

Psalm 78:1-8
From One Generation to the Next

We ultimately become what we listen to and digest the most. This morning, I want us to think intentionally and be honest with ourselves regarding who is teaching us and/or what is shaping us. Every day Americans consume roughly 100,000 words of information. At that pace, the world pours the equivalent of an entire Bible into our minds every eight days. Yet six out of ten Americans seldom or never read Scripture outside of church, even though 62% still identify as Christians. Church, we are not suffering from an information crisis in America. We are suffering from a discipleship crisis because so little of what fills our minds comes from the Word of God. Considering this level of biblical illiteracy, *might it* explain many of the challenges we face as the church? Could it explain why young people and young families are increasingly absent. The sharp political divisions and infighting among professing believers. The acquiescence of the church to cultural norms that dishonor the Word of God, the gospel of Jesus the Christ. I think so. This is sobering data, but I am not without hope. I am reminded of Paul's words in **2 Cor 10:4**, "We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments." Having said all this, I ask what is most important to us or what should be most important to us? Is it that we and our children prosper in the world, or that we prosper in Christ? Certainly, to prosper in Christ is to prosper in life regardless of what life may bring our way.

John 10:10, "¹⁰The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." **NLT**

John 16:33 “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” **NLT**

Who doesn't want a life of steadfastness, perseverance, hope and joy; a life not deterred or deferred by the consistently shifting currents of our time. This is the life I want to live, and this is the life Jesus offers us and our children, if we would only allow ourselves to be taught so that we could teach our children. Teach them what? I'm glad you asked.

First, teach them the truth about God. V1-4, “Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! ²I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ³things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. ⁴We will not hide them from their children but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” We teach them about God. Not what we think about God. Not what the culture says about God, but what the Bible declares about God. We teach them the whole truth about God, even the difficult, uncomfortable, and humbling truths. You know. Those truths about God that make us say, “I just can't believe that.” But we must believe it, even that which does not suit our sensibilities. We teach them that God does not change. That God created all things, even them. That God is a jealous God. That God is holy, just, merciful, gracious, and at the same time, full of wrath toward those who hate Him. We teach them that God is love and that love is the reason for the sinless life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, who is God in the flesh sent into the world to die for the sin of the world. To die for us because God hates sin. We, you, teach them this among many other things.

Matt 19:13-14 “¹³ One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. ¹⁴ But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.” **NLT**

Second, teach them God’s law. V5-8, “He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; ⁸and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.” We teach them God’s law because the Word instructs us to do so. But also, it is the law of God that reveals to us God’s holy character while making known to us our utter sinfulness and desperate need of a Savior.

And though it cannot save, the law can lead us to the One who can. Not only this, but the law of God reveals the mind of God, a mind that no human being other than Jesus possesses. Listen! The law of God communicates the holy, perfect standard of God and every one of us needs exposure to this if we are to understand fully the grace of God afforded to all humanity through God’s Son, Jesus the Christ. We teach them God’s law, and, in case you are not sure where to start, start with the Ten Commandments.

Deut 6:6-9 “⁶And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. ⁷ Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. ⁸ Tie them to your hands and wear them on your

forehead as reminders. ⁹ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” **NLT**

Matt 5:17-19 “¹⁷ “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.” **NLT**

This brings us to the final thing, but certainly not the least thing, we must teach. Teach them about Jesus. We do so because Jesus is the fulfillment of the law of God. We teach them about Jesus because Jesus is God in the flesh. **To know Jesus is to know God; *not* to know Jesus is *not* to know God at all. We teach them about Jesus because to believe in Him is to do the work of God and this above all pleases God.** We teach them about Jesus because Jesus is the truth, the life, and the only way to life with God. We teach them about Jesus for only He, by the power of His Holy Spirit, can change their sin-sick hearts, only He can save their souls.

John 14:8-9 “⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹ Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? **NLT**

John 6:26-29 “²⁸ They replied, “We want to perform God’s works, too. What should we do?” ²⁹ Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.” **NLT**

John 6:40 “⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” **ESV**

In closing, every generation is charged to teach the next generation about the majesty, the magnificence, the holiness of God and His wonderful works. Hear me! We will be taught, and so will our children. The question is who or what will do the teaching? What will shape us? Let us recommit ourselves to being taught these glorious truths so that we might faithfully teach them to our children, and our children's children, from one generation to the next. Lest they become stubborn, rebellious and callous in heart toward God. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**