

## Mother's Day 2026 Psalm 128 The Good Life

Happy Mother's Day; I hope everyone has a wonderful day.

Mother's Day, of course, is an occasion to celebrate and highlight the work of mothers. But motherhood does not stand in isolation; that is, we understand motherhood within a context. Motherhood is supposed to operate within a limited set of relationships and family structures. We find a brief description of that structure in Psalm 128. This short psalm describes the blessed life; what we might call the good life. This psalm gives a picture of domestic bliss; a family rightly related to God enjoying God's blessings.

Most people naturally want to enjoy the good life. We want to be happy and fulfilled. Much of the good life depends on our family relationships. We can enjoy the good life if we apply biblical principles to our lives. Much of the unhappiness in family life is traceable back to disobedience to biblical principles of the family.

Let's look at this picture of the good life from Ps 128 and see what it tells us about motherhood and family life.

I. .1-2, 4-5 The good life is blessed.

The author uses a series of words to describe the blessedness that a family enjoys when it follows this pattern.

A. .1 "blessed is every one..."

The word "blessed" (אַשְׁרֵי) means "characterized by happiness and divine favor." God is inclined to shower his blessings on us when we follow the pattern he has given us for human flourishing.

The word is actually in the plural, suggesting the fullness of blessing—"How blessed is everyone..."

B. .2b "happy (same word) shalt thou be"

C. .2c "it shall be well (טוֹב) with thee" – good, pleasing, valuable, useful

D. .4 "thus shall the man be blessed (בֵּרַךְ)" – this is the more common word for "blessed" – to enjoy divine favor

E. .5 “The Lord shall bless thee” (יְבָרֶכְךָ) – once again, using the common word for “bless” – God will be favorable toward you.

So we have three different Hebrew words here to describe the well-being of the family who follows this pattern. We can enjoy much blessing, happiness, and goodness from our families when we do things God’s way.

II. .1 The good life begins with the fear of the Lord.

A. “the fear of the Lord/God” indicates awe or reverence. Reverence is that sacred respect for God based on his majesty, power, and glory.

1. The fear of God is a basic recognition of God’s authority and power. The pagans had no fear of God.

*Gen 20:11 And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; ...*

2. God alone is worthy of honor and devotion. We fear God’s displeasure and seek to avoid chastisement and discipline. God is the righteous Judge, and we tremble before him.

*Isa 66:2b ... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

3. The fear of God motivates us toward obedience. When we fear God, we obey his word and a desire to please him. Our behavior reflects the fact that we have a proper respect for God.

B. .1a And the result of fearing God is happiness or blessedness. Well-being comes from ordering our lives properly in reverence for God. A proper relationship with God brings happiness.

The fear of God provides a foundation for everything that follows. It’s only when we have a basic reverence for God that we put ourselves in a position to enjoy all these other blessings.

Why is there so much family breakup and dysfunction in our world? Because people do not fear God or obey his commands.

**Trans:** The good life begins with a proper fear of God.

III. .1b The good life continues as we “walk in his ways.”

- A. When Bible writers tell us how to “walk,” they are telling us how to live or conduct our behavior (thoughts, words, and deeds).
- B. The word “walk” suggests continuation and persistence. The word suggests regular conduct or behavior, the ongoing, normal pattern of life.
- C. And for one who fears God, that pattern of life moves “in his ways.” That describes an obedient, reverent lifestyle. Our behavior is in keeping with God’s commands. The fear of God leads us to obedience to God’s instructions.
- D. Believers should desire to “walk humbly with [their] God” (Mic 6:8).  
*Deuteronomy 13:4 You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.*  
*Jeremiah 7:23 ..., ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.’*

**Trans:** Happiness, blessedness, and well-being come from respecting God and obeying his commandments. The good life is an obedient life. We walk with God when we obey his voice, fear him, serve him, and hold fast to him.

IV. .2 The good life enjoys the fruits of one’s labor.

- A. The biblical pattern demands that we labor to provide for our families. Work is normally necessary to provide an income to support the family.  
*Ecclesiastes 5:18 ... It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage.*  
If a man is not willing to work, then he should not expect to eat (2 Thes 3:10).
- B. In the good life, your labor provides for the needs of your home. You make an honest living through your work. You are independent and providing for your own living.

C. Men typically find fulfillment in working to provide for their families. Godly men especially see work as God's means of putting bread on the table. That is typically the man's responsibility.

**Quote:** It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry; as the sleep, so the food, of a labouring man is sweet.<sup>1</sup>

**Trans:** In the good life, with God's blessing, the husband/father is able to provide for the needs of the home through his work.

V. .3, 6 The good life assumes biblical marriage and family.

A. You are married—"your wife..." The psalm is written from the perspective of the man; he has a wife, he does the labor, etc. The expectation is that the man gets married. Marriage is a good thing; the good life assumes marriage.

Proverbs 19:14 ... *a prudent wife is from the LORD.*

The normal pattern is that young people grow up and get married. Admittedly, life does not work out that way for some people. For various reasons, some people remain single. And single people can also enjoy the good life without following this family pattern exactly. Life will be a bit different for single people. But remaining single is still the exception rather than the rule. The majority will get married.

Sadly, in modern society, fewer people are getting married, and those who do get married are delaying it longer and longer. The average age for marriage today is about 30 years old for men and about 28 for women. Generations ago, it was common for people to get married right around 20 years old.

No matter when you get married, the expectation is that...

B. .3 You have children.

1. Your wife is "fruitful." A fruitful wife implies the presence of children. The psalmist is speaking in terms of "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28).

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry

One's wife is like a "fruitful vine." Growing grapes was a very common occupation for the Jews in the ancient world. Virtually every farm would have some grape vines. A "fruitful vine" has multiple clusters of grapes. There is great value in having fruitful vines on your farm. So this is a very positive image of prosperity and abundance.

2. In this context, a fruitful vine implies many children—"thy children." The family contains several or many kids.

Ps 127:5 *Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.*

**App:** Christian couples should plan to have multiple children if possible. You don't have to have 10 of them, but some would be good.

Christians should see children as a blessing—they are the heritage of the Lord (Ps 127:3). Large families are good.

Sadly, our culture is unsure about the value of children. Many people today focus on the inconvenience and expense of bringing children into the world. Many couples are refraining from having children, or they delay having children until later in life.

One of the most positive things we can do for the church and for our nation is to have children and raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. One way to have a long-term influence on our world is to have children and train them up to serve God.

Muslims are having lots of children; through their fruitful reproduction, they are gaining a lot of influence in our world today.

Christians can increase and spread their influence through fruitful reproduction. I recommend it.

Mothers in particular are very influential in training children. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

- C. .3b Your wife is at home – "by the sides (יְרֵכָה) of thine house" – the deepest part; "in the very heart of your house." Or just "in your house."

1. I think this suggests that the wife is primarily concerned about sustaining the operation of the household. I.e., she's a home maker. Her primary focus is her household, her family, her home. The husband is out working; the wife is at home taking care of the household.
2. This was the historic, traditional pattern that we find in the Bible and in western civilization until the last 100 years or so. Men worked while women took care of the home and children.
3. Women today have many options, including a career outside the home. But for Christian women, their primary concern and focus, especially if they have children and when the children are at home, should be the home and family.

**Quote:** The wife's place is the husband's house; there her business lies, and that is her castle.<sup>2</sup>

To secular, feminist ears, that sentiment is highly offensive—i.e., that the wife's place is in the home. But it is a biblical idea. We must not adopt the modern world's attitudes about home life and children. We disavow the influence of feminism.

4. Most women have a natural instinct to get married, have children, and take care of them. Many working women would rather stay at home with their kids if possible.

Some women seek to have it all—both family and career. But many women are more than happy to quit work and stay at home and take care of the house and the family. Every situation is different, but ideally, if the husband is making enough income to sustain the family, it would be best for the wife to stay at home with the kids. I would guess that most Christian men would rather have their wives stay at home and take care of the kids. Most mothers want that, too.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry.

It's the materialistic attitude of many families that makes them think that they need two incomes to sustain their lifestyle. If they were a little more frugal and modest with their spending, they could make life work on just one income.

So we agree with the psalmist here—the fruitful wife is at home with the children. That's a good pattern to follow.

The psalmist goes on to describe another aspect of the blessedness of the good life...

5. .3b The children are sitting around the table like olive plants.
- a) The vine and olive tree were symbols of peace and prosperity to the ancient Jews.
  - b) Olives were one of the most important and valuable crops in Israel. The more olive trees you had, the wealthier you were. Having an olive tree with many shoots was good.
  - c) The word here is literally “olive sprouts/shoots,” and it's a plural word, suggesting several or many. In the ancient world, having many children was a great blessing. It meant more labor for the farm and the guarantee that the bloodline would continue.
  - d) The ideal life for the ancient Hebrew man would be to sit on his own property beneath his vine and olive/fig trees with his children and grandchildren around him in the kingdom of the Messiah. This was the goal of life—a peaceful and prosperous family enjoying the blessings of God in the Promised Land.

*Micah 4:4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make them afraid; ...*

*Zechariah 3:10 In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'Everyone will invite his neighbor Under his vine and under his fig tree.' ”*

*Ps 52:8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.*

- e) So the imagery of the wife like a fruitful vine and the children sitting around the table like a bunch of little olive shoots would be a very pleasant and positive picture for the ancient Jews. This good life was evidence of God's blessings.

Olive trees may not produce fruit for 40 years after being planted. So the olive is a symbol for longevity and patience. Future generations will enjoy the fruit of those trees. The godly man will extend his influence through future generations who will in turn be fruitful.

- f) And the picture of the children sitting around the table reminds us that taking meals together is a very good way to enjoy family life.

6. The picture we have here is that of a married man who provides for his family so that his wife can stay at home with the kids and take care of them. Theirs is a peaceful, prosperous, and fruitful home. That is the ideal.

**App:** Sometimes life does not work out that way; we cannot achieve the ideal. Things happen and we make decisions that prevent us from having the ideal.

Still, we ought to maintain the ideal picture in our minds. We ought to strive to implement this ideal in our own lives. Young people should grow up with this ideal picture as their goal—you get married, have kids, the husband provides for the family through his own labor, and the wife is at home caring for the kids.

7. .5b-6 The blessed man will experience these good things throughout his life, and he will see his children's children. I.e., the couple will live long enough to see their grandchildren. The family line will continue to succeeding generations. So the blessed family will enjoy God's goodness for years to come.

8. .5a All of this depends on God's blessing. All of these good things are gifts from God. If you have these things in your life—if your life reflects this pattern—you are enjoying God's blessing on your life. The blessed, fruitful, fulfilled life comes from God. If you follow this biblical pattern, the normal outcome is a blessed life—the good life.
9. .6b “peace be upon Israel.” When families follow this pattern, the entire nation receives the benefits. As the family goes, so goes the nation. Following the biblical pattern brings peace for families, communities, and nations.
10. The unstated implication is that if you reject this pattern, you will not enjoy God's blessing on your life. Particularly for those who reject this pattern altogether, they will experience God's judgment rather than his blessing. The entire nation will suffer when families forsake this pattern.
11. Our choices yield natural consequences. If we fear God and follow his commandments, the normal outcome is that we enjoy the good life. If we do not fear God and keep his commandments, the frequent outcome is disaster and disappointment.

Psalm 128 reflects the biblical picture of the good life. In this picture, the family is happy and blessed because they fear God and walk in his ways. God sustains them through the work the man does, and God blesses the couple with a home full of children.

A productive man, a fruitful wife, a bunch of growing kids in a peaceful home for generations to come—that's how God blesses those who fear him. It's a wonderful and ideal picture of the good life. We all ought to be striving to embody that picture.

Many of us here today are living reflections of Ps 128. You are blessed because you fear the Lord and walk in his ways. You are happy and things are going well. You are eating the labor of your hands. Your wife is like a fruitful vine within your house. Your children are arranged around your table like olive plants. Some of us already have seen our children's children, and perhaps some children from the generation after that. If all of this is true for you, you should be very thankful for God's blessings on your life. Many families today—even Christian families—do not follow this pattern and miss out on these blessings.

Young people here should adopt and retain this picture of the good life; this is what they should strive after; this is what family life should be. This is what they should pursue as normal and proper. This picture provides meaning and purpose for human life. Make good decisions, and this could be the picture of your life.

On this Mother's Day, we reflect the words of the psalmist—"Peace be upon Israel." When people fear the Lord and walk in his ways, individual families enjoy God's blessings as do the entire congregation, and even the country.

Psalm 128 reflects our desire for all families and especially for mothers on Mother's day. Enjoy spending time with your olive plants around you today. Rejoice if you see your children's children. May this be a day of blessing, well-being, and peace for you on this Mother's Day.

- A. Occasionally, when Israel's enemies were threatening them, others would take the fruits of their labors. E.g., the Amorites or Philistines would come in and steal their produce. They were unable to eat of the labor of their hands. And that would happen when the Israelites were disobedient to God. Disobedience led to Israel's weakness and defeat.
- B. Those who walk in God's ways normally do not have to worry about others taking away the things they worked for.

Before going on, we must admit that the Psalms also includes passages where good people suffer. Families often suffer. A common question is the Psalms is, why do the righteous suffer? So some people do not enjoy the good life through no fault of their own. We might do everything recommended in this text, and still suffer hardship and sorrow. Even a blessed, happy, pleasing life will often include elements of pain, sorrow, and loss.

However, normally speaking, in most cases, those who follow the pattern described here will enjoy the good life. The potential for blessing is greater if we follow this pattern. We may not feel happy and blessed some of the time. But in most cases and most of the time, the lifestyle promoted here will provide blessing, happiness, and fulfillment—if we fulfill the requirements God gives us here.

Sadly, our culture has intentionally removed most of the traditional boundaries of motherhood. Today, society accepts many routes to becoming a mother. On the extreme end, some claim that men can be mothers. Some people claim to be mothers by hiring other women to have babies for them. Some women use technology and sophisticated laboratory procedures to produce children for them. Many women these days become mothers outside the bonds of marriage. And most sadly, many women deny their motherhood and destroy the children they have conceived. Many in our world today claim that all these aspects of motherhood are fine, acceptable, and good.

As Christians, we disagree with much of what we see in the world today pertaining to motherhood. We believe that the Bible gives us the proper pattern for motherhood. We find that pattern emerging very early in the biblical record. God creates a woman, brings her to a man, they are married and begin a family. Jesus endorses that pattern, and seriously diverging from that example is sinful. God has intentions and expectations for motherhood, and motherhood works best when we obey God's commands.