

## I. Introduction

- A. Years ago, Jim\* and Mary\* asked, “*Do you do marriage counseling?*”
1. I said, “*I talk with couples from time to time*” (Why? Can’t be sued)
    - a. I went over and after small talk said, “*So, uh... what’s the deal?*”
    - b. Mary\* asked, “*Is it OK that Jim\* strands me at home every day?*”
      - 1) I’m thinking they have one car, he takes it, and she’s stuck.
      - 2) But no, he pulled the distributor cap off her car to strand her
  2. After awkward silence, I turned to him “*So, uh... what’s the deal?*”
    - a. He said Mary’s\* job was to cook and clean; she wasn’t doing job
      - 1) They had TV dinners twice in week, and house was shabby
      - 2) He was the head of house, so he disabled her car to punish her
      - 3) I’ll never forget what he said, and this is word for word:  
*What good is it to be the head of house if you don’t have a hammer*
    - b. Jim\* needed to be knocked upside the head with his own hammer
    - c. Maybe, Jim needed to listen to the sermon series we’re begin today
- B. We’re calling the series *God @ Home*; may major premise is simple
1. Old expression that, “*Charity begins at home.*” Well, so does faith.
    - a. Faith *should* make marriages/families better. We want that, right?
      - 1) But then we also all want to be thinner and healthier, right?
      - 2) What we don’t always want to do is work toward getting there
    - b. Faith requires some work; James says faith without work is dead
    - c. This series is talk about how we can put our faith to work at home
  2. I doubt the things we’ll discuss will be profound or even all that new
    - a. It helps to hear things you already know but might not be doing
      - 1) I know it’s important to change my oil, but it’s good to hear it
      - 2) Why? Hearing about it reminds me to actually change the oil
    - b. Maybe some things we’ll say will remind us to bring God home
  3. Today we want to start looking at family by putting first things first

## II. Putting First Things

A. We'll begin our study with **Psalm 128**, one of the "*Songs of Ascents*"

1. The "*Songs of Ascents*" are special hymns found in **Psalm 120-134**
  - a. These were sing by Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem
  - b. They weren't written for that purpose; that's how they were used
  - c. Tradition says the priests sang them ascending the steps of Temple
2. Jerusalem is on a hill, so pilgrims coming to worship would ascend
  - a. Families, friends or maybe entire villages travelled together
  - b. That was how Mary and Joseph lost Jesus when he was twelve
    - 1) Each thought the boy was travelling with family and friends
    - 2) We've left each of our girls at the building in much same way
  - c. As the pilgrims travelled together, they sang the Songs of Ascents
3. One song the pilgrim families sang is about families (**Psalm 128**)

B. The first line combines two ideas that we rarely put together (**128:1**)

1. The word for "*blessed*" is Hebrew *esher*, often translated "*happy*"
  - a. Jacob named a son "*Asher*," or "*happy*." Named after a smurf?
  - b. Queen of Sheba, "*How happy your people must be*" (**1 Ki 10:8**)
  - c. Who does the Psalmist say is "*happy*?" The one who fears God!
2. What is fear of God? The original word can be translated "*terror*"
  - a. We use words like "*healthy respect*" because God is "*awesome*"
  - b. But "*awesome*" might not mean what we think it means (**Psa 66:3**)
    - 1) What if told me, "*That was awesome sermon*" Hypothetically
    - 2) What if you said, "*That was a terrible sermon*" Not the same?
    - 3) Any time someone says, "*That's terrible*," I hear "*awesome*"
  - c. If all that sounds too Old Testament, then hear Jesus (**Luke 12:5**)
3. God is not a cosmic grandfather who is there to grant our every wish
  - a. He is the Awesome, Almighty and Amazing creator of all things
  - b. When we see Him that way, we are moved to fall down in worship
    - 1) More to the point, we take His commands seriously; we obey
    - 2) We are most happy/blessed if we "*walk in obedience to him*"

C. How does fearing and obeying God impact our family?

1. **First**, it'll lead you to be secure and satisfied (**Psalm 128:2**, NRSV)
  - a. In an agrarian culture, to be assured of a harvest is like lottery
    - 1) So many years, there is too much rain or not enough rain
    - 2) If farmer knows that he'll eat of his harvest, life is good
  - b. NIV has "*prosperity*" here, but the word is actually "*good*."
    - 1) If you're offered pie and you had enough, you say "*I'm good*"
    - 2) If you fear God, you will always be good with what you have
      - a) Is that prosperity? More like my Dad having plenty to eat as a kid
      - b) He knew because if he asked for more, he was told "*You had plenty*"
  - c. Someone said "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these...*"
2. **Second**, one who fears/obeys God will have a better family (**128:3a**)
  - a. He's talking to husbands, but it obviously works both ways
  - b. If a man fears and obeys God, His wife will be a fruitful vine
    - 1) Of course, she is fruitful in the sense of having children
    - 2) Derek Kidner points us to other vine imagery (**Song 7:8-9**)
  - c. Fear God and your kids will be olive shoots, not the pits (**128:3b-4**)
    - 1) Important to have lots of kids in ancient times (farm hands)
    - 2) Image of a growing family around table (*not looking at phones*)
3. Where does all this family happiness start? *With the fear of the Lord*
  - a. I've had the same experience as all preachers teaching on family (*I don't mean the wry smile from wife, "OK, genius, when will you start?"*)
  - b. No, I mean people who say, "*My husband/wife really needed that.*"
    - 1) What I want to say, "*But I wasn't talking to them but to you!*"
    - 2) People go marriage counseling find what's wrong with spouse
  - c. Psalm says that if you want a happy family, start with yourself
    - 1) Fear God. Obey God. Become the person God wants you to be
    - 2) Guarantee you'll have great family? No, they must choose too
4. If we fear & obey God, we'll be happier.... so will those around us
  - a. It won't work if you're a Christian, but still have to get your way
  - b. If you want a great family, you start by dying to yourself.

D. Song ends expanding the impact of godliness beyond family (**128:5-6**)

1. The family can become pretty selfish and self-contained, right?
  - a. May God bless you (*singular*) from Zion (*where faithful gather*)
  - b. When you fear God, you bless and are blessed by His people
2. “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people*” (**Pro 14:34**)
  - a. We can read politically or nationalistically; it’s about community
    - 1) Righteousness has a positive impact on the people around us
    - 2) Sin hurts not just the sinner; it also hurts those around them
  - b. Psalm starts with you, moves to your family, then to community
  - c. It all starts when you decide that you will fear and obey God

### III. Conclusion

A. Old Peanuts comic strip that has Lucy and Linus looking at the rain

1. Lucy says, “*What if the whole world floods?*” Linus answers her: *It will never do that. In Genesis 9, God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow.*

- a. Lucy thanks him, “*You’ve taken a great load off my mind.*”
- b. Linus, “*Sound theology has a way of doing that.*” Go Linus!

2. Poor theology has a way for us to mess things up completely

- a. Why did otherwise smart, devoted Christian disable wife’s car?
  - 1) Why did he think that he had a hammer to impose his will?
  - 2) Why was he surprised it had a negative impact on marriage?

b. Poor theology. He misunderstood what it meant to be a leader

- 1) It doesn’t mean to enforce your will; it means to serve others
- 2) It doesn’t mean you get your way; it means to seek God’s way

c. When you become more center in God, your family just gets better

B. Do you want to have a happy and healthy home? It’s simple, not easy

1. A healthy, happy home is like getting enough to eat and drink

- a. Will worrying and being about material things help one bit

b. The same is true about families. But there is one place to start

2. We’ll end with a familiar text; I’ll add a paraphrase (**Matt 6:31-33**)