

**What I Really Want in Life**  
**Psalm 128**

**Dr. Steve Horn**

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**(On the Occasion of Both Father's Day and My 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at FBC)**

**Introduction to Text:** This may seem a bit odd to you, but I prayed pretty specifically for a text that would be appropriate for two things today—obviously, one being Father's Day and also the occasion of this day representing my 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as your pastor. That might sound like an unusual request, but that is how I approached this week. I am a disciple of Jesus, a husband, a father, and a pastor. I am some other things, but these four dominate my life. I believe with all my heart that God has led me to that kind of text for our consideration this morning. Now, this passage doesn't necessarily indicate my testimony. I am far from perfect or even at times exemplary in all that we will see in this passage, but this passage does express my hope for what I really want in life. This passage actually communicates what we all want in some way.

**Text:** How happy is everyone who fears the LORD,  
who walks in His ways!

<sup>2</sup>You will surely eat  
what your hands have worked for.

You will be happy,  
and it will go well for you.

<sup>3</sup>Your wife will be like a fruitful vine  
within your house,  
your sons, like young olive trees  
around your table.

<sup>4</sup>In this very way  
the man who fears the LORD  
will be blessed.

<sup>5</sup>May the LORD bless you from Zion,  
so that you will see the prosperity of Jerusalem  
all the days of your life

<sup>6</sup>and will see your children's children!  
Peace be with Israel.

**Introduction:** Our text today comes from a particular section of the Psalms called the Book of Ascents (Psalms 120-134). Sometimes these songs are called processional songs. We assume that these are songs that would have been used as the worshippers proceeded to the temple. Each Psalm helps us to see the kinds of things that the worshippers had upon their hearts as they entered for worship. We would do well to use these psalms as our own preparation for worship.

**What I Really Want in Life**

We actually are going to examine this Psalm this morning slightly out of the order that it is given. We are going to come back to verse 1 a little later and go right to verse 2. In verse 1, there is the description of blessedness. Beginning in verse 2 seems to be a list of what it means to be blessed.

You could list in different ways, but here is my list of what the Psalmist says it means to be blessed. These things represent what I really want in life.

**1. I want my life to count for something.**

I don't want something for nothing, but it is good to have a reward for your labor, isn't it? I want "to eat what my hands have worked for."

**2. I want to be happy.**

Are you ashamed to ask to be happy? Don't be. Jesus gave us a whole list of blessings in the Sermon on the Mount. The problem with happiness is that in many cases we try to bring happiness into our lives by what we think will make us happy. True happiness is the result of life the way God meant it to be.

**3. I want things to go well.**

Again, don't be embarrassed to desire things to go well. Things going well is the mark of a blessed life.

**4. I want my family to be blessed.**

In verse 3, the attention turns to the family. In fact, this is a carry-over idea from the previous Psalm. True blessing is when your family is blessed. Olive shoots, for example, were symbols of hope for the future in the Jewish community. A father is truly blessed when he can look to his children as symbols of hope.

**5. I want my church, my community, and my country to be blessed.**

The idea of blessedness extends beyond the family in verse 5. In order for my life to be truly blessed those around me will be blessed. I constantly pray for the blessing and favor of God to rest on our church, our community, and our country.

**6. I want to live a long life.**

I am not ashamed to say I want to live a long life. I want to be a blessing to the next generation and the next.

Most of you know who Bobby Bowden is. He had a long career as a college football coach, most with Florida State. Coach Bowden is a Christian. He has been vocal about his faith. In a recent book, *The Wisdom of Faith*, Coach Bowden wrote about contentment, which in essence is what this Psalm is about.

Coach Bowden wrote: "It's interesting to reflect back over one's life and ask, 'When was I the happiest, the most contented?' The answer for me is one that you might not expect."

He goes on to describe his life as a young married man with four small children living in Douglas, Georgia, at the time. On Friday nights they would gather up just enough pocket change to go to the drive-in movie. The kids would sit on top of the car and he and Ann shoulder to shoulder in the front seat.

He concluded:

Thirty-three years later, cameras flashed all around as I stood with the team in the Oval Office of the White House. FSU had just won the national championship. I was making more money than I ever dreamed a coach could earn. Our children—six in all—were grown and gone. The kind of worries that plagued us daily in those early years had dissipated like vapor in the wind. But if you ask me when Ann and I were the most contented, the happiest, and most at peace, I think back to those years when we had so little. What could be better than sitting beneath the stars at the Skyview with a loving wife at my side and four sleepy children on the roof? And for nothing more than pocket change!” (Bobby Bowden, *The Wisdom of Faith*, pp. 143-145.)

## **So What?**

### **1. I must fear God.**

What does it mean to fear God? The word fear can be somewhat confusing, but don't be confused about fearing God. It's simple. I think there are Scriptures to help.

- Psalm 89:7 says, “God is greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, more awe-inspiring than all who surround Him.”

So, fearing God means greatly respecting and referencing Him.

- 2 Corinthians 7:1 says, “Therefore, dear friends, since we have such promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, completing our sanctification in the fear of God.

So, fearing God results in obeying God.

The Bible, in 1 Kings 18, tells of a man named Obadiah who was in charge of the palace. Jezebel was the queen. She had slaughtered the Lord's prophets. Obadiah, though, hid 100 of the Lord's prophets. In 1 Kings 18:3 we read why. “Obadiah was a man who greatly feared the Lord.”

I think what we could say is that Obadiah feared God more than he feared Jezebel.

Oswald Chambers said about fearing God: “The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else; whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.

### **2. I must walk with God.**

Walking in His ways means doing exactly what He asks in the way that He asks: you love your wife the way He says to love her; you lead your children the way He says to lead them; you do your job in a way that pleases Him. You live to “walk worthy of the calling you have received” (Eph 4:1). If you want your life to change, to be better, then you must resolve to follow His commands. (From Lifeway blog)

Author Larry Crabb remembers as a four year old watching his dad, who was a pastor, lead the congregation in prayer during the Lord's Supper. Crabb says even as a four year old boy, I

remember thinking, “He actually thinks he is talking to someone.” He noticed his father “walking with God.”

Jews use Psalm 128 often in wedding ceremonies and refer to it as the Marriage Prayer. They use it to indicate a 7 fold blessing. Earlier I listed 6 for you. Where is the 7<sup>th</sup> blessing? It is here in the first verse. To fear and walk with the Lord is a blessing itself.

### **3. I must trust God.**

So, this is what I want in life. To this point, we might conclude that in order to receive the blessing we must fear God and walk with God. And, yet, sometimes those who fear God and walk with God have hard times. So, we must also trust God. Ultimately, the blessing comes from Him. The blessings of God are not so much mine to get as they are God’s to give, so we trust Him.

Charles Spurgeon once said, “Every blessing that comes from God is sent with the same message, ‘And more to follow.’ ‘I forgive you your sins, but there’s more to follow.’ ‘I justify you in the righteousness of Christ, but there’s more to follow.’ ‘I adopt you into my family, but there’s more to follow.’ ‘I educated you for heaven, but there’s more to follow.’ ‘I give you grace upon grace, but there’s more to follow.’ ‘I have helped you even to old age, but there’s still more to follow.’ ‘I will uphold you in the hour of death, and as you are passing into the world of spirits, my mercy shall still continue with you, and when you land in the world to come there shall still be more to follow.’”

You’ve probably never heard of George McCluskey. But, he was a man who exemplifies Psalm 128 for me. He decided to invest one hour a day in prayer just for his family. He was concerned that his children might not follow Christ and establish their own homes with reverence for God and obedience to Christ. After a time, he decided to expand his prayers to include not only his children, but his children’s children, and also his children’s children’s children. Every day between 11 a.m. and noon, George would pray for the next 3 generations.

As the years went by, George’s two daughters committed their lives to Christ and married ministers. Those two couples produced four girls and one boy. All four girls married ministers and the boy became a pastor. The first two children of the fourth generation were both boys. One became a pastor, but the other didn’t. He was the first descendant and the first boy in the family to not be a minister. He was the black sheep of the family.

This black sheep pursued his own interest in psychology, and, over the years, met with success. After earning his doctorate, he wrote a book to parents that became a best-seller. He then wrote another book and another and another. On and on it went. Eventually he started a radio program that is now heard on more than 1000 stations a day. What is this black sheep’s name? He is James Dobson, perhaps the most influential pro-family leader in America today. His ministry is the direct result of the prayers of a man who lived four generations ago.

Never underestimate your importance in the history of your family. Make a difference. Be this type of father, this type of mother, this type of child.

This is the blessed life. (From sermon by Stewart Holloway)