

## Approaching God

### Begin your time with an opening prayer

Take a moment to quiet your heart and ask God to help you experience his presence today. Ask Him to free you from any distractions as you begin to read and meditate on today's passage.

## Psalm 128 - Happiness

**Passage Introduction:** There is a general assumption prevalent in the world that it is extremely difficult to be a Christian. While it is true that many don't completely disqualify themselves as "Christians," they do modify their claims: *ordinary* Christians they call themselves. They respect the church, worship fairly regularly, try to live decently. But they also give themselves somewhat generous margins to allow for the temptations and pressures put upon them by the world. To *really* be on the way of faith, take with absolute *seriousness* all that the Bible says—well, that requires a predisposition to saintliness, extraordinary willpower and an unspecified number of nameless austerities that they are quite sure they cannot manage. But this is as far from the truth as the east is from the west.

The easiest thing in the world is to be a Christian. What is hard is to be a sinner. Being a Christian is what we were created for. The life of faith has the support of an entire creation and the resources of a magnificent redemption. The structure of this world was created by God so we can live in it easily and happily as his children. The history we walk in has been repeatedly entered by God, most notably in Jesus Christ, first to show us and then to help us live full of faith and exuberant with purpose. In the course of Christian discipleship we discover that without Christ we were doing it the hard way and that with Christ we are doing it the easy way. It is not Christians who have it hard, but non-Christians. *Blessing* is the word that describes this happy state of affairs. Psalm 128 features the word.

Eugene Peterson - *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

## Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Read the passage slowly 2 or 3x's.

**Start with Engaging the Text:** Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

**Psalm 128 - A Song of Ascents (NLT) - 1** How joyful are those who fear the LORD — all who follow his ways! **2** You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How joyful and prosperous you will be! **3** Your wife will be like a fruitful grapevine, flourishing within your home. Your children will be like vigorous young olive trees as they sit around your table. **4** That is the LORD 's blessing for those who fear him. **5** May the LORD continually bless you from Zion. May you see Jerusalem prosper as long as you live. **6** May you live to enjoy your grandchildren. May Israel have peace!

## Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What metaphors are used in this passage to describe the blessings of being one of God's people?
- What are 2-3 promises for God's people that are listed? Where do you need to rest on those promises today specifically?

### Psalm 128

#### Passage Summary - (From The ESV Transformation Bible)

We see here a blessing upon Zion, the City of God, and also upon the man who fears the Lord. The psalm opens generically: "Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD" (v. 1). This promise, then, is for every believer: to live in the fear of God is to invite his blessing upon one's life. But as the psalm continues, its application is directed particularly at a believing husband and father who fears the Lord (i.e., gives God proper regard). A man's work (v. 2), his wife (v. 3a), and his children (v. 3b) all will prosper due to the fact that he—not they—fear the Lord (v. 4). What grace there is here! How kind God is! While he does visit the sins of the father on the third and fourth generations (Ex. 20:5), he shows kindness to "thousands" (Ex. 20:6) because of faithfulness to him in this generation; the consequences of sin are ultimately exceeded by and eclipsed by grace toward those who follow God. Psalm 128 expresses this important truth with further implications for all those responsible for the nurture of others. As this man, this husband and father, lives by God's grace a life in the fear of God, he can expect God's blessing to rest on his labor, on his wife, and on his children. Call this the "umbrella principle," perhaps. One man holds the umbrella faithfully, and, by God's grace, countless others are protected under the cover it provides. The switch, then, in verses 5–6, seems to be this: as a man fears God, his children are blessed, and so his city and nation likewise are blessed. As goes the husband and father, so go the children and nation. May we see our children's children (v. 6), because of God's blessing and the faithfulness of God's people!

### Close in Prayer:

Close by turning today's Psalm into your own prayer. Over the past couple of days we've given you some prayer prompts to get started. Now try to write some of your own prayers here using sections of Psalm 128 as a guide using the theme of happiness.

- vs. **1-2** *How joyful are those who fear the LORD — all who follow his ways! You will enjoy the fruit of your labor. How joyful and prosperous you will be!* (Use these words to form your own short prayer)
- vs. **3-4** *Your wife will be like a fruitful grapevine, flourishing within your home. Your children will be like vigorous young olive trees as they sit around your table. That is the LORD's blessing for those who fear him.* (What can you pray for or thank God for in light of this truth?)
- vs. **5-6** *May the LORD continually bless you from Zion. May you see Jerusalem prosper as long as you live. May you live to enjoy your grandchildren. May Israel have peace!* (Use these words to form your own short prayer)