

An Unbroken Chain

Songs of David: Volume 2, Part 6

Psalms 78

The headlines are announcing, in so many different ways, that the family is now on the list of endangered species.

Nonetheless, a biblical, Christ-honoring family is just as possible today as it was in first century Rome.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers, it wasn't any easier for a man to love his wife as his own body; for a woman to respect her husband's leadership or for children to obey their parents – all of which is spelled out in *Ephesians chapters 5 & 6*.

It wasn't any easier to follow God's design then as it is now.

In fact, it's just as possible to please God and follow Him now as it was then, simply because some things never change.

The truth of scripture doesn't change;

The pattern and design for the family hasn't changed;

The goal of parenting hasn't changed;

The need for biblical love and discipline hasn't changed;

And by the way, the depravity of the human heart hasn't changed either, has it?

We are born with the amazing capacity to sin.

And something's got to be done about it.

Chuck Swindoll quoted the Stanford Observer in his book, *The Strong Family*. In the Stanford Observer, Dr. Albert Siegel said, "When it comes to rearing children, every society is only 20 years away from barbarity. Twenty years is all we have to civilize the infants who are born into our midst each year. He wrote, these savages know nothing of our language, our culture, our religious beliefs, our values and our interpersonal relations. The barbarian must be tamed if civilization is to survive.

Maybe you're a parent – or a grandparent – and you think the term barbarian is a bit too harsh. You mean we just prayed over 18 barbarians a few moments ago?

The Minnesota Crime Commission didn't think it was too harsh.

Tedd Tripp recorded in his book *Shepherding A Child's Heart*, published a few years ago, that the Minnesota Crime Commission released an interesting perspective: "Every baby starts life completely self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it; his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toy, his uncle's watch. Deny these and he seethes with a rage that would be murderous were he not so small and helpless. This means that all children, not just certain children, all children are born delinquent.¹

That's all true.

Which is one of the reasons you never had to teach your child to disobey – you had to teach them how to obey.

Your two-year-old doesn't run around the house saying, "Yes Mommy, yes Mommy, yes Mommy!"

As soon as they get around other little children, they don't take their toys and run toward each other shouting – "I want to share . . . I want to share!"

Now to the average parent in our world today, this is their primary objective – take that little savage and civilize him.

Which is a good idea, by the way, don't get me wrong.

Teach him to tell the truth and mind his manners and to share his toys and behave and do his homework and walk the dog.

But for the Christian parent, civilization isn't the primary goal for their children— getting good grades isn't the end game; graduating without getting pregnant or hooked on drugs; getting a good job and nice house and growing green grass in the front yard isn't the goal.

And I fear that for many parents even in the church today, keeping their children out of trouble and ahead of the pack is their priority.

Listen, the priorities of parenting – in fact, in all of our adult lives as well – is bound up in the mission statement of Colonial's children's ministry – which says it so well: we want our children to **know God – to think biblically – and to live wisely.**

Salvation is the narrow gate we point our children toward, by means of the gospel – and once they're through that gate, God-willing, the stepping stones along the way are all related to the priorities of **knowing God, thinking biblically and living wisely.**

Keep in mind, we can't guarantee salvation in the lives of our children . . . we can't even guarantee spiritual desire in our children; the Spirit of God has to do that; we simply model it and demonstrate it and teach it and point to Him.

If we've ever needed a fresh look at the priority of parenting especially, it's today. If moms and dads have ever needed encouragement and support and instruction and prayer and fellowship and wise counsel and the church family, it's today.

So let's dust off an ancient, inspired poem, written to be sung so that every generation could be reminded of the ultimate priorities for parents to pursue.

Turn to Psalm 78.

You'll notice the fine print underneath the Psalm that reads, A Maskil of Asaph.

The word Maskil can be understood to mean instruction for meditation.ⁱⁱ

In other words, think long and hard over the lyrics of this song.

We won't cover the contents of this poem in our study, but what Asaph does is actually rehearse Israel's history – from Israel's exodus from Egypt all the way to David's reign in Jerusalem.

Asaph will present in poetic form the history of Israel – in other words – you not only *can* learn from history – you *should* learn from history.

The song opens in *verse 1, Listen, O my people, to my instruction; incline your ears to the words of*

my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings – or secrets – of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

Notice the end of *verse 5 – that they should teach them to their children. 6. That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children.*

In other words, there is no such thing as a generation gap. Like an unbroken chain, the truth about God's works and the truth about God's character and the truth about God's will is to be passed down from generation to generation . . .

And what I want to point out in this unbroken chain are three priorities that godly parents need to communicate above everything else.

1. Priority # 1 Is to know God

This is the direction we're pointing. This is Who we want them to see.

In fact, notice *verse 6 again – that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should – notice this – that they should put their confidence in God.*

You cannot put your confidence in a God you know nothing about.

Take your children through the history of Israel – Asaph sings – so that they might end up knowing why they can place their absolute confidence in the God of Israel.

Teach it to your children – and if they get it – they'll teach it to theirs.

What God wants the home to be like, is a spiritual chain reaction.ⁱⁱⁱ

And by the way, the church today picks up this same strategic priority – Paul wrote to Timothy, listen, *the things you heard from me – teach it to faithful men who will then teach it to others (2 Timothy 2:2).*

The truth about God is to be communicated through an unbroken chain of believers and parents and grandparents and mentors and disciples and elders and teachers.

Listen, does the generation following us get it from us that God is worthy of every confidence.

Teach them to know God.

2. Priority #2: Teach them to think Biblically

Notice again verse 7. That they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God.

Not only coming to know about God but coming to know about what God has done.

Tell them – look up at *verse 2, the parables* – those are stories with spiritual meaning; tell them *the secrets* – the hideth – that is, the mysteries of God’s glorious handiwork.^{iv}

Tell them, *verse 5, the testimony and the law* of God to Israel; tell them *the commandments* of God to His people.

Verse 4, Don’t conceal them – but tell them – in other words, bring before the eyes of your children these stories and parables and principles and ordinances and laws and commandments and events of biblical history in order to show them what they can follow through life.^v

In a simple word – teach them the word of God.

Charles Spurgeon, pastoring in the late 1800’s wrote in his commentary on this text, “The best education is education in the best things.”^{vi}

The best education is the education of the best things.

Listen, your children might very well be receiving an education in good things – and necessary things – but not the best things.

And a school isn’t given the primary mandate to teach them the best things. Spurgeon wrote, the very first lesson a child should learn from his mother is concerning his mother’s God.^{vii}

He goes on to write, Grammar is poor food for the soul if it is not flavored with the grace of God. Around the fireside, fathers should repeat not only the Bible stories, but the deeds of the martyrs and reformers, and moreover the dealings of the Lord with themselves both in His providence and His grace.^{viii}

In other words, it is the responsibility of an educational system to teach your children grammar, but it is your responsibility to teach them the gospel and the grace of God:

- through history;
- through the scriptures;
- and through your own testimony and life story.

Spurgeon ends by writing, “Every satchel – or book bag – every satchel should have a Bible in it.”^{ix}

In other words, every child should grow up learning that the most important things to learn are about the Creator and His divinely inspired communication to us through His word.

Without it he might become nothing more than an extremely well-educated fool who grows up to say in his heart “there is no God.”

Beloved, we are surrounded by extremely intelligent people in the world whom the Lord would consider foolish . . . misguided . . . empty.

The fear of the Lord – that is the placing of your confidence in the Lord and His word – Solomon wrote – that is *the beginning point of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7)*.

The priority of parenting is to provide the best education by giving your children an education of the best things – the primary things.

This means you’re going to have to answer a lot of hardest questions on the planet.

Because when it comes to spiritual things, kids have a lot of questions.

Don’t hand them off to your wife . . . or husband.

Dig for yourself . . . and find the answer – and in finding the answer you’ll model for them that you don’t know everything about the Bible – but you really want to know what the Bible says.

I emailed our Children’s and Middle School pastors this week and asked them to send me the latest questions they’ve received from kids . . . who want to know the answers.

Here are some questions from 6th-8th graders for Pastor Paul:

- How do I deal with death in a family that I’m close to?
- How should I treat a friend who has changed gender at school?
- If the person I marry one day abuses me, can I get a divorce?
- If God actually gives certain disabilities to people for certain reasons, why does He do that?
- If people live far away and can’t hear about Jesus, do they go to heaven?
- How are God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit the same God?
- How do you help bullies and flirts?

Aren’t you glad Pastor Paul has answered these?

Here are some questions from 3rd-5th graders they had for Pastor Mike:

- Why does God let us sin?
- If God knew that Satan was going to sin, then why did He create him?
- Where is the Garden of Eden on today's map?
- What is the Holy Spirit exactly?
- Where did Jesus go after He was crucified?
- Did Adam and Eve's kids marry each other?
- What's your favorite hairstyle . . . that's not exactly in the Bible . . . but they want to know.
- Do angels have free will?
- Are there girl angels – that's easy – yes, I married one of 'em – how many of you men married one too?

Listen, how wonderful is this? These kids are saying, "I want to know what the Bible says? I want to know how it relates to my life and my problems and my friends lives and what it has to say about my world."

They are effectively inviting us to help them think biblically!

And what a joy when your children come to understand and by God's grace believe the gospel – and what a special joy it is to hear them delivering it to someone else.

I got a phone call this past week from one of the young mothers in our church – she called me up and said, my 8-year-old daughter Lauren came home from school today with some pretty exciting news and after she had told me I asked her who she wanted to tell – thinking she'd want to call her grandparents – she said that she wanted to call me.

Lauren got on the phone and told me that out on the playground that day she had been able to tell her friend about Jesus Christ – and basically delivered to her friend the gospel. And then the verdict – what are you going to do about it? She told me she prayed with her friend to ask Jesus Christ to become her Lord and Savior – the simple faith of a child who believed the Gospel and wanted to tell her friends about it.

Talk about an unbroken chain.

How to know God;

How to think biblically – even on the playground of life;

3. Priority #3: Teach them how to Live Wisely

Notice verse 7 one more time; That they should put their confidence in God (that's knowing God); and not forget the works of God (that's thinking biblically) – now notice – but keep His commandments, and not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.

The term here for fathers is a reference to the disobedient Israelite forefathers who continually rebelled against God and ended up wandering in the wilderness.

And God disciplined Israel over and over again.

Which is also a part of parenting . . . it is not only congratulating them for acting right – it is disciplining them when they act wrong.

And for you who are in the throes of raising children, you know the weariness and daily challenge of discipline.

Every child is different, right?

Some are more compliant than others – they're quieter – trust me you got to watch the quiet ones.

Some are one loud noise from sunup to sundown. Their lives have two speeds – full throttle and fast asleep.

Some are easy going – others are little attorneys who find loopholes in every command you give them.

And early on – in grocery stores and the mall – they learn how to hold their parent's hostage!

They do it in church . . . I loved reading about that one kid who was fussing in church – wouldn't sit still – complained – dropped books and crayons – finally started crying. His father finally had enough and picked up the kid and put him on his shoulder and marched out of the sanctuary – the kid crying the whole time – and just before they got to the back doors, the kid hollered out – Pray for me!

He suddenly grew in wisdom.

By the way, according to the Bible, wisdom is not the opposite of ignorance; wisdom is the opposite of disobedience. In other words, wisdom is not intelligence; wisdom is obedience.

James writes in his New Testament letter, *who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom (James 3:13).*

Wisdom is the practical application where you take what you know about God and His word and put it into practice.

That's wisdom.

Wisdom is truth applied to life.

So here are the ultimate priorities of parenting – to show and tell the next generation that:

- That God is worth knowing;
- That God’s word is worth studying;
- That God’s will is worth obeying.

Several years ago a study was done by an agricultural school in Iowa. It reported that producing 100 bushels of corn from one acre of land required 4 million pounds of water; 6,000 pounds of oxygen; 5,000 pounds of carbon, 160 pounds of nitrogen, 125 pounds of potassium, 75 pounds of yellow Sulfur and several other elements too numerous to list.

In addition to these ingredients were the required balance of rain and sunshine – and at the right times.

Although many hours of the farmer’s labor was also needed, it was estimated that only 5% of the produce from that acre could be attributed to the efforts of man.

Now don’t misunderstand – unless that farmer invested 100% of his 5%, plowing, planting, fertilizing and protecting – no corn would be harvested.

However, even after he did all he had to do, so much depended upon only what God could do.

That’s a great analogy of parenting.

You invest everything you have in the 5% of what you must do – you plow, and you plant the seed of the gospel and you water it with time and protect it with the truth.

We pray for each other and each other’s children . . . we give 100% of our 5% . . . and then fully understand that the Lord builds the house . . . the Lord brings the increase . . . spiritual fruit is the work of the Spirit of God . . . and we entrust our efforts to Him.

And no matter what . . . we recognize that this is our priority. We must demonstrate and model and teach and direct and point and encourage and pray for our children – and we have committed to praying together tonight that this church will become a place that partners with parents and holds a high standard and communicates to all of our children these priorities . . . we’re praying for an unbroken chain:

From generation to generation . . . teaching and modeling what it means:

- **To know God;**
- **To think biblically;**
- **To live wisely.**

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 11/1/2015 by Stephen Davey.

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i Adapted from Tedd Tripp, Shepherding a Child’s Heart (Shepherd Press, 2005), p. 4.
ii C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume V (Eerdmans, 1988) p. 361
iii John Phillips, Exploring the Psalms: Volume One (Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), p. 645
iv William Knight, Psalms: Volume 2 (Westminster, 1983), p. 29
v Adapted from Knight, p. 30
vi Charles Haddon Spurgeon, The Treasury of David: Volume 2 (Zondervan, reprint 1977), p. 331
vii Ibid
viii Ibid
ix Ibid