

Unless the Lord Shall Build Worksheet
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Verse 1

Unless the Lord the house shall build,
The weary builders toil in vain;
Unless the Lord the city shield,
The guards a useless watch maintain.

Verse 2

In vain you rise ere morning break,
And late your nightly vigils keep,
And of the bread of toil partake;
God gives to His beloved sleep.

Verse 3

Lo, children are a great reward,
A gift from God in very truth;
With arrows is his quiver stored
Who joys in children of his youth.

Verse 4

And blest the man whose age is cheered
By stalwart sons and daughters fair;
No enemies by him are feared,
No lack of love, no want of care.

Vocabulary In one or two words define the following terms from the poem.

Verse 1: weary, toil, vain, maintain

Verse 2: ere, vigils, partake, beloved

Verse 3: Lo, quiver

Verse 4: blest, stalwart

Word Pictures Word pictures is another way of saying *imagery*. *Imagery* or *figurative language* helps us form a picture of what the author is trying to present. Discuss what these word pictures mean and, perhaps, without drawing a picture of Christ, draw your idea of the *imagery* or *figurative language* the author uses!

Verse 1: house shall build, weary builders toil in vain, city shield

Verse 2: morning break, vigils keep, beloved sleep

Verse 3: children are a great reward, gift, arrows ... quiver stored

Verse 4: stalwart sons, daughters fair

Mechanics Verbally discuss

Who is the speaker? (Does the speaker have a specific personality or has the author remained in the background so the message of the poem will be more clear?)

What does the poem reveal about the speaker's character? (Sometimes, poems reveal nothing about the speaker's personal thoughts, feelings, or attitudes. Yet, the poem may demonstrate those character traits that are important to the author like courage, loyalty, perseverance, etc.)

Is the speaker addressing someone in particular or is it to anyone? (Sometimes poems are not directed to anyone in particular, but to anyone that may read it.)

Does the poem have a setting? (Does the author tell where the poem occurs? Is the poem about a specific event?)

Is the poem about a particular event? (Is the event past or present? If it is about a past event, does the remembrance of the event have a particular meaning to the speaker?)

Is the theme of the poem stated directly or indirectly? (Some poems are straightforward and are meant to be taken literally. In songs, the theme may be presented in the refrain or in the last few lines. Sometimes the theme is a little bit more difficult to discern as it is made with figurative language or symbols.)
How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time?

What point of view or perspective is the speaker? (What meaning do you think the poem has for the author?)

How did you respond to the poem when you read it the first time? (Did your thoughts and feelings change after you took time to study it?)

Comprehension Questions Verbally discuss

Verse 1: What does the author mean by stating, “Unless the Lord the house shall build”? What does the author say about the builders (line 2)? Do you agree/disagree with the first two lines? Why? How can the Lord be a city’s shield? Who are today’s guards?

Verse 2: Explain and discuss: “In vain you rise ere morning break, And late your nightly vigils keep.” The author draws a sharp contrast to those that do not trust God to those that do. Do you agree/disagree? Why? What does God give His beloved? Why would this be important? Why do you think the author opted to use the term “ere”?

Verse 3: What are a great reward? Why? Why do you think the author used the term “Lo”? What is a gift? Explain and discuss: “With arrows is his quiver stored, Who joys in children of his youth.”

Verse 4: Who is blest? When? What is the blessing (line 2)? What is not feared? What is not lacking? Why?

After reading this poem, what character traits did you think of? What does the Bible have to say about these character traits?

What Does the Bible Say?

Find Scripture proofs for each of the assertions or statements made for each of the four verses.

What does the Bible have to say about cheerful obedience to God? Identify Biblical characters that were demonstrated cheerful obedience. Can you think of anyone else in history that demonstrated this character trait in the Biblical sense? What will you tell your grandchildren about cheerful obedience to God? How will you encourage your grandchildren in this character trait?

What does the Bible say about love? Identify Biblical characters that were demonstrated love. Can you think of anyone else in history that demonstrated this character trait in the Biblical sense? What will you tell your grandchildren about love? How will you encourage your grandchildren in this character trait? For more scriptural helps in learning what the Bible says about love, go to the internet page <http://www.lovetolearnplace.com/SpecialDays/Valentines/Bible.html>

Discuss this poem in light of ...

Matthew 22:37 " ... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Luke 10:27 "... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."

Deuteronomy 6:5 "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Mark 12:30 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength ..."

The Author/Poet

Based on what you have studied about this poem so far, would you guess that the author was a Christian or a humanist? How did you arrive at your decision?

This song is from the 1912 *The Psalter*.

Geography

Locate any country and capital of that country on a globe, map and atlas.

Challenge Locate one-two smaller communities of that country on a map or in an atlas.

Compare/contrast this country's weather with your own for one week.

Make a meal from this country for your family.

Activities

1) Make your own book! Without making an image of Christ, draw pictures representing each verse. (Note: that will be four different illustrations). With construction paper and other items readily available at home, make a title page with the name of the song and the author's name which will be your book's cover. You may want to illustrate your cover and include this poem in your book.

2) Make your own play! Re-enact with your siblings or friends the message discussed in this poem. Keep it lively, simple, and short. You may want to end your play with singing a rousing chorus of this poem or reading Scripture verses. Videotape your creation.

3) Radio Drama! With a handheld tape recorder, create your own radio show dramatizing the message of this poem.

4) Be a Reporter! Either with your family camcorder or with a handheld tape recorder, “interview” various individuals this poem could illustrate (e.g., family members, John Knox, Martin Luther, Daniel Boone, farmers, ministers, laborers, etc.). In order to have the fast paced style of a reporter, watch and/or listen to the news with your parents’ permission. Keep the interviews lively, quick, and to the point.

Remain objective! Being objective means just reporting the facts and not giving your opinion of the situation.

5) What is one of the things you most enjoy? Is it literature? math? science? sports? cooking? Take that area of interest and relate that to this poem. If you enjoy dance, for example, develop a dance routine that physically expresses the sentiments of this poem. If you enjoy shop, create something out of wood that helps to clarify this poem. Do you enjoy creating stories? Write a story based on any time period you desire that expresses the sentiments of this poem. Do you enjoy creating things in the kitchen? Make an ancient meal from this time or develop your own meal that symbolizes the many different points this poem makes.

6) Poster. Create a poster illustrating the the author’s view of the impact of *Unless the Lord Shall Build*.

7) Scavenger Hunt. Go to the library to learn what you can about psalters --- when they came about, why, their purpose, etc. --- and share it with your family. If possible, discover the story behind this poem.