

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

**SERMON TITLE:** Family Fun

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Take your Bibles and find Psalm 128. We're going to talk today about some homemade happiness. A home ought to be the dearest place on Earth, the nearest place to that Heaven that we're talking about. In this particular Psalm, God gives us a description of the ideal family. I did not say the normal family or the average family, it ought to be normal according to God's standard, but God does give us the ideal family. Look at it if you will, Psalm 128 verses 1 through 6, "*Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord, that walketh in His ways, for thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands.*" Now here's the phrase, watch it, "*Happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house, thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life, yea, thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel.*" I say, that is the ideal family.

May I give you a definition of the family? So many times we don't even know what we're talking about when we talk about family. The word family has been misused and abused, caricatured, and sometimes refused, but what is a family? A family is an institution ordained of God. It did not come out of the swamps of evolution and immorality, but it is ordained of God and therefore it is rooted in human nature. God created the family to satisfy the deepest longings of our heart and to give us a means to give and to receive love, to propagate the human race, to provide a safe and secure environment in which to nurture, to teach, and to love our children. A family is a God-ordained unit related by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is defined as a lifetime, covenant relationship between a man and a woman. Now sometimes that relationship is severed and sometimes there is a single parent with children. That also is a family.

That is the ideal family that we've found right here, however, in Psalm 128. And how does God describe it? Well, first of all, there's a godly husband in verses 1 and 2. Man is the head of the home; God has ordained that. Then in verse 3 there is a faithful wife. She's like a vine beside the side of the house, fruitful and faithful. And then in verse 3 there are happy and productive children. They are like green olive plants round about the table. Now in the Middle East the olive was very valuable and very productive, but it needed to be nurtured and cared for, and that is God's picture of the ideal family. And God says this is a blessing. Look in Psalm 128 verse 4, "*Behold that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.*" But we're going to have to admit that the ideal has turned to an ordeal. And a lot of folks looking for a new deal. Why? This thing of a happy family is often made fun of today and ridiculed today as if it ever existed, it can never, ever come back. It is but an elusive dream.

Now I want to talk to you about a particular part of the family. I want to talk to you about some family fun. We've talked about family faith and family finances. I want to talk to you about some old-fashioned family fun. I want us today to get serious about fun. I want us to learn about laughter and I want us to see that laughter is a gift from God. Now you're in Psalm 128, just look in Psalm 126 and verse 2. When God's

people got right, notice what it says, “*Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Then, said they among the heathen, ‘The Lord hath done great things for them.’*” I would like for your home to be such a happy place that your neighbors who don’t know the Lord, your pagan neighbors, if you have some, will look at you and see the laughter and the joy that is in your home and say of you, “The Lord’s done great things for them.” And one of the marks that God has done something great for us is that our mouths are filled with laughter.

Now laughter is a gift from God. Sarah said in Genesis chapter 21 and verse 6, “*God hath made me to laugh.*” Now if you’re one of those who think that laughter and faith are contradictory, you need to get your Bible out and study your Bible. “*God hath made me to laugh.*” We need to learn something about family fun. We need to learn how to celebrate humor.

I have a friend named Ken Davis who is a comedian, a godly comedian. He doesn’t believe in coarse jokes and making fun of individuals so as to humiliate them, but he makes me laugh. And here’s what Ken Davis said, “Allow laughter to flood your home and its echoes will last a lifetime. Someone wisely defined humor as a gentle way to acknowledge human frailty. Humor is a way of saying, ‘I am not okay and you are not okay but that’s okay.’” I love that. “I’m not okay, you’re not okay, but that’s okay, God loves us anyway. People who are secure in their awareness of God’s love and who have experienced His love and forgiveness are free to laugh.” That’s good. “People who are secure in God’s love and awareness of God’s love and who’ve experienced that love and His forgiveness, they’re the ones who are free to laugh. Humor should never be used to avoid facing issues or as a weapon to hurt members of your family, but it should be allowed to flourish as a part of family life.” That’s what I’m trying to say.

Now when I’m talking about family fun I’m not talking about silly mindless frivolity, I am not talking about irresponsibility, I’m not talking about failing to do what you ought to do because you are careless. As a matter of fact, I’ve found out that fun and efficiency go together. As a matter of fact, if you learn how to have fun you will probably be more efficient. And in my studies for this particular message I found what I’d already suspected, that people who have an unusual capacity for laughter also have an unusual capacity for seriousness. The two go together. I’ll tell you something else that I learned. Laughter, with a well-rounded sense of humor, psychologists tell us, is one of the hallmarks of high intelligence. It is people who have a well-rounded sense of humor that have one of the surest signs of being an intelligent person. Now when I’m talking to you about family fun, I’m talking to you about not merely laughter and games. I include: joy, happiness, games, humor, sports, leisure, vacations, meals, parties, celebration, entertainment, and much, much more.

Now don’t get the idea that our Savior that we love and we said, “Because He lives I can face tomorrow,” don’t get the idea that Jesus was some pale, religious, sanctimonious recluse. If you study the life of the Lord Jesus, one of the things that they crucified Him for was they said He was a wine bibber and a glutton. Now He

wasn't, but Jesus went to parties. He worked His first miracle at a wedding feast. And there Jesus was the life of the party and Jesus was a friendly person. He called himself a friend of sinners. And I tell you one thing about Jesus, the little children loved Him, the little children loved Him. The little children wanted to come and sit in the lap of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that ought to tell you something about the Lord Jesus Christ, who was a man of great gladness. As a matter of fact, the Bible says in Psalm 45 and verse 7 concerning the Lord Jesus, "*Thou hast anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows.*" Jesus knew joy and Jesus knew happiness.

Now Satan would love to distort things. Of course there's a time to weep and there's a time to laugh. But Satan wants to get us out of balance. Satan wants to turn us into grim people. Satan wants to take the joy out of our lives and to distort things. I want to tell you something, friend, leisure is not a luxury, it is a necessity. Do you know what the word leisure means? The word leisure comes from a Latin word which means to give permission or to be permitted. So leisure time is a time that you give yourself permission to have without feeling guilty for enjoying it, because you need it and God wants you to have it. You have to give yourself permission for leisure. There's a lot of fun in you, but you have to give it permission to get out.

And there are a lot of people who have not learned to give themselves that permission. You must learn to have leisure, and if you have children, those green olive plants around your table, oh, my dear friend, don't fail to have that fun with your kids while they are kids. And you need to throw away your excuses, and all of us have excuses. "I don't have time." Then you take time. "Well, I'm working for their inheritance." Friend, it'd be far better for you to live rich than to die rich. You say, "Well, I'll make it up with the grandkids." Well, they may not even be bringing the grandkids around because of the way that you lived with them. "Well, we're going to Disneyland in August." Friend, that won't do it. I'm saying that you need to put away your excuses. You say, "Well I have deadlines." You will always have deadlines, but you won't always have a four-year-old. And we need to think about it. The word leisure simply means to give permission and it is a Biblical thing.

Put this verse down, Ecclesiastes chapter 3 and verse 4. The Bible says, "*There's a time to weep and there is a time to laugh.*" That's what God says, "*There's a time to weep; there's a time to laugh.*" Jesus in the New Testament said in Luke chapter 6 verse 21, "*Blessed are ye that weep now for ye shall laugh.*" That's what Jesus said. Don't get the idea that you can't be happy and be a Christian. Don't get the idea that God is some sort of a cosmic killjoy, that every time He sees somebody having a good time, He moves in to break up the party. That's not God. That is not the God of the Bible, and that is not the God of a happy home, and if you don't learn to put some joy in your home and some laughter in your home and some fun in your home, it's going to be a long, hard ride through ulcer gulch. The Bible says there's a time to weep. And yes, there's some things we need to be serious about, deadly serious. The things that break the heart of Jesus ought to break our hearts, but the thing that gave Jesus joy ought to give us joy and we ought to enjoy the things of God.

Dr. Vance Havner was a friend, who's now in Heaven, that many of us have learned so much from and quote so often. Dr. Havner said, "I have no sympathy with those who say the devil never takes a vacation. I am not following the devil, but the Lord, who said in Mark 6:31, 'Come ye yourselves apart and rest a while.'" And then Dr. Havner said, "If you don't come apart, you will come apart." You will go to pieces.

You see, what, what are we talking about? There is a time to work, there's a time to rest, there's a time to weep, there's a time to laugh, and we need some homemade happiness. We need some family fun.

I want to mention three things, three things that family fun will do. Are you ready for them? Number one: **family fun refreshes**, family fun refreshes. Look in Psalm 128 and verse 2 of this Psalm, "*For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands. Happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee.*" Now we have to work and sometimes work is difficult, and we come in and we eat, however, the labor of our hands and God refreshes us.

Now work is necessary, but it can't be all work and no play. You're in Psalm 128, look over in Psalm, 127 verse 2. Look at it, these Psalms are linked together, "*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.*" Now, what is He talking about, the man who rises up early and stays up late? He's talking about the man who is more interested in his finances than he is his fun. He's more interested in his labor than he is in his laughter, and God says that is vanity, that is vanity. There's a time to work. There's also a time to rest. And don't be so busy, what he's saying is, don't be so busy making a living that you forget to live! So many people are doing that. As I've already said, it is better to live rich than it is to die rich.

I read a story that deeply touched my heart. A young preacher came to a town that was a mill town. A small church was there and the young preacher went to see the owner of the mill to invite the owner of the mill in this mill town, who literally owned the town, really, to come to the church and this is what the man said to the minister. He said, "Young man, you've not seen me in church and you will not see me until my funeral. I own this town and this mill. It is my pot of gold. When I came here as a young immigrant, I heard that in America, there was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. I have found the gold, but young man, I have lost the rainbow." Now I wonder how many I'm talking to right now, you're working for that pot of gold and forgetting the rainbow. Psalm 127 verse 2, "*It is vain to rise up early, to stay up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. For He giveth His beloved sleep.*" That literally means that He, "*He giveth His beloved in his sleep.*" As somebody said, "If you're burning the candle at both ends, you're not as bright as you think you are. You're not as bright as you think you are." Life is passing you by! Your children are failing to have the joy and the happiness that God wants you to have with that family fun.

This showed up on the web here. I don't know who the author is. "We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but more narrow viewpoints.

We spend more but have less. We buy more but enjoy it less. We have bigger houses and smaller families. More conveniences but less time. We have more degrees but less common sense. More knowledge, but less judgment. More experts but more problems. More medicine but less wellness. We spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get angry too quickly, stay up too late, get too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom. We have multiplied our possessions but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and lie too often. We have learned how to make a living but not a life. We've added years to life but not life to years. We build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever but have less communication. We have become long on quantity but short on quality. These are times of world peace but domestic warfare, more leisure and less fun, more kinds of food but less nutrition. These are days of two incomes but more divorce, of fancier houses but broken homes. It's a time when there's much in the show window and nothing in the stock room."

Think about it. Friend, what does family fun do? Family fun refreshes. Why don't you say, "Pastor Rogers, by God's grace we're going to put some fun in our family. We need some refreshment in our home." We've been too grim, too much grinding out this thing called life, but Jesus came to give us abundant life.

Now here's the second thing that family fun will do. Not only will family fun refresh, but **family fun repairs**, it repairs. Look again in this Psalm 128 verse, 2, "*For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hand. Happy shalt thou be,*" that is, it refreshes, "*and it shall be well with thee.*" It will put things back together, it will be well with thee. Did you know that laughter is a medicine? Joy is a medicine? Happiness is a medicine? Proverbs 17 verse 22, put it in your margin, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones.*" If you have a grim and a solemn spirit, it's going to break your health. It'll break the health of an individual, and it will break the health of a family. Put this verse in your margin, Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 25, "*Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop, but a good word maketh it glad.*" You need to learn how to give some good words in your house. Heaviness just bows down the heart. Read in Proverbs 15 verses 13 through 15, "*A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. 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 love that. When you have a merry heart you have a continual feast. It doesn't matter whether it's Hamburger Helper or filet. You have a feast if you have a merry heart. I've seen those people with a broken spirit. The zest is gone, the spark is gone, the enthusiasm is gone, the fight is gone. The only thing that is left is the shell of that individual, or the shell of that home.

I tell you, folks, there's too much stress today. There's too much stress. Ulcers and high blood pressure, migraine headaches, strokes, and cancer are some of the symptoms of stress. Not all of these are caused by stress, but the physicians will tell you that we live in a stressed out society. Our attitudes, our lack of joy controls our

very emotion, controls our health. If you don't think that attitude has a lot to do with it, you think how many times people are too sick to go to work but seldom are they too sick to take a vacation. Children many times don't want to go to school and the reason that these children don't want to go to school is that they're sick at their stomach. The truth of the matter is, they're sick of school. It's our emotions that control our physical bodies so often.

I have in my files a story of something that took place after World War II in Germany. There were a lot of orphans, and they performed an experiment. Whether they had any right to do it or not, doesn't matter, the experiment took place. And they took one hundred children and put fifty of them in one group and fifty of them in another group. And one group of children were given everything that they need physically: food, bedding, clothing, care, and they were also given a lot of attention and a lot of love. They took the other fifty children in the orphanage and gave them all of the same physical material benefits but gave them no human interaction and gave them no love. And after a year, both groups were tested and those children who were raised in the orphanage where there was joy and happiness, listen to this, were an average of two inches taller, several pounds heavier. The other group, where there was no love, no happiness, no personal interaction, had more diseases and more sickness.

Did you know that, that, that laughter is a miracle medicine? Proverbs 17:22, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.*" Today people are discovering that. I read in *Executive Digest* that laughter has a profound and instantaneously effect on every organ. It reduces tensions, it exercises vital organs, and this goes on to say even if the laughter is forced it replaces bad emotions and produces its own effect. I said in the introduction to this that laughter is a gift from God. Think about it. Man is the only creature who can do three things. He's the only one who can weep, he's the only one who can blush, and he's the only one who can laugh. That is a gift of God. God made us that way.

There's a project by some researchers, Yoder and Goodman in New York, and they've talked about the effect that laughter can have just to repair, to restore and I'm going to quote now, "The positive effect that it has on a person's attitude, coping skills, relationships, and creativity in the way that humor can enhance motivation and morale is backed up, not just by common sense and anecdotes, but by research." They even have a magazine entitled *Laughing Matters*. It does matter. You see, laughter has a way of releasing tension, whether it is a broken spirit, broken body, or broken home. We've seen it in our home sometimes. When there's tension in the home and things are tense. If we can just learn to smile, just learn to laugh, that tension disappears. Have you found that in your home?

I may have told you about a time we got in the car when our son David, who's now a missionary, got in the back seat of the car. We started out and the back window was down, the air conditioner in the automobile was on and I said, "David, would you put up the window, son?" There was a roaring sound in the back of the car. And so

he put up the window. We're driving along, after a while they'd hear that roaring sound again. The window's down. I said, "David, son, put the window up and leave it up." And it went back up and then after a while it was down for the third time. And I turned around, I said, "David," I can put on that voice, I said, "David, if that window goes down one more time, there's going to be some serious trouble in this car, do you understand that, son?" "Yes, Daddy." So we're driving along and friend, I'm telling you, we were going out to have a good time, but the air was just thick. And then I looked over there on my side, and there was the controls where I could lower his window. And we're going along and I pushed the button and his window went down one more time. Joyce's head snapped around and she said, "David!" and then everybody realized that Dad had done it. Big laugh; the tension was gone. That's what laughter will do. In a home, we need to have some fun and not to take ourselves all that seriously.

Let me tell you something about raising children. Be firm, be fair, be fun. You can just almost put it all just right there. Be firm, have some rules. Be fair! Be honest! But be fun! Don't be an ogre! "*Happy shalt thou be.*" That's what the Bible says.

Now here's the third and final thing that I want to mention today of many things I could mention. **Family fun remains.** It will linger, it will echo through your life. Look if you will here in the last part of this Psalm 128 verses 4 to 6, "*Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, and thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel.*"

You know, folks, we're building for our children a museum of memories. We're building for our children and our children's children a museum of memories. I want the memories that my children have and my grandchildren have, I want them to be memories of a happy home, a home that rings with laughter. You see, memories are our landmarks. They keep us from getting lost. Memories bring a sense of security and belonging to a child's life. Memories are anchors of the soul. What do you remember primarily, those of you who are adults? What do you remember primarily about your home? Well, you may remember many things, sorrows, pains, deprivation, victories, what kind of car your daddy had, what kind of a house you lived in. But I'll tell you the things you enjoy remembering, are the fun times. The happy times that you had at home.

My daddy died and we had a family gathering down in Fort Lauderdale. And the kids and the grandkids from all of our family, and there were four of us, and all the Rogers seem to have four more children and man, we had a herd of folks there. I mean, they were all around. We were sitting in my sister's living room, talking about my daddy. You'd have to know my daddy. My daddy never got over being a little boy. He was a man, but he was a man filled with fun. And we laughed and talked and laughed and talked and laughed and laughed. Not a word of remorse, not a word of regret, but just memories of good times, of fun. You see, friend, family fun remains. It goes on and on and on and on.

I like people who can smile in the face of death because they have smiled during life and know that family fun remains and it goes on and on and on.

Let me read to you something. We're talking about fun and laughter, but let me read to you something sad. Many of you remember the name Christian Bernard. He was a South African, a heart surgeon. He created the aortic heart valve, an artificial valve. His name was famous because he did the first heart transplant before heart transplants were common and known. He was a leader. He was on the cutting edge in that area. Dr. Bernard wrote a book, the title of the book, *One Life*. And in the midst of all of his great success, in the midst of all that he did, Christian Bernard lost his home and he lost his family.

Now here it is in his own words. Listen to what he said, quote, "It was a bright April morning when I drove out of Minneapolis." Now you see, he had been to Minneapolis to do this work. He literally lived in South Africa and that's where his family was. "It was a bright April morning when I drove out of Minneapolis. It seemed like a century since I had first arrived there, a time longer than all the years before it. In New York I put the car on a boat and caught a plane for Cape Town. A northwest wind was blowing when we came over the sea with the waves close below. My wife was there with the children. I'd not written much in the last two months, yet I was unprepared for her greeting. 'Why did you come back?' There was no longer a smile in her eyes. 'I made the most terrible mistake of my life.' 'Don't look so surprised,' she said. 'We gave you up. We decided you were never coming back.' 'But it was only a little delay. I wrote you April 1<sup>st</sup>.' 'No, you wrote once to say you weren't coming home.' 'But we were building valves, aortic heart valves,' I answered. 'No, you were building a family, that is, until you dumped it in my lap,' she said bitterly. 'We have ceased to exist for you.' I wanted to say I came home because I love my children, and I thought I loved her. I wanted to because I felt it, but what could I say now that didn't sound meaningless? It began to rain. The city was gray under a gray sky. It was winter in Cape Town, but in Minneapolis, the trees were a splashy green color. How was it possible to lose a whole springtime?"

Well, I want to say to you, friend, don't lose the springtime, don't lose the springtime. It's vain; it's vain to rise up early, to stay up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. I want to call, listen, give me your attention, I want to call our family, our church family, and your family to some fun. And I don't want some long-nosed, hard-hearted Grinch to think we're not supposed to have some fun. Folks, it is our legacy, it is our necessity, and I call you to it.

I call you to go back and re-examine where you've been putting your emphasis. I ask you, what are your children going to remember at your graveside, as we said last week, talking about family finances. But folks, if you're having fun and laughing your way to Hell, that also is pathetic, because I remind you there're no fun and games in a Christless grave. And if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what kind of time you have with your children, if you don't know Jesus, one of these days you're going to kiss them all good-bye.

And we've said before that God wants everybody to have three homes. God wants for you, God wants for you a church home; God wants for you a family home; and God wants for you a heavenly home. And Jesus Christ is the key to all three. "*Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.*" Do you know Him? The fear of the Lord is love on its knees. Have you ever bowed your head, humbled your heart, and said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart and into my life and save me?"

Would you bow your heads right now? Heads bowed, eyes closed. And if you're not certain that you're saved, I want to lead you in a prayer, and in this prayer today, now, this moment, you can receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Would you pray like this? "Dear God, I know that You love me. And I know that You want to save me. I need to be saved. My sin deserves judgment, but I need and want mercy. Jesus, You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for dying for me. I'm sorry for my sin. I turn from my sin to You. I now, right now, yield my heart, my life to You. I receive You by faith as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus." Would you pray that from your heart? Pray it from your heart, "Save me, Jesus." Pray it from your heart, "Save me, Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Then by faith thank Him. Say, "Thank You, Jesus, for saving me. I receive it by faith and that settles it. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, my friend. And Lord Jesus, because You have forgiven me, I will live for You and follow You all of my life. You are my Lord and my Master. I will not follow You in order to be saved, I am following You because I am saved by Your grace, but I will never be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen."