

# WHEN FATHER DOES BEST<sup>1</sup>

## PSALMS 128:1-8

*A Song of degrees.*

*1Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways.*

*2For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.*

*3Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.*

*4Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.*

*5The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.*

*6Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.*

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### Introduction

Between 1954 and 1960, CBS aired a popular television show titled “Father Knows Best.” Robert Young played the part of the father, although, he was really more like a dad. His family was the most important thing for him. Nothing could tear him away from family events. He played a responsible parent who loved his wife and kids. He was a man who would do a paper route in the rain for his sick son, Bud. He was a man who'd always choose to see Kathy in a school program rather than attend an important Chamber of Commerce dinner. His family came first, but it was a delicate balancing act.

That was make-believe television. The writer of the 128<sup>th</sup> Psalm gave us the blueprint for being a GREAT father.

The Bible tells us God has a high regard for Godly husbands and fathers.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Strite – Sermon Central <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/when-father-does-best-jeff-strite-sermon-on-parenting-108448.asp?Page=1>

In the Old Testament, Godly fathers and husbands were the leaders, priests and prophets of their homes. That was a big responsibility.

Psalms 128 repeats a common theme in Scripture: God has a very high regard for dads. Why? Because earthly fathers are the model of our relationship with God... our “heavenly Father”.

QUOTE: Dr. James I. Lamb said: “God loves fathers. He is one.”

In the 128th psalm, is a “Song of degrees/Ascents.”

Song of degrees/Ascents is used in the titles of 15 psalms (Pss. 120–134). The origin of the phrase is obscure, the generally accepted view is that the Hebrew term *ma'alot* (goings up) is a reference to pilgrims going up to Jerusalem for the three required festivals (Pss. 42:4; 122:4).

Others have suggested that “ascents” is a reference to the rising melody of the psalms, the step-like poetic form of some of the psalms, or to the steps upon which the Levites performed music in the temple.

Jewish tradition relates the title to the 15 steps leading from the court of the women to the court of Israel in the temple.<sup>2</sup>

This Psalm then is one of “*stepping up to the presence of God*” psalms.

God informs earthly fathers that He wants to bless their families and make them strong. He wants them to “ascend to the ideals of what God holds for Fathers.

## Godly Fathers walk with God

*Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways.*

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The Bible talks a lot about how we walk. It emphasizes...

Walking before God

Walking in His ways

The whole idea is that it is a blessing if we walk with God.

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<sup>2</sup> Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., & Butler, T. C. (Eds.). (2003). Degrees, Song Of. In *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 410–411). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Back in Genesis, we're told that God came down and walked with Adam in the cool of the evening. There's an old hymn that has always reminded me of that communion Adam had with God in the Garden (sing it):

“And He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own.”

Oh, what that must have been like. I would give anything to be able to walk with my father today on father's day. Just to talk with him about anything, and genuinely listen. To hear his voice, his thoughts and his wisdom would mean the world to me. He wasn't perfect, but there was never a day that went by that I wondered if he loved me. It showed in every aspect of his life.

God has always wanted to walk with His people. The problem is... His people rarely seem to find the time to walk with Him.

Fathers who want God's blessings in their homes have to decide that they are GOING to have to take the time to walk and talk with God and telling God that they want Him to be their own.

That would mean that Father's should have a Personal time with God in prayer and bible study

Father's should plug into their Church so that their children or grandchildren are given a chance to find God.

KVBC has six hours a week dedicated to this goal. There is Sunday school, Sunday morning worship, and Wednesday evening prayer and bible study. Just six hours out of 168 hours in a week. That is only 3% of the whole week.

Fellowshipping with other Christians is a must. While Christians are not perfect by any means, they are united in their relationship with the risen LORD. This last week at Falls Creek Youth camp, thousands came together for one purpose to unite in praising and studying about God.

Jesus said in Matthew 18:20 **For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.**” Every time you and I spend time with God's people, we're walking with God, because that's what Jesus promised.

I heard a story about the impact of a father on his son while the father didn't know his son was even paying attention.

Larry Crabb tells about watching his father pray when he was only 4 years old. "It was Sunday morning, and about 50 people gathered in a circle at our (Lord's Supper) service. The elements, covered simply with a white cloth, were on a table in the

middle. The arrangement was intentional: it spoke of Christ as the center of our thoughts.

"Dad stood to pray. I was lying on the floor, looking up at him. Even now, the memory is clear. I thought to myself, 'He actually thinks he is talking to Someone. And whoever it is means more to him than anyone else...'"

Without even thinking about it, Larry Crabb's father modeled what his priorities were for his young son. He walked with God at the Communion Table, and his actions spoke to his son of walking and talking and claiming God as his own.

### Godly Fathers have to want their homes to succeed

Notice the location of the blessings listed in Psalms 128:3.

*"3Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.*

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Notice: it's "*by the sides of thine house*" "*Around thy table.*"

Too many men find their greatest fulfillment anywhere but at home. Some find their greatest joys are work, in recreation, possessions, etc.

But, we need to realize that the allure of those aspects of our lives (job/recreation/possessions) can distract us from God's priority for our homes and families.

William Willimon told about an adult Sunday School class where they were studying about Jesus being tempted in the wilderness. The teacher asked "How are we tempted today?"

A young salesman was the first to speak.

"Temptation is when your boss calls you in as mine did yesterday, and says 'I'm going to give you a real opportunity. I'm going to give you a bigger sales territory. We believe you are going places young man.'

'But I don't want a bigger sales territory,' the young salesman told his boss. 'I'm already away from home 4 nights a week. It wouldn't be fair to my wife and daughter.'

'Look,' his boss replied, 'We're asking you to do this for your wife and daughter. Don't you want to be a good father? It takes money to support a family these days.'

Sure, your little girl doesn't take much money now, but think of the future. Think of her future. I'm only asking you to do this for them,' the boss said.

The young man paused and then told his class, "Now that's temptation."<sup>3</sup>

In order to have a God-blessed home, fathers need to make their home a priority. That doesn't mean we're always going to be successful, but that doesn't preclude us not trying.

## Godly Fathers fear the LORD

*4Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.*

*5The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.*

*6Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.*

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Essentially what it's saying is this: Fear the LORD... and you shall receive His blessings.

Now, there are people who have problems with the idea of FEARING God. They try to use "political correctness" to tone down the words. They'll say this phrase means to "reverence God" or "respect" God or be "devout" with God. Some translations will use those words rather than "fear."

the Hebrew phrase is "Yaw-rey Yahweh". "Yaw-rey", and when doing a search on its use, I find that in almost every case the word really means to fear the LORD."

The idea behind this Hebrew word "Yaw-rey" IS "fear".

It's more than respect... it is more than reverence ... it is more than being devout. It means fear

Jacob cheated his brother Esau out of his inheritance and then fled for his life because his brother Esau said he'd kill him. Fourteen years later Jacob returns to his home and the Bible tells us (Gen. 32:11) that Jacob "feared" Esau and prayed that God would deliver him from his brother's hand. That's not respect, or reverence... that's fear.

In Exodus we're told of God bringing the 10 plagues upon Egypt and in Exodus 9:20 we're told that in response to one of those plagues, that Pharaoh's officials "feared the word of God" and protected their cattle from plague. That's not respect, or reverence... that's fear.

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<sup>3</sup> William Willimon, *What's Right With the Church*

Then in Deuteronomy 20:8, God said that certain people didn't have to go to war. Those who were "fearful and fainthearted" were excused from being in the army.

The idea of "Yah-rey" is fearfulness.

Fear the LORD, says Scripture, and God will bless you.

*Ps 103:11 "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him"*

*Psalms 103:13 "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him"*

*Psalms 34:7 & 9 "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them... Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing."*

So, let's review: If I fear God, I'm assured

That He loves me

That He has compassion for me

That He assigns an angel to protect me

And He will make sure I lack for nothing.

But, what does it mean to "fear" God?

Well 1st, fearing God means fearing His disapproval more than anyone else's

Back in the days of Jezebel, it was a frightening thing to be a prophet of God. She killed them wherever she could find them. According to I Kings, there was a man Obadiah who was in employ of Jezebel and her husband Ahab. We're told that "Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water. (I Kings 18:3b-4 KJV)

In other words, Obadiah feared God more than he feared Jezebel.

People will often make decisions, bad or good, upon whatever they fear most.

Thus, a man who fears God properly - does what is right even when faced with things that could make him afraid. Partly because right is right and wrong is wrong.

Let me ask you a question this morning...does your foot automatically come off the gas pedal when you see a State Patrol on the side of the road? That is fear...fear of doing something wrong and having to pay for the consequences.

But Godly fathers and husbands fear God. And when we really fear God in the right way there's nothing else on this earth that can make us afraid

Oswald Chambers once wrote: "The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else."

Or as Psalm 118:4-8 says

*4Let them now that fear the Lord say, that his mercy endureth for ever.*

*5I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place.*

*6The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?*

*7The Lord taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.*

*8It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.*

The 2nd aspect of fearing God is not taking Him for granted

We don't rile up God's anger.

The book of I Samuel tells about a time when the priests in Israel were wicked men. They were the sons of Eli the priest and their names were Hophni and Phineas.

At the time Israel was at war with the Philistines and the army of Israel felt the need to have God's presence with them at the battle front, so they asked Hophni and Phineas to bring the ark to the battle.

What happened? They lost the battle, the priests were killed... and the Ark was stolen by the Philistines.

Why did this happen? Because the leaders of the family of Israel (the wicked priests) thought they could live anyway they wanted and still count on God to help them fight their battles.

When I was a boy, my dad had gave my brother and me boundaries. They were things we could and could not do. I knew that if I crossed one of the boundaries, there was a price to pay. Did I cross them? Of course I did and there was a price to pay. Did I fear my dad? Of course I did, but ONLY if I had crossed over those lines... or if I was considering crossing those lines.

Did I love my dad? Absolutely! I knew he loved me and the boundaries were there for my protection because he loved me.

*9Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*

*10For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*

So, AS earthly fathers, it's important for us to know where God's boundaries are at. We need to know where God draws the line.

*11Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*

*12What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?*

*13Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.*

*14Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

Fearing God is knowing where He has drawn the lines and determining to draw those same lines in our own lives and homes.

Conclusion

The message of this psalm is that one is never truly happy until he is truly holy.<sup>4</sup>

If I want to be a Godly father, and receive all the blessings He wants to give my family...

Godly Fathers walk with God

Godly Fathers have to want their homes to succeed

Godly Fathers fear the LORD

*Bob Crowder*

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<sup>4</sup> *King James Version study Bible* . (1997). (electronic ed., Ps 128:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.