

February 18, 2024

Let Children Come

Last Sunday we LEARNED how turning Your Heart To Children is a BIG DEAL!

Jesus' words were:

"...Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them..."

This is our THEME verse for our series. (Luke 18:16)

THIS is a BIG DEAL!

- The LAST prophecy of the OT:

Malachi 4:6 (NIV) — 6 He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."

- A prophecy about a coming prophet "like Elijah" to prepare the people for the coming of the "Day of the Lord"
- THEN PROPHECY WENT SILENT FOR 400 YEARS.
- THE FIRST prophecy of the NEW TESTAMENT broke the SILENCE.
- It was the words of Gabriel to Zechariah:

Luke 1:17 (NIV) And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

So, today we EXPLORE **Part 2 - What This Looks Like for Parents**

THIS is a BIG DEAL!

- The Malachi prophecy described what would happen if God's people fail to turn their hearts to their children: TOTAL DESTRUCTION.
 - 2 interpretive possibilities:
 - A punishing judgment directly by the hand of God
 - Or the judgment of what happens when the faith is not passed on from one generation to the next...with utter destruction of values, and sin having its way...

All that to say: **THIS is a BIG DEAL!**

SO WHAT DOES TURNING OUR HEARTS TOWARD CHILDREN LOOK LIKE? SURPRISE: It isn't just the JOB of parents (although the responsibility is heaviest for them) IT'S EVERYONE'S JOB!

Psalm 78:1–7 (NIV) — 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— 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. 7 Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

I. WE WILL pass the baton of faith

vs 4 “We will tell the next generation...the deeds of the Lord”

This was a public declaration of commitment to reach the next generation! This is a prayer, a declaration of worship. SPEAKING of Prayer: Everyone needs to pray for the children!

How many of you have prayed for a child by name in your lifetime?

Probably, most of us have prayed something like these!

- Lord, watch over my child as he or she develops in the womb.
- Lord, let my child be born healthy.
- Lord, help my child to sleep through the night, please.
- Lord, keep my child safe as she goes off to school.
- Lord, please heal my child.
- Lord, help my child say no to drugs.
- Lord, help him to choose the right friends.
- Lord, lead her to the right college, and let us win the lottery so we can pay for it.
- Lord, let him meet a nice girl.
- Lord, don't let her marry that bum.
- Lord, please, make my child want to move out of my house.

What prayer do we need to keep at the top of our list? Something like...

- "Lord, may they come to know you as Savior and follow you all their lives."

That's what Psalm 78 is all about! WHY?

6 so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. 7 Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

Passing along the faith to a child, helping a child come to Jesus is what we all must be about. JESUS: “Let the children come to me...and do not hinder them!!!”

It takes a healthy church to raise a child well. It takes a village of people!

This is not just for PARENTS... but it is most definitely FOR PARENTS.

Are you tracking with me so far?

I'm grateful for those who pointed me in the right direction! Are you?

- **My 5th grade Sunday School teacher**
- Many Youth Workers.
- Many Adults.
 - Can you think of a Sunday School teacher, or youth worker, or coach, or pastor, or teacher, or musician, or neighbor, who made a difference in your life?
- Can you be that someone for another child in some way?
 - You can! In some way!
 - You were blessed to be a blessing!

Each of us is a vital link in a generational chain by which the knowledge, and values, and love of God is passed on, from one to another to another.

I. WE WILL pass the baton of faith, How? We will...

II. **TELL them God's STORIES**

Psalm 78:4 (NIV) — 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.

These aren't just STORIES... This is real HISTORY. Pointing us to HIS Story of salvation...

THE BIBLE no other book like it....

- My first bible...

PROVIDES a **knowledge base** like a **foundation** upon which I could build my **faith**.

- A correct KNOWLEDGE BASE is not SEPARATE from A FAITH BASE.

We all need a knowledge base that answers the most important questions, questions like: What is real? What is the good life? Who is a good person? How do I become one?

Your mind and your faith do not have to be at odds.

- *Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength!*
- Faith is built on the foundation of knowledge.
- God revealed himself to us in a way that gave us this knowledge base to pass on to others!
- There is evidence that demands a verdict, evidence beyond these words, in history itself, other secular documents, etc...
- The movement of Jesus was documented ... it happened before it was documented.

- We base our faith on these realities...
- What God did, was not in secret.
- AND WE ARE TO continue to teach the knowledge base, and the evidence and WHY we believe what we believe.

IT'S MORE than “head knowledge”!!!

The foundational “knowledge base” helps us enter into “knowing” God just as you might get to know a person. When you get to know a person you move through stages ...

- from the stage of meeting a complete stranger
- to becoming an acquaintance
- to knowing more personally and
- to increased trust (with a really good person)
- to increased reliance and loyalty
- to confidence
- to joy in a growing relationship!

A covenant relationship of knowing and being known, in loyal commitment.

John 17:3 (NIV) —Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Parents, if you aren't telling them the stories that shape their lives, who is?

In very busy households... 2 working parents, day care, school, then we come back together. What happens then? ARE WE ALL JUST STARING AT SCREENS together and separately?

Who is actually telling those stories that shape us? And whose philosophy is actually behind these stories?

I. WE WILL pass the baton of faith, How?

II. TELL them God's STORIES

III. TEACH them God's TRUTH

Will YOU teach them...

- What is real?
- What is the good life?
- Who is a good person?
- How do I become one?

Will YOU teach them...

- explain how all of this makes a difference for you, and why you center your life on Jesus.

Will YOU...

- Take a look at the Children's ministry table? You might be surprised to find out the ways you can make a difference for the next generation!

Talk It Over

Let Children Come
Part 2
“What This Looks Like For Parents”

SMALL TALK

1. Share about a meaningful tradition or practice in your family or community that has helped pass on values, beliefs, or wisdom from one generation to the next.

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9.** What instructions does God give regarding passing on faith to future generations? What practices and values are emphasized?
3. **Read Psalm 78:4–7.** What key commitments were declared in this public prayer?
4. What does it take to successfully pass the baton of faith to the next generation?
5. How does behavior modification alone fall short of the job God requires of parents raising their children?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. What steps can you take to be intentional about passing on your faith to the next generation, whether within your family, church, or community?
7. What steps can you take to ensure that the values and beliefs you hold dear are communicated effectively?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

8. Choose one specific practice you want to implement.
I will _____[routine]