

# Memory Verse

**Psalm 127:1**

**Unless the LORD builds the house, those who  
build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches  
over the city, the watchman stays awake in  
vain.**

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**Selections from the Psalms**  
**Part 16**

**Psalm 127**  
**Wisdom for the**  
**Next Generations**

## **A. What is Wisdom?**

There are *many definitions*, such as *applying knowledge to life's situations*. In Jewish thought, wisdom involves *knowledge and understanding* and is connected to **skill at life**.

Wisdom is *skill for living*, and *making godly choices in life*.

## **A. What is Wisdom?**

In Scripture, *someone with a particular skill and experience is considered wise*. What makes the **Bible unique** about wisdom, is the *moral or ethical aspect*. Wisdom begins, Biblically, with the **fear of God**:  
*Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, Eccl. 12:13.*

## **A. What is Wisdom?**

One who *fears the Lord* **departs from evil**, lives in a way that honors Him. The **wise person** sees what the right decision or course of action is, and does it. He or she *doesn't just think or talk about it, but puts it!* The wise person is discerning and is skilled at tasks and relationships.

## **B. What are the Wisdom Psalms?**

**Wisdom Psalms** take different themes from *Biblical Wisdom Literature* and put it to song. *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes* and the *Song of Solomon/Songs*, are wisdom books in the Bible. These are dedicated to help the reader or listener to *live a life that honors God*, particularly under the commands of the Mosaic Law.

## **B. What are the Wisdom Psalms?**

*Psalm 127* is part of a section known as the *Psalms of Ascent* or *Pilgrimage Psalms: Psalms 120-134*. These were sung as pilgrims walked up to Jerusalem. *Psalm 127*, main ideas are *the Lord's blessing; God's involvement in life; and while we are responsible, only **God** gives security, stability and success.*

## **Psalm 127:1-5**

***A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.*** Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. **2**It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. **3**Behold,



## **Psalm 127:1-5**

from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. 4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth.

5 Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

## **C. *Psalm 127:1-2* – The Lord's Provision**

These verses set the tone and we see a repeated phrase: *Unless the LORD. If God is not in it, whatever "it" is, it is vain, a word used 3 times in vs. 1-2. It also means "useless," or "empty."* The verses **do not deny** the *need to work or labor*, but the emphasis is that *unless the LORD builds or watches, our human effort is useless.*

## **C. *Psalm 127:1-2* – The Lord's Provision**

Solomon gives 3 examples: **1.** *A house or family lineage*; **2.** *A city and a watchman*; and **3.** *A worker, laborer or farmer*. This is connected to the *second section of the Psalm* when it refers to "sons," because one who has a quiver full of many sons will be able to work harder, produce more, and sleep better, humanly speaking.

## **C. Psalm 127:1-2 – The Lord's Provision**

The **first** example is a house. This *may be a literal house, but probably a family lineage*, which verses 3-5 refer to. *Unless the LORD builds this house or heritage, those who labor to build it, do it in vain.* In Jewish culture, *family heritage was and is extremely important.* Under the Mosaic Law your descendants received everything.

## **C. *Psalm 127:1-2* – The Lord's Provision**

**Second**, watchmen in the ancient world *guarded the city*. If the enemy was coming to attack, the *watchman sounded the alarm*. His job was to stay awake and watch. But **if God was not watching over a city**, to protect it, *all the watchman's watching was a waste*. He might as well sleep.

## **C. *Psalm 127:1-2* – The Lord's Provision**

The **third** example is in *verse 2*. The laborer, and probably a farmer *got up early and went to bed late*, to take care of his crops. In *his own strength*, he lived in fear or anxiety of his work, not knowing if there was going to be a *flood, famine, dry spell or locust plague*. *Without God's blessing*, he and his family were in trouble.

## **C. Psalm 127:1-2 – The Lord's Provision**

...In **faith**. This is summed up at the end of verse 2, where *God gives His beloved sleep or rest*. This means there was *no anxiety or fear* in the hearts of those who were building a house, guarding a city or taking care of crops. *They left the things they could not control in God's hands and fulfilled their responsibilities in **faith**.*

"Hard work by itself is not what counts, but one's relationship to God, for God is able to bless an individual even while he sleeps. (There may even be a subtle allusion to the miracle of conception following sexual intercourse; see the reference to the gift of sons in the following verse.) The statement is not advocating laziness, but utilizing hyperbole to give perspective and to remind the addressees that God must be one's first priority." *NET Bible Online*



## **C. *Psalm 127:1-2* – The Lord's Provision**

What does "*in the Lord*" mean? When we do something to honor Him, and for Him in life and ministry, we do it "*in the Lord.*"

There is more to this. Put another way, when we *do what He says in His word* when it comes to raising kids, working hard, being a good steward of His money, sharing Christ and more, *it is in the Lord.*

## **D. *Psalm 127:3-5* – The Lord's Blessing**

This next section expounds on *verses 1-2*, giving one specific blessing from the LORD. Some translations say "*children*," but the Hebrew is "*sons*." These *sons* were, and are, a *heritage of the LORD*. They were and are *God's gift*. In the ancient world and some cultures today, *having sons is very important*.

"Archery units were the most critical component of an ancient army - useful on foot, on horseback, and as part of the chariot corp. The psalmist's choice of arrows as a metaphor is appropriate to the analogy of multiple children, but it also underscores that the growth of the next generation is vital to the future well-being of both city and society."

*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary,*  
p. 426

*Heb* “like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so [are] sons of youth.” Arrows are used in combat to defend oneself against enemies; sons are viewed here as providing social security and protection (see v. 5). The phrase “sons of youth” is elliptical, meaning “sons [born during the father’s] youth.” Such sons will have grown up to be mature adults and will have children of their own by the time the father reaches old age and becomes vulnerable to enemies.” NET Bible

## **D. *Psalm 127:3-5* – The Lord's Blessing**

Verse 5 says the man is *blessed*, by God, if *his quiver*, continuing the arrow metaphor, is *full of children or sons*. The sons protected their father in the "*gates*." The gates of a city in the ancient world is a place where *justice* was administered by the leaders of that city. It was here, this man, *speaks with his enemies*.

## **D. *Psalm 127:3-5* – The Lord's Blessing**

He will *not be put to shame* or will be *protected*. This could be *physical protection* if he was attacked, or *protection of his character*. If his sons were God fearing individuals who were contributing to the society, *any accusation against him could be deflected* by the *character and testimony* of his sons, or children.

# Prayer

**“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6**

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