

# Psalm Sundays

Text  
Psalm 128

Topic  
The psalmist encourages everyone,  
starting with men, to fear the LORD  
and to walk in His ways

Title  
***"I'm a Man, Yes I Am,  
and I Can't Help but Fear You So"***

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Here you are in church when you could be LARPing.

It's an acronym for Live Action Role Play.

Mark your calendars and get your costumes. The next Renaissance of Kings Faire is October 2nd & 3rd, 2021.

I haven't been to Hanford's Annual Christmas parade for some time. Does the StarTrek COSPLAY group still march with their shuttlecraft?

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I found an archived Hanford Sentinel article from February 2019 about Comic-Con COSPLAYers gathering at the Kings Fairgrounds. They pictured a pretty convincing Boba Fett.

COMIC-CON International San Diego annually draws over 100,000 fans. They were forced to COVID-Cancel this year.

## **We're going to talk a little about roles today - our roles in the household of God, and in our own houses.**

Psalm 128 celebrates the biblical family - man, woman, children. It wasn't written to correct any failing on Israel's part, but to celebrate family as an earthly blessing from the LORD.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 You Want To Lead As A Fearful Father**, and **#2 You Want To Follow As A Fearful Family**.

### **#1 - You Want To Lead As A Fearful Father (v1-2)**

**This psalm was addressed to men.** Yes, it opens saying, "Blessed is **everyone** who fears the LORD." But it goes on to address men about "**your** wife," and about "**your** children." The psalmist doesn't address women and children directly.

Men, women, and children have different roles to fulfill, both in the household of God and in their own houses.

Psalm 128 celebrates God's design for the family. To the extent that it does, we can apply it to ourselves. It wasn't written to us; but since it assumes the larger context of the biblical family, we can learn from it.

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Psa 128:1 A Song of Ascents. Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways.

This is the ninth of the fifteen "Song(s) of Ascent" sung by pilgrims on their trips to the annual feasts in Jerusalem. Men of a certain age were required to attend. From the information given to us, it would seem that whole families traveled. The notable episode where 12yr old Jesus got left behind in Jerusalem describes His family pilgrimaging with other families.

Though required in God's Law, these annual pilgrimages were not intended to be a burden. They were to be a blessing. God wanted to draw His people together to bless them.

Our gathering together ought to be a blessing to you - not a place to heap burdens upon you. Jesus wants to show you your blessings, what He has done for you.

The "fear of the LORD" can be described in many different ways. One way, and the way I am going to emphasize, is that **you believe God always has simultaneously in His mind your good and His glory.** You thus "fear the LORD" by willingly obeying Him. No matter your will, you prefer and choose God's will. You implicitly trust God's will over your own; you submit your ways to His way - even if it requires sacrifice. It is the only way to insure your good and His glory.

Before we go on with an example, let me say this. As we reference marriage and family today, think about where you are now, **not** everything that has happened in your past. For example, if you have been divorced, but are now remarried, we are talking about your current marriage.

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If you are not married, we are talking about what is going on in your life today.

If you insist on looking back, look back to the Cross, where your sins are forgiven.

Back to our text. Maybe, right now, you are contemplating divorce. Do you at least have any biblical grounds?

- 👤 Have you been abandoned by your spouse?
- 👤 Has your spouse committed adultery?
- 👤 (I've learned over the years to add this important footnote. Physical abuse is sin, and you don't ever submit to it. Tell someone; call the police).

Without biblical grounds for divorce, and sometimes even with biblical grounds, God says you are to stay married. He would only say that if it were for your good, and for His glory. Blessed is the man (or woman) who fears the Lord and does what He says.

You're to "walk in His ways." You discover "His ways" by reading your Bible.

Everything you need to live a godly life is covered in the Bible. Add to that, you are given God the Holy Spirit to indwell you, making it more than possible for you to "walk in His ways."

Psa 128:2 When you eat the labor of your hands, You *shall be* happy, and it *shall be* well with you.

Israel was an agricultural nation. It was the land flowing with milk and honey. Other occupations depended upon ag. They quite literally "[ate] the labor of [their] hands."

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The phrase speaks to providing for one's family.

We are light years away from saying that this means women can't ever work outside the home. In fact, *I'm not going to suggest any particulars of your home life.* We are painting a picturesque biblical home in broad strokes. We are talking about *roles*, not the *rules*.

The psalmist was putting a joyous responsibility upon the man to see to it that his family prospers. It speaks to hard, honest labor. To a diligent work ethic.

Happiness and contentment are byproducts of assuming your roles. Ultimately, walking in God's ways results in a peaceful existence that is to be envied.

More than ever people are walking in their own ways when it comes to marriage and family. In June 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in the landmark civil rights case of *Obergefell v. Hodges* that the fundamental right of same-sex couples to marry on the same terms and conditions as opposite-sex couples, with all the accompanying rights and responsibilities, is guaranteed by both the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Our reaction, first and foremost, ought to be this:

"Judgment must begin at the house of God" (First Peter 4:17). How are **we** doing at walking in God's ways with regard to marriage?

Biblical marriage is one biological male, and one biological female, in a monogamous heterosexual union that is to last as long as they both shall live.

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- 👤 At the same time we rightfully decry same sex marriage, divorce is too prevalent among believers. Is it really less sinful?
- 👤 At the same time we rightfully decry homosexuality, fornication and adultery are too prevalent among believers. Is it really less sinful?

You can't "fear God" and pursue unbiblical divorce. You can't "fear God" and commit sexual sin

**G**uys: Psalm 128 mentions you first, and is written to you. You're to lead. Get into God's Word and understand His ways. Know that you are empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk in His ways. Fear Him by following Him.

## #2 - You Want To Follow As A Fearful Family (v3-6)

The Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. There is only one God. Three coexistent, co-eternal, co-equal Persons who are one God.

With regard to the plan to redeem sinful men, there is a division of roles in the Trinity:

- 👤 God the Father is said to have sent Jesus. Jesus willingly submitted Himself to God the Father in His role as the Savior of the world.
- 👤 Jesus is said to be the giver of God the Holy Spirit.
- 👤 The Holy Spirit subordinates Himself to Jesus, pointing men to Him for salvation.

It should come as no shock, therefore, that there is a division of roles in God's household, and in your house.

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In fact, as we each fulfill our roles, it reveals the sweet co-operation of the Trinity in salvation. It mirrors the nature of God.

Psa 128:3 Your wife *shall be* like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house,  
Your children like olive plants All around your table.

There is an obvious hierarchy in this home. Every one in the blessed family has their God-assigned role to play.

Roles, and especially the role(s) of women, is super controversial. There is a lot of disagreement among Christians. Theologians have come up with big words to describe at least two of the differing positions on the biblical roles of men and women in the church. Those words are *Complementarian* and *Egalitarian*.

- 👤 Complementarianism is the viewpoint that God restricts women from serving in church leadership roles and instead calls women to serve in equally important, but complementary, roles.
- 👤 Egalitarianism is the viewpoint that there are no biblical gender-based restrictions on ministry in the church.

The team over at [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) summarize it, saying,

On the one side are the *egalitarians* who believe there are no gender distinctions and that since we are all one in Christ, women and men are interchangeable when it comes to functional roles in leadership **and** in the household.

The complementarian view believes in the essential equality of men and women as persons as human beings created in God's image, but

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complementarians hold to gender distinctions when it comes to functional roles in society, the church, **and** the home.

**We are complementarians.** It seems straightforward:

- 👤 The original married couple was complementarian. Adam was created first. Eve was tasked with the role of “help-meet” for Adam.
- 👤 After our first parents sinned, the LORD was clear that Eve was to subordinate her desire to rule and instead assume a submissive role.
- 👤 The apostle Paul applied the hierarchy of the first family to the church, to the household of God, when he said to Pastor Timothy, “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man... For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (First Timothy 2:12-13).

A division in roles does not equate to a difference in quality, importance, or value. Men and women are equally valued in God’s sight and plan. Women are not inferior to men. Rather, God assigns different roles to men and women in the church and in the home because that is how He designed houses and His household on earth to function.

Egalitarians have their arguments, for sure. We find them unbiblical and, worse, dictated by cultural pressure to conform, or to seem progressive.

Israel was certainly complementarian. Psalm 128 assumes there are genders and gender roles in the Biblical home. The change from an agricultural society to our modern society doesn’t overrule God’s original design for marriage and family.

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Don't read this as "barefoot and pregnant." To an Old Testament wife, these words were tremendously encouraging.

It says that the wife is "the very heart of your house." Allow me to attempt an analogy. If you are smart, you are heart-healthy in your diet and exercise. You take good care of your heart. Apply that kind of smart to taking care of your wife.

I want to again emphasize that I am not going to tell you how to run your house. It isn't in the mechanics. It's in co-operation with Jesus. The key to success is simply to be like Jesus in His incarnation. Though He was Lord of all, He became the servant of all.

Everything you need in order to fulfill your role as a man, or a woman, or a child, is illustrated by Jesus washing His disciples feet the Passover prior to His willing death on the Cross.

We don't practice foot washing as an ordinance in the church, as some groups do. We should practice spiritual foot washing. It should be our individual practice to be the servant.

Is the man the leader? Yes - but that needs to be qualified. The greatest of all, in God's economy, is the servant of all. Our "lead servant," Jesus, didn't come to be served, but to serve.

The man of the house is more a *discipler* than a *delegator*.

Wives and kids: The Bible verses and passages that speak about your roles are not hard to find. Neither are they hard to understand - especially if you come to them fearing the Lord in the way we are describing today.

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Mark Twain is credited with saying, "It ain't the parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."

You can walk in His ways by yielding yourself to the Holy Spirit. He subordinated Himself to Jesus, and you should subordinate yourself to Him. He empowers you; He enables you.

Psa 128:4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD.

"Fear the LORD." Believe - because it's true - "that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose" (Romans 8:28). Submit to God's will, believing He is working.

Psa 128:5 The LORD bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem All the days of your life.

Their blessings came "out of Zion" in the sense that they were the result of God's presence in the Temple. For a long time, it was His dwelling place - His house - upon the earth.

It was therefore important that Jerusalem know peace and prosperity. All the Jews had to do was love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Sadly, Israel often committed spiritual adultery by worshipping the gods of the pagans around them. Then, for their own good and for His glory, God would allow His people to be defeated, and Jerusalem to be overrun.

Psa 128:6 Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace *be* upon Israel!

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Grand kids are pretty cool. It's all chocolate and silly string fights. Discipline? Not on my watch.

This ending probably looks farther forward than grand kids. God promised His people an earthly kingdom ruled over by the Son of David. We call it the Millennium on account of its description as lasting one thousand years in Revelation chapter twenty.

There are descriptions of it throughout the Old Testament. Isaiah, for one, said,

Isa 2:2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days *That* the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it.

Isa 2:3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Isa 2:4 He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

It's great that historic peace treaties are being signed in the Middle East. Peace is a good thing.

We also know that modern Israel's peace will not last. At some point, a treaty will be broken, and the Jews in Jerusalem will be forced to flee for their very survival.

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**W**hen LARPing, or COSPLAYing, you wear costumes. So do you as a believer in Jesus Christ:

- 👤 When by His prevenient grace God frees your will to receive Jesus as your Savior, He takes off your filthy garments and dresses you in His robe of righteousness.
- 👤 You are described as wearing the whole armor of God in your spiritual battles.

The outfit I want to highlight today is the one the apostle Paul described to the Ephesians:

Eph 4:24 and that you **put on** [like a garment] the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Eph 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR," for we are members of one another.

Eph 4:26 "BE ANGRY, AND DO NOT SIN": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

Eph 4:27 nor give place to the devil.

Eph 4:28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Eph 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

Eph 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

Eph 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

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