

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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Be finding the book of Psalms, please, and open your Bibles to Psalm 127.

And as you're finding it, may I tell you what you probably already know: that Satan has unleashed an all-out war on the family. When I say the family, I'm talking about the institution of families, and I'm talking about your family, specifically.

Now, if you don't believe that there is a war on the family, I want you to listen to what Gloria Steinem once said. Do you know who Gloria Steinem is? A former Playboy bunny and one of the chief spokespersons for the feminist movement; she is recognized by feminists as being a leader. I want you to listen to what she said, and I'm going to give you a quotation. Quote: "Marriage has existed for the benefit of men and is a legalized, sanctioned control of women. The end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women." She said, "Let's just do away with marriage." And then she goes on to say, "It is important for us to encourage women to leave their husbands. We must work to destroy marriage. The nuclear family must be replaced with a new form of family where individuals live together to meet the needs of all people. There must come a new way of looking at children. Children must be seen as the entire responsibility of the entire society, rather than their parents." Just another way of saying, "It takes a village." Just another way of saying that, "Marriage, as we know it, is obsolete." Now, that would be laughable and no one would pay any attention to that, except to say that this particular woman has a large following, and there're many who see her as the patron saint of a new movement in our world.

Now, of course, that's a very frontal attack. Most of the attack on the family is more subtle. For example, the sitcoms of today; what do they do? They satirize or ridicule the nuclear family. They mock marriage, and devoted fathers and mothers are looked upon somehow as dinosaurs and the father in these sitcoms is a bumbling, fumbling, stumbling buffoon. And, dads are mocked and ridiculed. Or, if it is a serious film, the father is seen as cruel, vindictive, overbearing, and if he is a religious man, look out! He is one who has twisted and perverted and cruel ways. And then, on top of that, there're many who would not fall into either of these two categories, but have never found God's plan.

J. Paul Getty. Is that name familiar to you? J. Paul Getty was one, in his day, one of the richest men on the face of the earth. As a matter of fact, when a billion dollars was worth more than a billion dollars is today, he had a net worth that exceeded four billion dollars. Now, if you have a net worth of more than four billion dollars, most of the people of this world would say that you are a success. And yet, he wrote in his autobiography and it was recorded in the Los Angeles Times in 1981. I want you to see what this man said. This is J. Paul Getty. He said, and I quote. Now, here's a man, here's a man with more than four billion, four billion, not million, billion, "b" as in "baby," four billion dollars. He said, and I quote: "I've never been given to envy, save, or except for the envy I feel toward those people who have the ability to make a marriage work and endure happily. It's an art I have never been able to master. My record: five marriages, five divorces. In short: five failures." And then the article continues. "He termed the memories of his relationships with his five sons as 'painful.' Much of this pain has been passed on with his money. His most treasured offspring, Timothy, a frail child, born when Getty was 53, died in 1958 at the age of 12 of surgical complications, after a sickly life, spent mostly separated from his father, who was forever away on business. Other members of the Getty family also

suffered from tragic circumstances. A grandson, J. Paul Getty, III, was kidnapped and held for a ransom of 2.9 million. When Getty refused to pay, they held the boy for five months and eventually cut off his right ear. Getty's oldest son apparently committed suicide among strange circumstances. Another son, Gordon Paul Getty, has been described as living a tortured existence. He was ridiculed in correspondence by his father and was the least favorite son. Similar sorrow has followed other members of this unfortunate family."

Here's a man that the world would call a success, and yet he, himself, confessed, "I have been an abject failure in the things that really matter."

I've just mentioned all three of these illustrations to show you that the devil has done a good job on families. And when we're talking about families today, I cannot, I cannot overestimate the importance of fathers. I heard a song, I don't know who wrote the song. I really don't know the title of the song, and I'm not sure I have the phrase just right, but here's what I remember it. The man is singing to God, and here's what he's saying. "God, I want to be just like You because he," talking about his son, "wants to be just like me." Are you familiar with that song? "Father, I want to be just like you because that boy wants to be just like me." There's a tremendous amount of truth in that.

Now, let's look in God's Word in Psalm 127, and see what God says about all of this. He says, "*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.*" Do you know J. Paul Getty said, "I've never been able to master that art." Of course not. No matter how much he tries, without God, it cannot be done. "*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows.*" Four billion dollars and you know what it was? The bread of sorrow, the bread of sorrow. "*For He giveth His beloved sleep.*" And then he says this, "*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. 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.*"

Now, what he is saying is this: that children are like arrows, and dads are like archers. Dads are to be mighty warriors and children are to be arrows in the hand of the father. And the implication of this psalm is that when dads learn to shoot straight, the kids are gonna to hit the mark. You see, an arrow is no more effective than the warrior who shoots it. And the bow is not much better than the man that holds that bow in his hand.

Now, with that as a background, we're going to talk about dads who shoot straight and kids who hit the mark this morning. Now, three things I would have you to learn today as we look into this passage of Scripture.

Number one: if you would to have a successful family and good kids, **the archer must be strong**, the archer must be strong. Notice what it says, "*As arrows are in the hand of a,*" what? "*A mighty man.*" And that's so true. We are to be strong. Now, when I was in the university I took a course in teaching individual sports and I was initiated to the sport of archery. It wasn't what I thought it was going to be. There's more than casually picking up a bow and an arrow. I

learned that no matter how fine the arrow, and how strong the bow, it takes an incredible amount of skill. There must be a good aim. There must be a full draw. And there's got to be a smooth release to make that arrow go where you want it to be. Needless to say, it takes skill, it takes practice, it takes determination. The same is true to be a good dad. The same is true of fatherhood.

Now folks, I want to tell you, to be a good man is difficult; to be a good husband is more difficult; but to be a good father is the most difficult of all. Did you know that? It really is. It is difficult to be. Now, when the arrow misses its target, there may be many reasons. Indeed, there may be some bad arrows. Indeed, there may be some moving targets. Indeed, there may be some unforeseen wind that blows the arrow away from the target. Now, because of this, this does not diminish the warrior's responsibility. It really only increases it that we might with skill, point those arrows. God has given us these children like arrows.

What is my responsibility as a dad? My responsibility is to shape, to sharpen, and to shoot those arrows at the enemy. *"As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of one's youth."* Now, do you know what my goal in life is? You say, "To be a good pastor." Well, I want to be a good pastor. "To be a good preacher?" I hope I can be a good preacher. But my highest ambition; and God is listening, is not to be primarily a good pastor or a good preacher; it's to be a good husband and a good father. And I don't mind telling you, if I had to choose between the congregation and my family, I'd choose my family. I would. That doesn't mean that I don't love the church. You'll have a better pastor if I love my family as I ought to love my family. You can get another pastor. My kids, they've got one dad. I am their daddy. And, the matter of fact, the Bible says that if a man doesn't practice it at home, he ought not to export it. First of all, a pastor ought to be one who has his family under the tutelage and the spiritual leadership of himself. So, here's the first point. Now listen very carefully. The, the archer must be strong. The archer must be strong. *"As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man."* Now, we're not talking about physical strength here because some of us could not qualify, but we're talking about spiritual strength, and any can qualify because he's talking now in spiritual terms.

Now, here's the second thing. Not only must the archer be strong, **the arrows must be straight**. That's the second point. The arrows must be straight. Now, children, listen, children are not born straight arrows. Sticks are not arrows. Twigs are not arrows. Children are not, by nature, arrows; they have to be made into arrows. And you cannot shoot straight with crooked arrows. And so, what is your job as a dad? It is shaping, it is sharpening, and it is shooting the arrows that God has put in your hands. And that is, I suppose, among life's most difficult task. And that's the reason we have so many dropout dads. The problem in society is not primarily juvenile delinquency but it is the delinquency of dads. Dropout dads who fail to do and be what they ought to be.

Put these verses down in your margin. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 4, *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord."* The word nurture literally means the discipline, and the admonition means the teaching of the Lord.

Or again, put this verse down. Colossians chapter 3 and verse 21, *“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”* Do you know what the challenge of any man is, and one of the prime marks of success of any man? It’s not how much money he can accumulate, but whether or not his kids are spiritually sharp and emotionally straight. Are his kids spiritually sharp and are they emotionally straight? An arrow has to be straight, and it has to be sharp. Now, notice what it says, *“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man.”* There is a time, dads, when the arrows are in your hand, and there will come a time when they will be out of your hand.

Now, when the arrow is in your hand, you have a responsibility. So many of us want to give that responsibility over to professionals today. Somebody else can handle the job for us, we feel. Someone has written these words, and I want you to listen to them because they’re very pertinent.

“No longer does he need to sit in your big, easy chair and listen while you read Jack and the Beanstalk. Now, there is a professional storyteller called television. It doesn’t doze off or become impatient. You can work those few extra hours in the office, earning a little more money, so your children can have a bigger television. You can now put him in the hands of a professional educator who will have him from 8:00 a.m. in the morning until 3:00 p.m. five days a week. He can tell him about the birds and the bees. And he will get his sex education there. You will have more time to accumulate things. You can work a few more hours and pay a professional to mow the lawn and to wash your car. Your child will not have to learn discipline and responsibility. A professional can teach him how to play baseball, and you won’t have to stand with him in the driveway at dusk and show him how to hold a bat, or to throw a curve ball. No, if you work a few extra hours you can buy him a real, hardwood bat. A professional can teach him how to swim so you won’t have to waste your weekends at the beach or lake, and with your extra money you can be on the golf course. You may even provide him with a swimming pool to swim in at home or at the club. And when he gets into high school, you will be able to afford a professional guidance counselor, who will give him ideas about his future. Your extra money will pay for that. A professional can teach him how to drive, and with your extra money you can buy him a new car. No need for you to get your hands greasy, side by side, in the garage while you teach him how to clean the plugs and change the oil filter.”

Friend, everything in us tells us there’s something wrong with that, Amen? Kids need dads, and there’s no way that you can pay somebody else to do what God wants you to do.

Now, how do you shape and sharpen arrows? Get out a pencil and a piece of paper and I want you to write some things down. Number one, **begin early**. Now when you have a twig then you can begin to shape it when it’s soft and pliable. That’s the reason the Bible says in Proverbs 22, and verse 6, *“Train up a,”* a what? *“A child.”* *“Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he’s old he will not depart from it.”* Little children can be shaped and molded so very easily. You want me to tell you why?

Number one: **the curiosity factor** is very, very high. “Why, daddy, why? Why, daddy, why?” Friend, that’s a teaching moment! Don’t say, “Stop asking why.” Say, “Keep asking why,” and answer those questions, the little ones and the big ones.

The memory factor is great. Don’t tell me that little children can’t memorize. Friend, by the time they’re two, they’ve learned a foreign language. Think about it.

The trust factor is at the highest point. Little children trust. That’s the reason the Bible says that adults have to become like little children to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

The humility factor is at an all-time high. Little children are not too proud to learn they can take advice, and they have an innate ability to believe! That’s the reason why you must start soon! Tomorrow, that child will not be asking why, and that schoolboy will not need help with his lessons. So, number one, start early.

Number two, **be creative**. I can’t stress this enough. When God told the Jews how to train their children and, by and large, the Jews have done a great job at this. He told them in Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 6 and 7, *“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.”* Not just in your head but, *“in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them,”* I love that, just underscore that, *“shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”* Do you see it? It’s in your heart and it’s just bubbling out, and there’re all kinds of ways to teach. Don’t ram it down their throat like cod-liver oil. Family worship doesn’t have to be an ordeal. Most of your teaching is not gonna be done in family worship. It’s gonna be done when you rise up, when you lie down, when you go out, when you come in, as you walk, as you talk you’re going to be sharing the Lord.

Number three, **work to build character**, work to build character. Do you know what most dads are working on? Sports, grades, health, popularity, management, but not character, not character. What is character? Ah, character is integrity. I’m just gonna rattle off some words. But I want you to be asking yourself this question as I rattle off these words: Who is teaching these things to my son, to my daughter? Are you ready? Contentment, courage, courtesy, discernment, fairness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, helpfulness, honesty, humility, kindness, obedience, orderliness, patience, persistence, self-control, tactfulness, thankfulness, thriftiness, wisdom, zeal. Where’re they gonna get that? You think they’re gonna get it at school? No! Dad! You got to build character.

When you compliment your kids, compliment them for character qualities, not just for the home run, not just for the good grades, not just for how many pounds they can curl when they’re in the gymnasium. But compliment them for these character qualities.

Number four; **learn to set some limits on your child**. Set some limits. Let me give you a verse here, *“For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not.”* He restrained them not. That is, he did not set some limits. You say, “Well, I don’t want to set limits on my child.” God had two children, put them in the Garden of Eden, and God set some limits upon them.

Do you know that if you don't set limits on your children, it's a sign that you have rejected them? No limitation implies to a child rejection, and if you don't conquer them, they will allow somebody else to conquer them. When you set limits, and don't just have a lot of little small rules, but have some great principles, and adhere to them, because that child will push against those. He'll push and he'll push. That's in a child's nature. And when he pushes, if it gives; he will have no confidence, he'll have no security, none whatsoever. Every child needs some limits.

Next, **assign responsibilities**. Teach your child that one of the greatest abilities is responsibility. Give him regular work assignments. He doesn't need so many freebies. Most of you have no idea what your child can do because he's never been challenged to do it! Teach him that there's a link between success and work! And make him complete the job, and don't fix it for him! Give him some money, give him an allowance, and then let him earn some. And teach him money management. Teach him how to save and to give, and how to spend. Teach responsibility.

Next; we're just talking about make arrows straight and sharp, **let your home be filled with laughter**. Your home ought to be the happiest place in the town. It ought to be the place where he wants to bring his friends there. Proverbs chapter 15 verse 13, "*A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.*" Have you ever seen kids with a broken spirit? They haven't been raised in a happy home. "*The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge, but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness. All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.*" I don't care how much wealth you have, how fine your home is, if there's not laughter in that home, your home is tragic. William Thackeray said, "Laughter is like sunshine in the home." Your home ought to ring with laughter. If your home is a happy home, I can tell you, it has a much greater chance of survival.

Next, **let your kids see God at work in your family**. Let them see God at work. Now, they hear Pastor Rogers preach about God, but the church is the classroom. The home is the laboratory. Let them see God at work. And do you know how they're going to see God at work in your house?

Number one, they're going to see God in your worship. They're going to watch you when company comes, whether you stayed from church, miss church. You say, "Well, Pastor, we weren't there Sunday; we had company to drop in." Tell your boss tomorrow morning, "I didn't come to work. I had company to drop in." See how that goes. They're going to be watching. They're going to be watching your priorities in your worship. The way you spend your money. They're going to be watching how you use your time. Let them see God as a vibrant reality in your life.

Our kids know that we're not perfect, but our kids know that God is number one. And I'm not afraid to you to ask any of the four. They'll tell you. They know. Now if somebody were to ask you; if I were to bring one of your children up here and ask them, "What is the priority of your dad?" What would they say? Let them see God at work in your home.

And then, **cover them constantly with prayer.** That's the last one I want to mention. Just cover them with prayer. Now, if you are the archer, and the children are the arrows, the bow is prayer. That's what sends them forth. And a father without prayer is like an archer with an unstrung bow. You need to pray for them. Pray for them regularly. And no matter how dark it gets, and how discouraging it may be, and how difficult it may seem, just keep on praying. Never, never, never stop praying. I've seen my darling wife pray our children through one circumstance after another after another after another. What are we saying? I'm saying, friend, that the archer must be strong, and the arrows must be straight.

Now, here's the third thing I want to say today; **the aim must be sure.** Now if you've got a good archer, and you've got a good arrow, you still need a good aim. You've got to have a goal. *"As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of one's youth."* Verse 5 says, *"They shall speak with the enemies in the gate."* There are enemies. I told you at the beginning of this message that there are enemies against the home. How are we going to take the institution of the family back? By our kids. A godly seed.

How are we going to shoot down the ideas of a Gloria Steinem? With our arrows. Well, they're going to speak with enemies. They're going to say, "That's a lie. That's not right. Here's the truth. My father taught me the truth. My mother taught me the truth. They got it from the Word of God." Now, many times we're trying to keep our children from the enemy. Friend, we ought to aim our children at the enemy. We ought to aim them at the enemy. They are our arsenal. *"They shall speak with the enemy in the gate."*

We didn't just raise four children so they can live in safety and harmony. We raised them themselves to be arrows to go out against the enemy. Now, parents, more than anybody else, determine the direction of the arrow. The aim must be sure.

The apostle John said in Third John, verse 4, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth."* Now, I have goals for myself; I have desires for my children. I can't make a goal for any other person except for myself. I desire godly children; I will be a godly dad. I will be a godly dad. I desire godly children. But let me give you some desires that Joyce and I have for our children. My wife has written a book. The title of the book is *"The Wise Woman."* And in that book Joyce wrote some things that she desires for our children. And I want you to listen to them because they may be the kind of desires that you would wish for your children. I'm going to read them as she wrote them.

"I want my children to really like one another. I don't want this close relationship to end. I want the memories of childhood, laughter, and adventure to add spice to our family gatherings throughout the years. I desire for the bond of Christian love to tie us all together. I want each of them to be devoted to the person of Jesus Christ and to be filled with His Spirit. They don't have to grow up to be in my particular denomination, but I desire that we might not experience differences in doctrines that will divide our fellowship. I desire that each of our children discover God's particular talents and spiritual gifts for them, and that they might be like garments that our Lord may readily put on to express Himself. May these talents never be channeled to the devil's use or for self-glory. May each one first sacrifice the right to himself to Jesus Christ. Then these gifts and talents will be theirs and His forever. I want my children to

learn to pray, win souls, and minister to the needs of others, and to see Jesus Christ on each page of the Bible. I claim for each of them a Christian husband or wife filled with Your Spirit. For without You there can be no real unity.”

And I just want to say, “Amen, Joyce.” That’s what we do want. You see, you have to have a goal, you have to have an aim, you have to have a desire before you release the arrows. Arrows are not to be collected; they’re to be projected. I think it was Anna Mow, who said that, “Our job, as parents, is to work ourselves out of a job.” You see, when you’re an archer and you pull that thing back, that arrow’s there and you have the aim. Then there’s comes a time, what? When you let go. Arrows are to be straightened, they’re to be sharpened, and then they’re to be shot! They’re to be sent! They’re to be released! There comes a time when they are in your hand, and then there’s a time when they’re out of your hand. You have to release them into adulthood and you just have to give them out. Our goal is to produce kids who can emotionally leave home, kids who can come to love somebody else more than they love their own parents.

Boy, that’s hard, isn’t it? To give your daughter to be married is like giving a Stradivarius violin to a gorilla. But you have to let go! You just have to say, “There they go!” But you just keep on praying! And the winds of grace then will send those arrows. Thank God that we have arrows to aim at the enemy.

Now, what are we saying? Look, the archer must be strong, the arrow must be straight, and the aim must be sure. *“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children on one’s youth.”*

Now in conclusion, let me just say several things, dads, I want you to do. Let’s just sum it up. Number one, would you **ask God to make you a mighty man!** J. Paul Getty said, “I was a failure.” Ask God to make you a mighty man. *“As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man.”* It’s God who gives you that strength.

Number two, would you **get to work shaping, sharpening, and seasonings your arrows!**

Number three, would you **work on your skills at being an archer!**

Number four, would you **rethink what your goals and desires are for your family!** What is your aim for your child? What kind of success do you want? Do you want him to be a successful failure? Or do you want to raise a man for God, a girl for God?

You say, “Pastor Rogers, it’s too late for me. The arrow’s gone, and he went in the wrong direction.” No, it’s not too late. You can recover lost arrows, bring them back. Pray again. Ask God in mercy to give you a new chance, and pray, and pray, and pray much, for this Scripture says, *“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain.”* If we only knew how dependent we are upon Almighty God.

This is Father’s Day. I thank God for the memory of my dad, who died, a godly man, lifetime deacon. I thank God for him. But some of you say, “Pastor Rogers, you’re talking about a romanticized idea that I don’t know anything about. My dad was a failure.” Or, “My dad deserted my mother.” Or, “My mother deserted my dad. Our home was broken.” Or, “My dad

died when I was little.” Or, “My dad was cruel and vindictive. It’s very hard for me today to idealize what you’re talking about.” That may be true. Unfortunately, it’s more and more true today, isn’t it? But I want to tell you something. There’s another Father in the glory. There is a Father in Heaven. And Jesus taught us to pray, “*Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name.*” And do you know that the Bible says, “*When my father and my mother caste me off, then will the Lord take me up.*” There is a God and Father, and He wants to be Your Father. And the only way He can be Your Father is for you to become His child. And the only way you can become His child is to be born into His family. The Bible calls that being born again. And how are you born into the family of God? By faith. Listen, the Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.*” To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. To be saved means that Jesus Christ now lives in your heart to give you peace and power and strength. And to be saved means that one day, when you die, or when Jesus comes again, He’ll take you home to Heaven. And I promise you, on the authority of this Book that I preach from, if you will pray and say it and mean it, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin and save me,” He will save you instantaneously, and He will keep you saved eternally if you’ll trust Him. Now, if I could do it for you I would, but I preached as best I know how, and now I’m going to ask you to pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you’re already saved, would you begin to pray for those round about you who may not know the Lord Jesus Christ? And if you’re not certain that you’re saved, or certain that you’re not saved, and you want to get it settled, would you pray this way. Forget anyone else is here and just pray from your heart. Just pray this, “Dear God.” Pray it. “Dear God, I know that You love me.” And, friend, oh, He does love you. “I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You Jesus.” Would you tell Him that? “I do trust You right now. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me Jesus.” Pray that. “Save me, Jesus.” Did you ask Him? Were you sincere? Then, thank Him. Just by faith pray this way. “Thank you for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Master, my Savior, my God, and my Father. Thank You for doing it. And, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You. I will not be ashamed of You, and I will make it public today. I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen.”