

A Generational Duty

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Psalm 78:2-8

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. 5 For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; 6 That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, 7 That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments; 8 And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

There is a duty given to each generation to pass to the next generation the truth and a love for it. But for four generations Americans have abandoned their responsibility and failed their children. Most parents have resigned from their teaching duty and handed it over to local school boards and school systems that are mere puppets to a Federal government dead set on indoctrinating enough of the population to get the absolute power that it wants. Washington's liberal bureaucrats who are socialistic in ideology, and proud of it, along with a complicit and obedient news media have stolen the souls of the past four generations, I'm speaking about since the 60s.

Many, if not most, teachers today are trained on Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy. Bloom was a behavioral psychologist whose system of indoctrination has been adopted by most educators. I asked Tracy and my daughter-in-law Leigh Ann if they knew of Benjamin Bloom and they both said, "Oh, yes." In fact, Tracy told me that at certain meetings, he is still mentioned and referred to. One of Bloom's foundational beliefs of learning is that "truth and knowledge are only relative and that there are no hard and fast truths which exist for all time and all places." In other words, there is no absolute truth. Truth is changing. Another of Bloom's beliefs is: "The purpose of education and the schools is to change the thoughts, feelings and actions of students." Bloom said specifically, "[A] large part of what we call 'good teaching' is the teacher's ability to attain affective objectives through challenging the students' fixed beliefs and getting them to discuss issues." The fixed beliefs that he is referring to are what children have been taught by parents and religion. Bloom bragged he could change a Christian into an atheist in one hour.

Friends, this is what has been accepted by the educational system of our nation. Men like this, who are very much prevalent in the curriculum we now use to train the youth of this nation, are men and women who have been dead-set to change this nation from its Judeo-Christian heritage.

For example, how else do you explain how it is possible that an unashamed and avowed socialist, could gain the popularity of young people all over this country and was able to give Hillary Clinton a serious challenge for President of the United States? Who would have thought that a socialist could actually win 23 states primaries and caucuses?

The reason it's happened is because for the last four generations we have indoctrinated our children with teaching and information that is contrary to what this nation was founded upon.

The government and secular academia has been successful in brainwashing and indoctrinating the youth of our nation for one reason: because parents have ceased to do their job to instill morality, values, and beliefs into their children. They have been too eager to send their kids to school to get them out of their hair so they can pursue their own dreams and goals. And we wonder why most of our kids leave the church when they become of age.

My friend Paul Washer says, "Your children will go to public school and they will be trained for somewhere around 15,000 hours in ungodly secular thought. And then they'll go to Sunday school and they'll color a picture of Noah's ark. And you think that's going to stand against the lies that they are being told?"

Beloved, we have fooled ourselves into thinking we have done an adequate job in rearing our children in the admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not a message against the public school system or any school system for that matter. This is a message to you and I that we have failed our children and thus the Lord. This text makes it imperative that the task of training children was never given to public school boards. It was not given to private institutions of learning, even Christian institutions of learning. It was given mainly to moms and dads, chiefly dads.

God's method of rearing children is that moms and dads instill in their children truth so that if an educator wants to try to convert them to the atheistic beliefs in one hour, it will not be able to be done. They should know the truth, know why they believe it, and be able to defend it and give an answer to the hope that lies within them.

As we look at this text I want us to see what is the objective of Christian parenting, specifically the role of the dad. I believe the psalmist establishes a foundational principle for teaching our children and taking seriously that task.

I. Parents Must Love God And Have A Passion For Him

You, parents, must love God yourself and have a passion for Him.

*We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. (Psalm 78:4)*

In other words, the psalmist is saying, “We’re not going to fail God or our children. We’re going to tell of His wonderful works. We’re enamored with our God. We’re carried away with enthusiasm about what God has done. And what He’s done for our forefathers He’s done for us. God is active in our lives and we are experiencing Him, thus we want to share it with our children, because we love God.”

Therefore, the primary goal of parenting isn’t the wellbeing or the good of the child. The purpose and foundation of Christian parenting is love for Jesus and a passion for Him.

A. God Must Be Valued More Than Our Children.

Here I must speak briefly but firmly against an extreme that has infiltrated the church in the last 20-25 years. It has a good seed but it’s a good seed gone bad. It’s the family movement that has been prevalent in Christian circles.

Because the church has neglected the family and because we have surrendered our children to the public school systems, there has been a movement within that has made the emphasis on Christianity family. It’s been mostly homeschooling and family-integrated churches and these kinds of ideas. While I applaud many of the things they teach, we have yet missed the boat and are drowning. This teaching and doctrine has been perverted by most and it’s not about a passion for God but a passion for parenting and family. Beloved, nothing can take the place of God, not even good things, not even biblical things.

You must love God more than you love your children. If you do all the “right” things, you homeschool, or you send them to a Christian school, and you’re very family oriented only to say you have done your Christian duty, my friend, you have sinned against your children and more importantly you’ve sinned against God.

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” (Matthew 10:37)

Yet so many Christian parents love their children more than God. When you love children more than God you have become an idolater and are not acting like a Christian.

To love your children and establish them as the passion of your life and to pursue them in the place of God is idolatry and is not Christianity. You have no right to claim the name “Christian,” if they have your heart and you’ve given them the passion that belongs to God.

B. God Must Be the Center of Parenting Not Morality.

A big mistake we have made today is hold to the false assumption that morality is Christianity. Christianity is moral, but morality is not Christianity. Christianity is a passionate and loving relationship with Christ that is evident in the spiritual pursuits and moral behavior of the Christian.

Most of our children see that we are moral, but do they see an overriding passion for God that consumes the entirety of our lives? They see you are religious and are kind and have generosity and all the “good” qualities that make up a lot of the Christian behavior, but I ask you this morning the burning question on my heart: do your children and grandchildren see a passion for Jesus Christ that far exceeds your concern about being good in the sight of people?

This passion for His glory permeates everything in the Christian’s life. It should influence every facet of our being. Our children see us get up on Sunday morning and go to church but the rest of the week they see our passion about our jobs, money, sports, hobbies. We mistakenly think we have given them a Christian example, but the truth is all we have given them is a morality. It is the primary duty of parents to teach our children not to be moral but to love the Lord their God with all their hearts.

If your children can recite every book of the Bible, if they can quote verses but they don’t love God we have failed. You cannot make your child a Christian and I wish to put nobody under any kind of false guilt. My children didn’t come to know Jesus Christ until their later teens. I knew only God could save them but I also knew I had to pray, “God, in spite of what Karen and I have done, save our children!” But, friends, there are things we are to do whether they follow Jesus or not.

You say, “Well, it won’t work.” That’s not the problem and it’s not your decision. Your decision is to be faithful and obedient to God. I’m going to tell you, any other way will not work. I can guarantee that.

Do your children see a love for God? Believe me, they know. Your children know whether you really love God and are passionate about Him or not. I remember as a boy growing up, knowing my mom and dad’s relationship. I’m ashamed to tell you this but I believe it is for your help, both of my parents are gone, but I knew while watching them as a little boy that they didn’t love each other. You know, children are not stupid. They can pick up on the vibrations of the heart.

How could I tell my parents didn’t love each other? The cold glances. The bitter words toward one another. I knew my mother was resentful toward my father and my father knew he had probably made a mistake in marrying my mother. It was very obvious to me. Do your children know if you love your spouse? I guarantee you they know and they know how fervent that love is or how little it is. The same is true how they notice your love for God. They’re observing it.

Let me say, again, what you already know: it’s not what you say it’s what you do that teaches more than anything else. The foundation of our parental duties is to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strengths.

II. Parents Must Teach Their Children the Fear of the Lord

The psalmist doesn't reference the fear of the Lord explicitly but it's all through this text and of course it is the leading admonition and the first step to all knowledge. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and the most significant piece of knowledge you and your child can possess. You can master Einstein's theory of relativity or be a whiz at quantum physics and still not have the most important of all information, if you do not fear the Lord. To fear the Lord does not mean an unhealthy or ungodly fear of God, this morbid trembling and never knowing what He's going to do or if you'll be on His good side or bad side—that's not biblical—but rather to fear the Lord is a correct assessment and understanding of the full revelation of who God is.

We are to have a correct understanding of who God is as He has revealed Himself in Scripture and to joyfully submit to Him. That's the fear of the Lord.

You cannot fear a God you do not know and the only way you can know this God is through the revelation of His Word. When your understanding of God is balanced by Scripture, meaning you don't have a slanted or skewed view of God because you're focusing only on one or two attributes, but you allow all the attributes of God to reflect His benevolent nature, then you are moving toward the fear of the Lord. When you can see God in His totality as it is revealed in Scripture, you will fear. You will tremble. Your heart will sink in submission. You will bow down gladly before this great God and Creator and Maker of heaven and earth. No one will have to teach you the fear of the Lord when you see God as He is. You will fear Him.

You can teach your children in two biblically mandated ways: formal teaching and correction, better known as discipline. I would summarize it as *discipline* because discipline has two sides, one is instruction and the other side is correction. It's like two sides of a coin.

Let's first examine instruction.

A. Fear of God is Based on the Bible.

"For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children." (Psalm 78:5)

God gave revelation of Himself and if our children are to fear the Lord they must know the truth about Him. There is no fear apart from the revelation of Scripture. Without the truth of the Gospel the Holy Spirit does not convict. Why? Because He has nothing to ignite. See, this teaching of who God is and what He is like must be a purposeful endeavor. This is the goal of Christian parenting, to introduce God to your children as the Scriptures reveal Him.

Let me be swift to say that no one can know God in His entirety. I would say none of us know Him very well. We all know Him very little but we do know what this Book has taught as He has chosen to reveal the nature of Himself to us. This we can know and your children can know.

Dad, you would be better off to teach above their heads than beneath it because even if you're saying things they don't understand they will grow to understand. And I believe as we, years ago, changed the children's curriculum around here to teach more doctrinal, substantive Bible instead of just moral stories found in the Scriptures, that our children have absorbed much more than they would have otherwise. It's amazing what they can understand. Teachers of our classes come to me often and say, "I'm amazed at what my students are able to learn and ascertain and keep in their minds," and it is.

I've often be amazed at some of the younger children. They may be coloring or doing something where it doesn't seem like they're paying attention to me, but on the drive home they might say something to mom and dad about what I said in that message. Mom and dad are blown away because they underestimate what God has given to young people—a mind that's like a sponge and can soak up and retain so much. Let's take advantage of these years.

In Romans 10:17 Paul affirms this principle by telling us that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The knowledge of God is so wonderful that it produces faith. In fact, it is impossible to embrace faith that's not first taught. We cannot believe what we do not know, because knowledge precedes faith. Mom and dad, that's your responsibility, not the Sunday school teachers. We need to teach them the Word of God.

Dads, I again encourage you, to give at least 30 minutes a day to hearing you share with your children the Word of the Lord. I have no problem saying to indoctrinate them in this way—that's the command of Scripture. That's my responsibility!

I heard on a national news program the other day that it's not the responsibility of a dad to create the image of himself in his children. I thought, "Where have you gotten this?" It seems to me that this is the very instruction of Scripture. My children are made in my image and if I, as an image bearer of God, a knower of Jesus and a lover thereof, am to instill that part of my image in them. What's left of my image after that is no good. The remainder of my image is not going to serve them but it will damn them. We need to be gathering our children for the sake of God and His glory and the sake and wellbeing of our children.

B. Teach Children to Put Their Confidence in God.

*"That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments."
(Psalm 78:7)*

God has testified and taught us that we may deposit the truth into our children that they might know it and embrace it. In this way they will learn to put their confidence in God. Teach them the Word and as they see all the times God is faithful to His Word, their faith will be built up. God is a promise keeper. He is faithful to His Word. Teach children to observe how God does keeps His promises; it's so the aim of all true education, to deepen and broaden confidence in God.

This is what keeps learning from leading to pride—or *should* keep learning from leading to pride. All true learning, all true knowledge reveals that we are dependent on God and must depend on Him or otherwise we perish. That's the goal of all true knowledge. I don't care what field, I don't care what science, it should all lead me to the conclusion that if I don't have God I'm dead and hopeless. Knowledge that leads to self-sufficiency rather than dependence on God is not true knowledge but flawed knowledge.

As we let our children know God is faithful, they can trust Him through your experiences with Him. One of the things Karen and I tried to do quite often was to let our children know when we needed God to come through for us. We told them the problems, we told them the challenges. Not all of them, of course. You have to be wise. You can't dump a lot of things on small children, they can't handle it emotionally and intellectually. But, within reason, we did that purposefully, we wanted to involve them in our prayer time as a family because when God answered they could see, "God did this," and now their faith was being developed that God does hear the prayers of His people and He does keep His promise.

Parents, teach your children to trust the Lord. Don't let them see that your trust is more in the arm of the flesh, what you can strategize, or in someone else's help. No, your help is in God.

C. Parents are to Love Their Children by Correcting Them.

Discipline is also corrective. If our children are to grow up and fear the Lord, something must first happen. This is why God created families. He created an environment to teach the fear of God and respect for Him. If you are to teach your children to grow up and fear the Lord, they must first love and fear their parents in a healthy manner.

Your children will never fear God and obey Him if they are not expected to obey you. It is very difficult for children to learn to honor God if they defy their parents and resist their authority. It is very difficult to nurture a reverence for God and humility before Him when children are permitted to treat parents and adults in general with disrespect. Do you hear what I'm saying? You're teaching them to *not* love God and honor Him, if they can get by with disrespect for you, God's representative in the home, why should they respect Him? This is what we're doing when we allow these little children to say things to you and to other adults that show not honor but just the opposite, a disrespect of people in authority.

The permissiveness that is encouraged and taught in our culture, and which is rampant in the American church and evident in our own congregation, not only makes life miserable for those who have to be with our children but can lead to our children's destruction. Do you hear what I'm saying? Do not allow your children to disrespect and dishonor you because all you are doing is instilling in them a disrespect and dishonor for God.

If you're not planning on correcting your child when they disobey your directive, then don't give the directive. It would be much better to not give them the instruction if you're not going

to enforce it. Discipline is love, if done lovingly—it's the most loving thing we can do for our children. Instruction must include correction because they are naturally born rebels. They don't want to submit to authority. They're born with an instinct that says, "It's my way." It's their way or nobody's way.

When does selfishness start to manifest itself? When you graduate from high school? When you graduate college or university? When you enter your first job? Is that when selfishness begins to manifest itself? No. It happens as a little baby crying with a dirty diaper saying, "I don't care what you're doing right now, mom or dad, you better pay attention to me because I do not feel happy right now. This does not feel good. Would you do something?" You say that's not what the baby means. If they could talk, it is exactly what they mean. It's good that they don't talk at this age.

We are to discipline our children.

*"Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction."
(Proverbs 19:18)*

When we correct our children, it's not because we're angry. And if you are angry when you correct your child you've just sinned against God and them. No, we correct them because we love them. We are to discipline our children while there is hope of correcting them. If we fail to do so we set them up for destruction.

I want to come to my final heading, as we're running out of time.

III. Parents Must Ensure a Passion for God in Coming Generations

"That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children," (Psalm 78:6)

A. We Are the Instruments of Continuity or Discontinuity.

We have received the torch of truth from the previous generation. Therefore, we are the torchbearers of truth today and we are to hold that torch out for light. But we are to also pass the torch of truth to the future by means of our children. This is God's method.

Evangelism and missions should begin in the home. I think it's absolutely wrong and irresponsible and not godly to be more concerned about the heathen nations than your own children. This is contrary to the way God makes us and wires us. If you have a desire to see people come to Jesus but your first priority is not your children's instruction in the Gospel, my dear friend, your heart is displaced. God's method of evangelism begins in the home. Psalm 78:8 says you can either be an influence for future generations or an impediment.

“And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.” (Psalm 78:8)

A father's failure to reflect a passion for God destroys the Gospel in the generation to come. Your child, when he or she becomes an adult without becoming a Christian, will probably have good morals simply because they watched your morality. But what about their children and their children? The nature of sin is never satisfied in its position to God. It wants to get further and further away from God.

The generation of our kids today who are not Christians, have a certain moral bearing, I pray, but what about their children when they rear them up with less than you gave them, what will happen? And your great-grandchildren? This is a deathly cycle of defeat that God is warning against in this text. It is certain, if you neglect raising your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, you are predestining your grandchildren and great-grandchildren to have less light than your present children.

A little girl followed her father in newly planted clumps of St. Augustine grass. She stepped exactly where he stepped. She said, “Daddy, if you don't get mud on your feet, I won't get any mud on me!”

It's true. If we can walk in the footsteps of Christ, passionately desiring Him above all other things, we will leave a trail for our children to follow. It doesn't guarantee their salvation, no one can guarantee that but Jesus, but you're giving God more ammunition and fuel to ignite when He begins to knock on the door of their heart.

I am very fearful of the future of our nation because for the last four generations we have forsaken our youth, abandoned our responsibility, we've become AWOL as Christian parents, and we're reaping what we have sown. In this case, what we have sown is a failure to obey the Lord and instruct children biblically. I believe sin will take this nation further away from God, except if in His mercy He would once again awaken the hearts of many people in this nation and turn them back to Him. Apart from that, there is no hope. History bears it out. You will not change history, if you don't know history. History bears when a people neglect to teach their children and indoctrinate them in His Word and truth, that nation will soon turn to wayward ways of carnal, fallen nature.

You say, “Well, I'm not a Christian, my children are reared, and I have failed.” Yes. Let's not mince words; it's not a time to mince them. But time is not ended and neither has hope.

Maybe you are a Christian parent and you can see today that you have neglected your children, you have failed to take the responsibility to teach them seriously and you handed that responsibility to others, it is not too late. The Bible says he who covers his sin shall not prosper but he who confesses his sin shall prosper. Go to your child today and in humility and brokenness repent, repent to God and repent to your child or children. Tell them you have seen from the Word

of God that you have failed them and God, “I see now from the Word of the Lord, I have failed Him and I have failed you and I’m asking for your forgiveness, I’m pleading for it, I’m begging for it, I’m sorry.” I don’t care if your children are adults with children of their own, this is what you ought to say, something like this, “I want to be an example to you of what a God-fearing man or woman is like. I want to give you a place, a trail for you, it’s not too late.”

They may not understand or appreciate what you have to say but, my dear friends, don’t give up on God. This is not up to you just like it was not up to me or Karen to rear our children. We needed God and apart from God they wouldn’t have been saved or walking with Him. Oh no, this is not some methodology or formula that will guarantee your children’s eternal life but it is God’s way and your responsibility to obey Him.

If you’re not a Christian today, I’m thinking of what I could say to you at this moment to encourage you to want to turn to the Father, the good Father, who gives good gifts to His children. I would just simply remind you of God’s love for you and the lunacy of it. Yes, you heard me right. You could almost say divine madness. That God would sacrifice His Son for me? There’s no father in his right mind who would do such, right? This is the definition of insanity. Any daddy who would take out his son and sacrifice him for a bunch of hoodlums, well, we would lock him up and throw away the key. We would classify him as certifiably insane.

Yet, this is exactly what the Lord has done for you! This is not a fable or a myth, it’s historical, it’s evidential, it can be proven true—this is what God has done for sinners like us, people who didn’t love Him or care for Him but wanted to be as far from Him as possible. Yet He took His Son and slew Him for you. How do you describe what appears to be such lunacy?

The only answer is that Jesus was not unwilling but willing to be the sacrifice. As the Father, so is the Son. The Father loved you enough to let the Son bear your sins and the Son loved you enough to bear them. The Son wanted to die for you. Don’t mistake that prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, “If there is any way possible, let this cup pass from Me,” as Him not wanting to save you. It’s not that, it’s that a holy being really understood the price like none of us unholy beings do or can imagine.

He knew the love of the Father so much that He didn’t want to live one second without it and it would require that. No, the Son wanted to die for you so that you could know the love of the Father through Him.

A group of botanists were searching in the Alps for rare flowers. A very fine specimen was spotted on a small ledge of rock that could only be reached with a lifeline. The job was far too dangerous for the inexperienced botanists, so they spied out a local shepherd boy who was familiar with the terrain. They offered him several gold coins to climb down the rope and retrieve the rare specimen.

Although the boy desperately wanted the coins, he feared that the job was too dangerous. Several times he peered over the edge of the cliff but he couldn't see any safe way of getting to the flower. Besides, he would have to place his trust in the hands of strangers who would be holding his lifeline. Suddenly, the boy had an idea. He left the group for a few moments, then returned holding the hand of a much older man. The shepherd boy then ran excitedly to edge of the cliff and said to the botanists, "You can tie the rope under my arms now. I'll go into the canyon, as long as you let my father hold the rope."

Why was he so secure? Because he knew his dad loved him.

Forgive me for the obvious illustration, but are you holding the rope for your children or have you given them to a stranger? Amen.