

A few years ago, I played this little smartphone game: “What’s the Word?” The premise is pretty simple. There are 4 pictures that have at least 1 thing in common. You have to figure out that thing, unscrambling the letters, and entering it in properly to continue. (Example – Shake)

To introduce our topic for study tonight, I let’s proceed a similar way. I will make it a little tougher and provide you only 3 pictures to compare. See if you can determine what they all have in common:

GIFT / ARROW / OLIVE TREE - Let’s take a little closer look at each:

- 1) Gift – Something everyone likes to receive, at any age. It is a blessing from someone who cares about you. A gift is given to you and for you and good ones are able to be used to your benefit. A gift is to be accepted, hopefully used, and certainly cared for out of appreciation.
- 2) Arrow – Men, in particular, like tools and weapons. Something that is useful to them. An arrow requires work: you have to practice with it and train it. And if not given to you by another, you may even have to build it. But once trained, it is VERY useful to protect and provide for you.
- 3) Olive Tree – In Bible times, this was a very valuable thing to own. You had to care for it, fertilize and protect and tend it, but it would bear fruit, produce, to make oil to light lamps in the house. A productive olive tree was a blessing and a help to any family.

Okay, has anyone seen what these three have in common? You have some letters there to help you out.

Let’s add a pertinent Bible reading to the mix: **PSALM 127 / 128.**

Can you see it now? Yes, all three of these figures are used to describe: a Child / our Children.

Each of these images represent something about the relationship between parent and child.

But more specifically, what a CHILD is to be FOR a PARENT

- **127:3** – “a gift, a reward” for you from God
- **127:4** – “an arrow” in your hand for your benefit
- **128:3** – “an olive plant” at your table to produce for your house

Before we take a closer look at those elements, let’s see the gravity the Psalmist puts on this family study:

127:1-2 – The home will not work, not any part of it, nor any relationship in it, lest God build it.

God’s name is not “Dr. Spock.” He is not “Dr. Phil.” He is the almighty God and this is His plan.

Most of what we are about to study would not be accepted in our culture, but God is right.

128:5 – And God’s will, His teaching on parenting has very specific intentions: to bring prosperity to your house, into the lives of your children and through the posterity of their homes for generations. We may need to make changes in our lives and homes: the reason to do so is great.

So, parents, what is God’s idea for the relationship you should have with your kids?

I. **Children are a Gift (127:3)**

- a. Your kids are God’s gift FOR you. They exist as a reward in your life. They are from you, by God and to make your life better!
 - i. Sadly, in our culture it seems things have flipped. It is as if we are God’s gift to our kids, along with every material thing that exists on earth. The world revolves around them, and parents are in orbit with everything and everyone else.
 - ii. That is not God’s design. Kids, when you grow up and have a family, you can have gifts that bring you joy and are a blessing to you. But for now, my kids are God’s gift to me! This means less catering to their desires and whims and more of them catering to ours! That is not selfishness: for us to be happy: that is God’s plan!
- b. Your kids are God’s gift TO you. That is, a blessing, ENTRUSTED to you for your care.
 - i. If someone gave you a fine antique car. They would only give it to someone who would be responsible with it. And while it is now yours, he has a right to expect you to show respect and appreciation by caring for it as it needs.
 - ii. **Ephesians 6:4 – “Fathers, raise them up...”**
 1. God expects us to take care of, raise up and be responsible for our kids.
 2. Long before we talk about what to teach them or what should be expected of them, we should talk about parents, particularly fathers, *obeying the Lord’s command to care for this gift, be involved and be accountable for them.*

- iii. **Deuteronomy 6:7** – They are not a gift to the world and so the world can care for them. Or a gift to the church and we put them in its care. They are a gift to us, parents, and therefore we are responsible to teach, spend time with, and to make them the very best they can be.
- iv. Far more dangerous than negative involvement in our kid's lives, is a LACK of involvement in their lives. They are busy. We are busy. We don't sit with them. Talk to them. Study with them. *They aren't out gift anymore. We have replaced them. And, as for caretakers, they have replaced us with friends and the world.*
- v. **Genesis 18:19** – Instead, parents, and fathers in particular, think like Abraham. God gave Abraham children for a purpose. A gift, but to be treasured as one as well.
- vi. *Be involved in their lives.* They are not a snake, but a fish, not a rock, but a loaf of bread. Your father knew what you needed and gave you something good: My three are blessed gifts, may I care for them as such.

II. Children are Arrows (Psalm 127:4-5)

- a. "Tender Warrior" by Stu Weber
 - i. *"As I write these words, I'm looking at three arrows on my desk. They differ from one another. Any archer could see that at a glance. Yet in other ways, they are remarkably similar. They are good arrows. But then again, they're not much better than the archer who notches them on the bow. They're not much better than the smoothness of the release. No matter how finely crafted these arrows might be... accuracy demands a trained, full draw and a disciplined release. As I write these words, I'm looking at a picture on my desk. It's a picture of my three sons." (pg. 166).*
 - ii. For me, it is my daughter and two sons. For you, perhaps a difference combination. But they are gifts to be TRAINED, PRACTICED, FOCUSED, and are to be an ASSET of defense and integrity to the family, NOT a LIABILITY or weakness to your name.
 - iii. But they are yours parents, put under your charge, made to fit in your quiver, and to be a benefit to your home. But that will demand focused and purposeful work on your part.
 - iv. **Ephesians 6:4 – "Fathers, raise them up in the DISCIPLINE... of the Lord"**
 - 1. Our kids are all different. Some seem to be naturally good, while others seem to be naturally... "adverse." But they all need training to accomplish what God intended them to be in the home and ultimately in Christ.
 - 2. And this means, "discipline." Not the modern day idea of letting our kids do as they please and make their own way and their own mistakes and be an individual soul.
 - 3. Their lives are not arrows in their own quiver. They are arrows in yours!
 - 4. Too often we see the results of not shaping the child
 - a. *Toddlers wear out parents and we make excuses for them*
 - b. *Young kids don't say "yes" or "no ma'am" and we feel bad for spanking them*
 - c. *Pre-teens test the water of irreverence and skirt truth. Dads don't notice.*
 - d. *Teenagers build lives separate from the parents, and parents are relieved.*
 - 5. Shame on us. Because one day we will have to let that arrow go. It is built to fly away from us and to hit the target of FAITHFULNESS to God. And if it misses, while not always the case, often times that is on us.
 - 6. **Proverbs 29:15; 3:12; 13:24; 19:18; 22:26; 22:15; 23:13**
 - v. Mom and dad. The greatest love you can show them is the care to reprove and discipline them so that they can hit their mark and can embrace the discipline of God when they grow up. And after all, they are your arrows, and their flight is a reflection of your training.

III. Children are Olive Trees (Psalm 128:2-3)

- a. Like the olive tree, that is cared for and pruned and produces oil to light the house, our children, even from a young age should be taught that they are not just CONSUMERS, but PROVIDERS. They do not exist to take, but for what they can give to the family and provide for loved ones.
- b. Do you know why apparel companies, makeup companies, shoe companies, movie industries, and game makers are some of the largest business in the world: teenagers consume by the billions.
- c. If you want a blessing in your home, teach them to provide, but that will take something important:
- d. **Ephesians 6:4 – "Fathers, raise them up in the INSTRUCTION of the Lord"**
 - i. Let us understand, if we do not instruct them how to be productive, they will not be.

- ii. But what does this word “instruction” mean?
 - 1. Well, it occurs 2 other times in the N.T.
 - a. **Titus 3:10** – “warning” – to warn them about their error and the consequences. To list those consequences and the hope that they will do better, and to follow through with punishment if not.
 - b. **I Corinthians 10:11** – To learn from what is written! Bible study with your family is the most important thing you can do to teach them to be great for God and for your family.
 - e. But instructing our children to be a provider of good things, an asset, is best carried out in one way:
 - i. **Psalms 128:1,4** – Your Example! When you fear God and walk in God’s ways. When you take your talents and develop them. Take the Bible out and read it. Be an asset, a source of oil of light of blessing to your family, children of all ages will see and learn and grow!

Conclusion:

Sadly, too many children grow up thinking everything exists as a gift to them, instead of their existence being a gift to others.

They grow to believe that life is about playing it as it comes and there is not need to train, prepare and be focused on goals.

They build a life around consuming and lack the maturity to produce for family, culture and God.

And while it is their problem, it often times is not their fault. Parents have molded them to think and behave that way.

But, it is not that way among the faithful in the household of God. And it does not have to be that way for you.

Psalms 128:1-2 – “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.”

Psalms 129:1-4 – “How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD...”

For those, those who cherish their children, who discipline their children, who lead their children by example:

Your house will be filled with GREAT GIFTS, TRUE FLYING ARROWS, and FRUITFUL TREES.

May God build that house for you and through you.

But that result may begin with humility and repentance. The need to show your children that you are willing to submit and obey the Lord, just as you teach them to do. Or perhaps a young person tonight is ready to be a gift to their parents by submitting to the instruction of Truth and turning to God for help.