



Children are important to us as a church, because children are important to God. Our children are our most precious resources. Nurturing our children spiritually must be one of our greatest priorities.

It is important that we teach our children when they are still young. Francis Xavier said, "Give me a child for the first seven years, and you may do what you like with him afterwards." The formative years of a child's life are critically important for their spiritual development. And that spiritual development takes place largely in the family and in the church. If we're not doing it at home and we're not doing it in the church, where will our children learn about the Lord? That's why it is so important to bring your children to church as well as to teach them at home.

If you are a parent then I am obviously talking to you. But even if you do not have children or children at home, this message also applies to you for the church is the household of faith; we are the family of God. And so the children in the church really are "our children." We all share the responsibility to tell the next generation about the Lord.

The Calling to Listen

Psalm 78:1-2 - "¹ My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. ² I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old." (NIV)

Listening is about an active, eager and responsive listening which results in learning and obedience. God wants his listeners to put forth some effort after hearing His words. A parable is a teaching device. It is a story with a spiritual meaning or application. The "hidden things" usually refer to riddles, puzzling stories or sayings which the audience must ponder to determine their meaning. But the problem is we only listen to what people said but we don't try to think it over.

The Passing of the Baton

Psalm 78:3-6 - "³ things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. ⁴ We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. ⁵ He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, ⁶ so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children." (NIV)

We must pass our faith on to our kids, to the youth. It is sort of like passing the baton in a relay race. We should not neglect to share with our children what we have learned about God. We should not refuse them what God has commanded us to share. When we hide the revelation of God from our children, we do them a grave injustice. Spiritual nurture is their due. It is their right. It is their proper inheritance from us. If we fail to teach our children about the Lord, we rob our children of their true inheritance — the knowledge of God and His will. If we fail to teach our children, if we do not nurture them spiritually, then we are refusing them the secret of a blessed life.

WHAT SHOULD WE PASS ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION?

A. Teach Them the Works of God

We must teach our children the works of God. We must tell them what God has done. Praiseworthy things, powerful things, things of wonder. Our children should be awestruck at God's wonderful works. Share with them God's mighty deeds recorded in the Bible. Share with them about men and women whom God has used mightily throughout history. Share with them your personal stories of how God has answered prayer in your life. Let them see the impact God has on your faith in everyday struggles and trials. Most of all, share with them what God has done in your life when you became a Christian. Teach your children to praise God for His mighty deeds. It is their heritage. Don't hide it from them.

B. Teach Them the Word of God

We should share with them not only the works of God (what God has done), but also the word of God (what God has said). God's statutes are his testimony to us of what is good for us and what can harm us. "Law" is a more general word encompassing all of God's Word to us. And so we must teach our children the works of God and the word of God — his laws, his commandments, his warnings, and his promises. Notice the long-range vision of verse 5b-6: "...he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children (NIV)." This command requires long-range planning, a love for future generations, and complete unselfishness on the part of parents.

THE FORGING OF NEXT GENERATION'S FAITH

Psalm 78:7-8 - ⁷ Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. ⁸ They would not be like their ancestors - a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him." (NIV)

THREE BENEFITS OF TEACHING OUR CHILDREN ABOUT GOD:

A. They will Put Their Trust in God

Children learn faith from people who practice faith. You cannot expect to lead your child any higher in the Christian faith than you are willing to go yourself.

B. They will Remember God's Deeds

This was Israel's problem just like our problem. We have selective memory when it comes to God's works for us. We conveniently forget God's miraculous deeds on our behalf, and so we forgot all that we owed him. Remembering God's deeds is a wonderful incentive to continue trusting him, to commit all your ways to him, to look for his hand at work all around you. Remembering that God is a God of action will spur you on to good works as you allow God to work through you.

C. They will Keep God's Commands

Teach them the commands of God. Teach them his statutes. Talk with them about the consequences of disobedience. Share with them examples from Scripture. Share from personal experience. Help them to understand the Biblical principle that a person reaps what they sow. Explain to them the problem of sin and how none of us can keep God's commands on our own. Lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ so that Jesus can come and live within them through the Holy Spirit and enable them to live a life of righteousness and peace.

The spiritual nurture of our children is the forging of their faith. It is through careful, loving instruction in the works of God and the word of God that our children will learn to trust God, to remember his deeds, to keep his commands.



- 1.) What are the priceless values your parents/elders have shared with you, that really shaped your life?
- 2.) How and when do you plan to share these things to the younger generation ?
- 3.) How can you influence a young person to love God and others and follow HIS ways?