

life group study guide

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BRICK AND MORTAR

Psalm 127

¹ Unless the LORD builds the house,
the builders labor in vain.

Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.

² In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat—
for he grants sleep to ^[a] those he loves.

³ Children are a heritage from the LORD,
offspring a reward from him.

⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.

⁵ Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.

They will not be put to shame
when they contend with their opponents in court.

I don't know if "SONG OF ASCENTS" is an official designation for this section of the book of Psalms. But 127 is located in among a series of chapters that are short, six to eight chapters long, (131 is only three verses long), and to the point about life and trusting God.

The NIV- quoted here is just slightly different than the NLT Matt used this morning, but the idea is clear from both. Those that labor, gather, raise a family, even sleep without the Lord, do so in vain.

When I read this section, I always think of God's blessings in my life. I have these things, Good work, children, a relationship with the Lord. And yet, at times, struggle in my life with peace and calmness.

Q) When we read "without the Lord," what does that mean to you? Is it just about knowing Jesus?

Q) Can we who are Christians labor without the Lord?

Q) How are you applying that in your life stage?

Q) If you could go back in your life, to change something, "do it over," as we all seem to talk about, what would that be?

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I hope that question opened up some interesting discussion in whatever group setting you are in. But of course we can't go back. We can't change yesterday. So what do we need to consider for today, tomorrow?

Q) If there was something from the past that you spoke of- What are you doing about it now? Have you made amends? Are you sharing your wisdom and hard-learned lessons with others?

Q) How can we share life's lessons? When we say mentoring for example, what does that look like to you?

READ MATTHEW 7:24-27

Q) Do you see a theme with Psalm 127:1 here? How so?

How about here- **READ LUKE 12:22-26**

Q) What is the theme here?

Q) How are we doing in living out these issues? Do we totally trust God in every aspect of our lives? Do we harbor an area where we are worrying? Agitated, anticipating something not yet arrived, and fretting over it?

READ PSALM 127:2 Again. I really like the NIV here: "For He grants sleep to those he Loves..."

What an interesting verse, here I think words have great meaning- the NIV uses the word GRANTS Sleep. The NLT says 'gives rest...'

Looking over a few translations the phrase is translated as gives sleep, gives rest, which could have a different meaning. Some translated it as provides to us even while we sleep. All of these are good translations, And all line up with the intent, for me, for now, I'm sticking with my literal translation- He gives sleep to those he loves...

Let me share a VERY recent personal story-- In the past week, a few issues seemed to come up at once. I think I deal with stress rather well, I work out, I eat decently, and I know how to relax. I like my job, home life is good. Everything runs, overall, smoothly. And my body gets the sleep it needs to function.

However, a host of items suddenly knocked on my door at one time and I found myself becoming upset about one specific item. One perceived slight...

I grew angry, frustrated, even to the point of voicing my displeasure. Over something that had NOT happened. Just the thought, or the knowledge that it was GOING to happen. An assumption actually. Based on facts, perhaps, but still an assumption. So much so, that my workouts could not release my stress and frustration. They did give me an extra measure of soreness as I focused my stress into them. But they didn't solve my frustration. And do you know where it really revealed itself? In my sleep. Or lack thereof...

For three days, I found myself lying awake at night unable to sleep. My body giving out finally gave me about two hours of sleep a day for three days. I was a walking zombie, and yet I still could not release my thoughts.

For a week I found myself struggling with this. I wrestled with God in the early hours of the morning, begging Him for sleep. For the first few days he was silent. My wife, seeing the change asked me, we spoke, she answered. "Give it up. God is in control. Who by worrying..." She gave me her 'you're nuts' look. Just relax, it will be fine. But of course I couldn't. Somehow, this had gotten hold of me and I could not shake it. By day number four I was praying not for the solution, but for sleep. Literally, begging for sleep.

Then finally I felt like I heard from God. "What does all of this matter?" He seemed to ask. It didn't. None of it mattered overall.

Q) What does it matter? Are we allowing the things of life, no matter how important or insignificant they may be, to cloud our relationship?

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Q) Who is solving our problem? Really, who is doing all of that? Who, as my wife reminded me repeatedly over those few days, is in charge of all things?

Q) What did my anger and frustration and worry get me, other than a bunch of sleepless nights?

Q) What is it getting you?

In my mind, I fixed the problem a dozen times: this is what I'm going to do. If they do that, I'm doing this... I labored in vain.

It wasn't until I finally gave it up, gave in, and realized that I wasn't in control that I went to bed, and slept. That I found peace. The I grudgingly gave to God what I couldn't control.

Q) What are the things that you are laboring in vain over? What are the issues that are keeping you awake at night. There is no doubt about our love of the Lord, that's not in question. It's that old trust thing, that 'give it to me,' thing.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30.

What are you laboring in vain over? What are you struggling with? What labor are you doing 'in vain,' without the Lord?

I lost my sleep and forgot to trust God, I "labored in vain," over a fence.