waste your time, strength and money building your physical, emotional and spiritual house, for unless a man allows the Lord to build his house, all his efforts are in vain. Rather, he says, turn your lives and your marriages over to the Master builder, Yahweh (Jesus), and trust him to build your house. He will not begin in a materialistic way. He will start by building your house on a spiritual foundation--Jesus Christ. By establishing a personal relationship with him you will be provided with the power necessary to maintain your spiritual house. The very Person of Jesus Christ indwelling your hearts will enable you to be all that you ever desire to be in a marriage. Husbands and wives, do you want to be loving in your marriage? Do you want to have a forgiving spirit? Do you want to have a servant's heart? Do you want to have patience? The Lord is saying, "Don't try to accomplish those things by yourself. Come to me and I will produce them through you. That is why he is called "I AM". "I AM

everything you are not. I AM everything you need when you need it." That is the foundation God wants for us.

Once the foundation is laid, then the "walls" go up. God will build the walls that will protect us from all the storms of life. He will protect our emotional, physical and spiritual lives when everything is coming down upon us. And everybody knows that when you are building a wall you always leave room for windows. Jesus will have windows in our "walls" so we will be able to look out and be encouraged by the lives of other married couples whom the Lord is working through. Those same windows will permit our neighbors to look in and say, 'How can they handle this life? How come they're not drinking, or on drugs? How come they're not arguing? Through the storms of life, Jesus will teach us about his character, his ways, and his values, etc. Jesus Christ wants our physical homes to be cities of refuge. He wants our homes to be salt and light in a community without hope, to be places of rest and shelter where people can come and rest, physically, emotionally and spiritually. One day I can come home to find that my French wife had named our house, "Villa Mon Repos" ("My House of Rest".) That is where I live—in a house of rest. That is what the Lord wants for all of us: to rest in him and let him rule our houses.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus used the figure of a house to describe man's spiritual relationship with him:

"Therefore every one who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall." The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for he was teaching them as (not) having authority, and not as their scribes. (Matt.:7:24-27)

The first thing Solomon teaches young married couples is that if they allow the Lord to build their houses all will be well. But if they do not, all is vain, a waste of time, effort and money, a "chasing after the wind."

Solomon now issues his second warning:

2. Allow The Lord To Guard Your City (verse 1)

**Unless the Lord guards the city,  
The watchman keeps awake in vain.**

In Solomon's day the City of David occupied about eight acres, and surrounding the city was a wall, built to protect the inhabitants. Following each day's activities--people going in and out to tend their flocks, their gardens and fields--in the evening all the people filed back into the city and the gates were closed. Then the night watchman went and sat on the wall, looking out for enemies. The people inside felt secure and protected; they could sleep and rest.

Soon after Solomon's death civil war broke out in Israel. The people no longer believed his great principle, "Unless the Lord guards the city the watchman watches in vain." They did not want this to be true in their lives; they did not want to be at peace. Solomon had quieted all their enemies so they started a civil war, resulting in the division of the nation into ten tribes in the north and two in the south. Seeing the house of Israel divided, the Assyrians came down and captured Israel, the ten northern tribes, and took them into captivity, never to be heard of again. Later the Babylonians came and captured Judah, the two southern tribes, taking them into captivity for seventy years and devastating the city in the process. For the past 2,500 years, because God's people, the Jews, will not believe what Solomon said, the walls of Jerusalem have been breached, in turn, by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Christians, the Turks, and the British! And who is guarding Jerusalem today?

Security and protection will not be yours because you have money in the bank, through Social Security, through storing food, through having gold and silver under your floorboards. Your security comes from allowing the Lord to guard your city; otherwise your lives are wasted; you are "chasing after the wind." When

my own father was young he was very rich. His father invented the mimeograph machine and had made a fortune during World War I and up through the middle of the 1930's. As a child I had my own nurse. We drove around Ardmore, Pennsylvania, in a big Hudson car that had a window between us and the chauffeur. But my father did not let the Lord guard his city. Instead, he entrusted it to Wall Street and lost his fortune. We had to move from a mansion to a tent on a friend's farm. That evening there was a hurricane and we had to move to a fruit cellar for safety. We went from a mansion to living underground, like animals, in just one day. Do not let anyone or anything offer you security. Only Yahweh can provide security for you The psalmist says:

**My soul waits in silence for God only;  
From Him is my salvation.  
He only is my rock and my salvation,  
My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken. (Ps. 62:1-2)**

Now we come to Solomon's third warning:

### 3. Allow The Lord To Provide Your Needs (verse 2)

**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.**

We know from the Scriptures that work is a gift from God. But when sin entered the picture, toil, thorns, thistles, sweat and pain resulted. Work, however, is still a gift from God. Now, because of sin, there is a battle between Satan's and God's view of work. Satan's philosophy is to get us on a treadmill of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. He tries to confuse us in two different areas: first, in the area of priorities; and second, in the area of materialism.

I was a victim of Satan's confusion of priorities just last week. I was getting a haircut at my barber's and he told me he'd see me on Sunday. "Great," I said. "Are you coming to church?" He said, "Yes, but then I'll see you later." "Later?" I asked. He said, "You don't know what is happening at 3 o'clock?" "No," I said, "what is happening at 3 o'clock?" "My wedding," he said, "and you're supposed to be there to do the ceremony!" I never even remembered!

The second problem area is that of materialism. We are receiving more than 500 messages a day, consciously and subconsciously, telling us to "Buy this, do that, wear this, smell like this, drive this, go there, come here." Over and over again we are told by the world to spend money we don't have for things we don't need, to impress people we don't know!

Five years ago I married a young couple. Recently they came to me and the husband said, "You know, when we got married everybody thought we were the ideal Christian couple. After our marriage I finished my graduate work and opened my new practice. My wife became a school administrator and we built our home. In the midst of all this activity my priorities got all mixed up. Now I'm scared to death; I don't love my wife." I asked him what was important to him, his practice, his house, his activities, his wife's work, or was his relationship to God the most important thing in his life. They said they would think about that. That was two months ago, and here is a letter I received from them last week:

"We are now entering our second month of self-imposed exile and thought you might want to know what became of us. We went home, dropped out of everything, closed up the office, finished the house and rented it, and rented a studio in Southern California. We have spent the past month resting, reflecting, dreaming, loving and finding our way back to each other again. I feel as if we have both been reborn in many ways and have entered a sort of 'oasis' together, where concerns, attitudes and priorities are changing and fusing together into a very peaceful and solid union. Our future, whatever and wherever that may be, seems of little consequence so long as we share it together and preserve this oneness that we are coming to

know with the Lord and ourselves. Thank you for encouraging us to take this step out of the world and back to each other. I cringe to think what would have become of us had we not broken with our past. What a victory for the enemy!"

You say, "But you can't just leave everything to get your marriage back together." Really? If you've got nothing together now you may as well leave everything. The Lord tells us not to buy Satan's philosophy of work. Don't think that rising up early and going to bed late is going to meet your needs. Allow the Lord to provide them. "He gives to his beloved even in his sleep," Solomon says. He is not advocating laziness, rather, he is saying, "Let Yahweh be Lord of your house and of your city. Let him be Lord in providing your needs. Let him be Lord when you go to work, where you work, how long you work, the decisions you make at work and how much money you should make. When your priorities are in order all these decisions about money and work fall into place.

Solomon calls Israel, and the church, "His beloved," "Most greatly loved of God ones." Cod has said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" \_not your wants, your desires, but your needs. All our needs will be met by our changeless God who gives to his Beloved even in his sleep. He who never sleeps moves the hearts of men and women to meet our needs even while we are asleep.

Solomon has warned married couples that the way to avoid an empty, vain and wasted life is to allow the Lord to build their homes, to guard their city, and to meet their needs. He ends his message by encouraging married couples to allow the Lord to "fill their quiver."

#### 4. Allow The Lord To Fill Your Quiver (verses 3-5)

**Behold' children are a gift of the Lord;  
The fruit of the womb is a reward.  
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 shall not be ashamed,  
When they speak with their enemies in the gate.**

God is at work in the world, working out his plan of redemption generation after generation, and one of the ways he is doing so is through the marriage relationship. In these verses, Solomon wants married couples to understand God's plan for children. The Canaanite nations surrounding Israel did not regard children as a gift. They took their firstborn and throw them into the fire as a sacrifice to appease their god; others were sold into slavery or used in religious prostitution. Things have not really changed much today. People who don't know Jesus Christ batter and abuse their children and dump them in garbage cans. Other children run away to big cities at 11 or 12 years of age, there to get involved in drugs, child pornography and prostitution.

But in this psalm Solomon tells us three things about children, from God's point of view. First, he says, "children are a gift of the Lord to his Beloved." The word "gift" here is the word for inheritance, possession or property. When God planned to redeem the world through the nation of Israel, he gave them a land called Palestine, and he asked the Israelites to go in and cleanse that land, to dedicate it to him, and to be salt and light to all the surrounding nations. God has given us similar responsibilities with our children. They are a gift to us to be used for his honor and glory. Our responsibility is to nourish them, to teach and to dedicate them to the Lord and to prepare them to be salt and light in their community. Children are a gift of the Lord. Receive those gifts, enjoy them, nurture them and get them ready to produce more fruit in the community so that they can continue God's wonderful plan of redemption.

Second, Solomon says, children are a reward. Parents who allow the Lord to build their home, to guard their city and provide their needs are rewarded with children. They are God's property, but God rewards us with the responsibility to be part of his redemptive plan. Our children are a sign of divine favor from God.

Then third, Solomon says that children are "arrows." Do you know how much time and effort goes into the making of an arrow? You have to choose the right piece of wood, make sure it's the proper weight and balance, etc. Then you have to fit the feathers, the arrowhead and the wood together and make sure the arrow is adequate to hit the target you're aiming at. Now that arrow is totally useless until someone picks it up, takes a bow and aims it. In this context who is going to aim the arrows Solomon is talking about? Parents, of course, and the target is redemption; children are to be part of God's redemptive plan to the next generation. Who's going to draw the bow, because the arrow will never speed to the target unless there is power behind it? I believe we need to teach our children that the power is the Holy Spirit. He will keep us on target.

Solomon concludes by saying, "How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they shall not be ashamed, when they speak with their enemies in the gate." Do not allow the world to tell you how full your quiver should be. The world tells us that we should have no more than two children because we should help control the population growth. I bought that lie and I have been angry with myself ever since because I love children. Now I don't know whether you have met my sons or not, but I will tell you one thing: I wish I had twelve like them. A young couple with four beautiful children aged two to six were here last week. This couple had been in my high school group ten years ago. I asked them how they managed to survive with all those children. They told me, "We love children. That's what we want to be--parents." A few nights ago on television they interviewed a couple with twenty children--six of them were their natural children, fourteen were adopted, and all of the adopted children were handicapped in one form or another. Do not let the world tell you how full your quiver should be. Go to the Lord and say, "Here's my quiver. How many arrows do you want?"

Finally, Solomon says that the man with a full quiver "will not be ashamed when he speaks with his enemies in the gate." In Jerusalem the gate was the place of judgment. Solomon is saying that the man with a full quiver will not be ashamed to meet an adversary because his sons and daughters who walk in righteousness will go with him to the gate.

Solomon, by the Spirit of God, has given us our changeless Lord's instructions to a married couple. They are:

- (1) allow the Lord to build your house;
- (2) allow the Lord to guard your city;
- (3) allow the Lord to provide your needs;
- (4) allow the Lord to fill your quiver...

so that Yahweh may continue to fulfill his plan of redemption throughout the whole world, to his honor and glory, in this generation and in the generations to come, until he comes again.

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Psalm 127  
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