

THE NEXT GENERATION

By John Richardson

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 78:1–8

[1] Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! [2] I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, [3] things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. [4] We 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. [5] He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, [6] that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, [7] so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; [8] and 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.

OBSERVATION

Reading through Psalms will elevate the affections of those who love God. Understanding the psalms may become difficult when a reader forgets that the words are more poetic. Lyrics of a song are completely different than directions on the back of a package of medicine. No one would argue the difference between directions and song lyrics, yet when reading the psalms, the reader often forgets the difference. The psalms are completely true but must be approached carefully, applying the features of other poetic works and literary devices such as parallelism, similes, figures of speech, etc.

- We know from the onset of the psalm that God is a speaking God. He speaks through His Word to those who read it. As God speaks, He expects the reader to listen to and obey His Word. The Israelites did not have a division between listening and obeying; one had truly heard only when one had fully obeyed. Verse 2 outlines the purpose of the psalm—to speak a parable—but it also speaks of Christ. Read the connection in Matthew 13:34-35. One must listen closely to God as He speaks and then share that truth with others, specifically with the coming generation. The need to disciple others is not first unfolded in the gospels; it begins in the Old Testament (vv. 1-4).
- The testimony of God’s grace, redeeming work, and glorious activity was set in Jacob, not because Jacob was special but because God wanted to preserve His plan for redemption in the world of idolatry. Israel became the vessel of God’s truth as the world pursued falsehood. Generationally, God kept His truth within the vessel of Israel by the discipleship of children. Each day people were commanded to share God’s works and His Word with the next generation. The activity of

discipling the coming generation ensures that the gospel will continue long after current believers have passed away (vv. 5-6).

- Verse 7 gives the result of investing God's Word into the lives of children/students: hope. When surrounded by idolatry like the Jews at this time, the children didn't need more entertainment or moral guidance; they needed the Word of God. The church (not programs or leadership but you and I, the members) would do well to all work with gospel enthusiasm to care for the spiritual journey of our children/students. As the coming generation struggles with anxiety and depression, could it be that they do not have the hope of God lifted from the Word? Let us, the bride of Christ, seek to give the hope of the gospel to our children/students (v. 7).
- The fathers spoken of in verse 8 alludes to the generation lost in the wilderness wanderings. The generation in the wilderness was deemed stubborn because they did not listen to God, they did not trust His words, and therefore sought to accomplish their plans without Him. The way to ensure that the coming generation would not trek down the path of the wilderness generation was to instruct every generation in obedience to the Word of God (v. 8).

OBEDIENCE

To teach the coming generation the Word of God, one must be **in** the Word of God.

- If this psalm is rightly understood, everyone should serve in the kids/student ministry as well as sharing God's Word with their own children. Many may say, "but that is not my gifting." Unfortunately, we treat the church differently than our own homes. I wonder who would wash the dishes in my own home if it was left up to only "serving in my gifting." It would be wise to serve based on the truthfulness of God's Word and not just on the feelings of our own skills.
- Being obedient to teach may not mean teaching from behind a pulpit. Obedience may simply be a commitment to show others the Word of God. Pray about ways you can teach the Word of God to others.
- To teach the Word of God, one must be knowledgeable about it. Spend time daily studying God's Word, not only for your growth but for those who are following you.

PRAYER

Ask God to give the coming generation a love for His Word. Pray for those who seem hopeless. Ask God to help you become a better teacher of God's Word and to give you a heart to disciple the coming generation.