

# STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

## Strengthening Your Grip on the Family

*Psalms 127–128*



### LET'S BEGIN HERE

*What is the family?*

In a culture where every role and relationship—from the husband-wife relationship to the parent-child relationship—is in the process of redefinition, it's hard to get a grip on what *family* should look like. Even for Christians, who have many pictures of family life in the Bible, it's hard to make those pictures a present-day reality when our culture paints a very different portrait.

To strengthen our grip on what God intended for the family, let's turn to His Word, specifically Psalms 127 and 128. Though not a detailed manual for successful family life, these two ancient hymns paint a mural of inspired images depicting four stages of family life: the foundation of the home (Psalm 127:1–2), the expansion of the home (127:3–5), the child-rearing years (128:1–3), and the later years (128:4–6). These verses can help us appreciate, as well as improve, our families.



### LET'S DIG DEEPER

#### 1. First Scene: The Foundational Years (Psalm 127:1–2)

Any home must rest on a firm foundation, both structurally and spiritually. What good is a home, even an elaborate one, if it's thrown together by an incompetent builder? God is the Master Builder. Unless a husband and wife construct their home according to God's Word and entrust it to His care, their work and watchfulness will be wasted. For the family to survive the wind, rain, theft, and vandalism of today's world, God must be the builder.



## Quotable

*“You can come  
to church, sit,  
leave, and  
NEVER be  
impacted  
by another life.  
That's tragic,  
you know?”*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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### 2. Second Scene: The Expansion Years (Psalm 127:3–5)

When children come along, everything changes! More mouths to feed, more bills to pay, more burdens to bear. But that's not how God looks at children; He calls them gifts, rewards, and sources of strength. Our children belong to God, but He has entrusted these gifts to their parents' care. As earthly stewards of these little ones, we have the joy and privilege of equipping them for life . . . and then releasing them, like arrows, to live with purpose.

### 3. Third Scene: The Child-Rearing Years (Psalm 128:1–3)

In Psalm 128, the psalmist used agricultural imagery to depict the blessing of a growing, flourishing family. Notice, though, that members of the family grow in their own way. A vine grows differently from an olive plant. So take note, fathers. Your job isn't to make carbon copies of yourself but to help your wife and children grow in the way God designed them.

### 4. Fourth Scene: The Closing Years (Psalm 128:4–6)

What about the “empty nest” years? Psalm 128 provides encouragement for hanging on after the kids leave. An empty nest doesn't have to mean an empty life. God continues to bless us even after our children have gone. He blesses us personally as we continue to walk with Him. He blesses us corporately as His people. And He blesses us generationally by allowing us to see our children expand their families with children of their own.



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### A CLOSER LOOK

#### *Fruitless Trees?*

Psalm 127 contrasts the anxieties of life (Psalm 127:1–2) with the blessings of life (127:3–5). Those who love life and give life to others will find themselves surrounded by gifts—their children. While many today do desire and yearn for children, it has become increasingly common for couples—even Christian couples—to choose to remain childless. Such a choice, when made despite good health and reproductive ability, is akin to choosing to become a fruit tree that bears no fruit. It denies the nature that God gave us at creation—not to mention His command to humanity to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). Our commitment to children in the context of marriage mirrors our confession of new life in Jesus. When physically capable couples affirm life by giving it, they also affirm their commitment to others outside of themselves—a commitment that stands at the very heart of our Christian faith (Matthew 22:39).



### LET'S LIVE IT

What is a family? It's an institution built, guided, and blessed by God. And one that honors Him. But perhaps the more important question is, What is *your* family?

Here are some questions to help you evaluate the state of your family:

- Is love in your home unconditional?
- Are you investing the necessary time into your family?
- Are the memories you have created mostly grim or mostly happy?



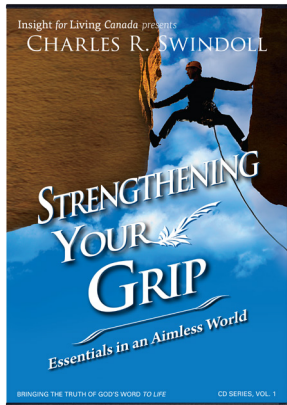
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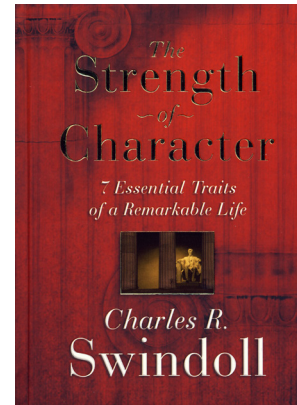
## Tools for Digging Deeper



**Strengthening  
Your Grip**  
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compact disc set



**A Significant Past . . .  
A Challenging Future**  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
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**The Strength of Character**  
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