

## *Psalms for All Seasons*

### **Week 3 Sermon - Our Next Generation**

**Main Argument - We must pass the history and reality of our faith onto the next generation.**

**Scripture - Psalm 78**

My co-laborer in the gospel and fellow pastor, Rev. Dr. Bill Monroe said the following some years ago...

*“As I watch the continual spiritual decline of our beloved America, I often call to mind a term used by my dear friend, Junior Hill. He refers to an “Unseeded Generation.” We know the Bible refers to itself as “seed” (Luke 8:11). In the past, America was constantly being sown with the Word of God. People attended church Sunday morning, evening and Wednesday. They went to Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, training union and twice a year (Spring and Fall) every church had a revival—sometimes lasting 2 weeks. This gave people a constant exposure to God’s truth—their need for Christ, the reality of heaven and hell, the Gospel and God’s law. Especially here in the Bible belt, Christianity was something to which they were constantly exposed.*

*Today, people are not being exposed to God’s truth often enough to keep their consciences tender. An entire generation or two have grown up with “unseeded” hearts. Few churches have Wednesday evening services and I read recently that less than 10% still have a full Sunday evening schedule. Sunday schools have been replaced by Home Study groups—with about 20% the attendance Sunday school formerly had. Consequently, the spiritual soil is not being plowed, planted and harvested. With so little exposure to God’s Truth, it should be no surprise that we are seeing what we see. If we expect another revival, we will have to “re-sow” the spiritual soil of America.”*

We are walking through the book for all seasons: the book of Psalms. So far we’ve learned that this is an every-season book, because the lessons of the Psalms help us in every season of our lives. In week one, we learned that engaging the Bible can make you happy in every season of life, and in week two, we learned that the Lord is our shepherd in every situation of life.

And today, we’re going to be talking about what may be the most important season of life...when children are in the home.

Arguably, the most important segment of our society is the under-18 population. They’re some of the most vulnerable, the most teachable, and have the potential to live longer than the rest of us. So, our current investment in this group impacts future generations.

With that said, I’d like to talk about the power of influencing the next generation.

***I want to talk to you about what I would call our next generation obligation.***

All throughout history, God has issued a next generation obligation to people of faith. All throughout history, God has said, “Teach your children in every season.”

Jesus told us the first and greatest command is to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and all our souls and all our minds and all our strength. And that a second is to love our neighbors as ourselves.

I’m pretty sure, if there was a third great command, it would say, “Pass on your love of God to the generation that follows you.”

Teach them to know Him. Teach them about Him. Teach them to love Him and to live for Him and to let others know about Him too.

That’s the challenge and the call to our next generation.

### **Main Teaching**

One day, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, a worship leader by the name of Asaph decided his great contribution to God’s kingdom would be to pass on his faith to his generations.

In the process, he showed us all how to do so as well.

### **500 YEARS OF FAITH**

Let’s take a trip together back to 3,000 B.C. David has just become king of Israel, and he wants to move the capital of his kingdom to the mountaintop city of Jerusalem. One of his non-negotiables is, “If this city is going to be the center of my kingdom, then it’s going to be the center of our worship of God as well.”

What this meant was, the Ark of the Covenant would have to be moved there, because the Ark of the Covenant was the place over which God’s Spirit hovered throughout most of the Old Testament. So King David organizes a big group of people to hold a big party as the Ark is traveling.

1 Chronicles 16:4 says,

***<sup>4</sup> David appointed some of the Levites to be ministers before the ark of the Lord, to celebrate the Lord God of Israel, and to give thanks and praise to him. <sup>5</sup> Asaph was the chief and Zechariah was second to him. Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel played the harps and lyres, while Asaph sounded the cymbals <sup>6</sup> and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel blew the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God. 1 Chronicles 16:4-6***

So, Asaph is the guy who played the cymbals for God as the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the city of Jerusalem. And that happened in *about* 1,000 B.C.

Now, let's look at a second piece of history. The kingdom of Israel lasted for 400 years before it was conquered by the nation of Babylon. The Babylonians slaughtered most of the Israelites and dragged the rest of them into exile on the outskirts of Babylon.

70 years after this, the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians, and the Persians released the Israelites to return to their homeland.

The Jews returned to Israel in waves.

The description of those who returned in the second wave is found in Nehemiah 7 which says,

***The number of the Israelite men included... Nehemiah 7:7***

And then it lists over 80 groups of descendants who returned home. All the way down in verse 44, it says,

***The singers included Asaph's descendants... 148.  
Nehemiah 7:44***

So here's what I wanted to show you with all of that:

***Asaph played the cymbals in 1,000 B.C.  
148 of his descendants were singing to God in 500 B.C.***

One day, a cymbal player by the name of Asaph thought about his children and their faith. He wanted his sons and daughters, and their sons and daughters, and their sons and daughters, and their sons and daughters to love God as much as he did. So he wrote the words to a song. That song became Psalm 78.

The words in that song preserved faith in all his generations for over 500 years.

What kind of words could do that? Well, let's look at them together.

Psalm 78 starts with a title... ***A Maskil of Asaph***

"Maskil" means, "a teaching psalm." This is a psalm that is going to teach us something. Specifically, it's going to teach us to teach our children.

Listen to this video reciting of verses 1-6 of this Psalm...(VIDEO)

***My people, hear my instruction;  
listen to the words from my mouth.  
I will declare wise sayings;  
I will speak mysteries from the past—***

***<sup>3</sup> things we have heard and known  
and that our ancestors have passed down to us.***

Translated: I'm going to retell some history – some God-history. Some things we know about God have been passed down to us by the people who experienced them. Why am I going to do this? Because I am convinced we have a next generation obligation. Our obligation is...

***1. Our Next Generation Obligation (vs. 1-3)  
is to pass on our faith.***

Continuing: The things our God has done...

***<sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their children,  
but will tell a future generation  
the praiseworthy acts of the Lord,  
his might, and the wondrous works  
He has performed.***

Our children need to know who God is, and the best way to show them who He is is to tell them what He's done.

There's a popular movement these days. Maybe you've run into it. Numbers of parents are saying, "I am not going to influence my kids about God. I am going to let them make their own decision about him when they are old enough. They can figure it out for themselves." Only they *can't* figure it out for themselves. God is invisible. They can't see Him. The way we find out about God is through revelation.

God revealed Himself to us, through Jesus Christ coming to earth to see what He was like, and through scripture, which tells the stories of God's actions, so we can understand what He's like.

Letting kids figure out God on their own is like saying, "I'm not going to teach my children which foods are good for them. I'm just going to let them wander around the kitchen and figure it out for themselves." Our kids are going to be exposed to all kinds of misinformation about God. If they don't hear the truth about Him from us, they may never know the truth about Him.

Asaph decided to teach his children – and our children - about God. To do that, he told stories about God. Stories about what God had done in the history of his people. That's what Psalm 78 is all about.

Let's read. Verse 5, Asaph begins: [God]

***<sup>5</sup> He established a testimony in Jacob  
and set up a law in Israel,***

***which he commanded our ancestors  
to teach to their children  
6 so that a future generation—  
children yet to be born—might know.***

When did He do that? At Mt. Sinai. God gave the Law and the Ten Commandments.

Asaph continues, [“The people of that generation...]

***They were to rise and tell their children  
7 so that they might put their confidence in God  
and not forget God’s works,  
but keep his commands.***

Friends:

***2. If we teach God’s deeds to our children (vs. 4-7)  
they will put their confidence in Him.***

Everybody puts their confidence in something. Teach kids what God has done, and they’ll have confidence in Him.

***8 Then they would not be like their ancestors,  
a stubborn and rebellious generation,  
a generation whose heart was not loyal  
and whose spirit was not faithful to God.***

The first generation who heard the Law at Mt. Sinai didn’t believe. They had a crisis of faith. God told them to conquer the promised land, but they refused. So God let them die in the desert. Then, in the book of Deuteronomy, He gave the Law again. And this second time, their children believed, and conquered.

See what Asaph is doing? For 72 verses, he’s doing the same thing we do in Sunday School: he’s telling them about the wonders of the God who made them and loves them and is with them all the time. Asaph is passing the history of his people onto the next generation.

And here’s some more history, to give some greater context to the next group of verses we’re going to look over together...

The nation of Israel was made up of 12 tribes. Three of those tribes were Joseph, Levi, and Judah. Joseph was the favorite son of his father, Israel. His tribe became the largest and most important of all the tribes. So large and important that the tribe of Joseph was over twice as large as any of the other tribes.

When it came time to divide up the land of Israel, the tribe of Levi wasn’t given any land. They were the priestly tribe. Their job was to lead worship and make sacrifices in the

Temple. So their livelihood was derived, not from the land, but from the sacrifices made in the temple.

Meanwhile, the largest tribe was going to need the largest portion of land, and since Joseph's tribe was so large, it became divided into 2 tribes.

Joseph had 2 sons. Ephraim and Manasseh. The firstborn was "***Ephraim.***"

Alright, so with the tribe of Levi serving a special function, God then broke the tribe of Joseph into two tribes: the tribe of Ephraim (Joseph's firstborn) and the tribe of Manasseh (Joseph's second born) so that there were 12 tribes.

With this background, let's continue the Psalm. Verse 9:

***<sup>9</sup> The Ephraimite archers turned back on the day of battle.***

***<sup>10</sup> They did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law.***

***<sup>11</sup> They forgot what he had done, the wondrous works he had shown them.***

Everyone puts their confidence in something. If we teach them about God, they'll put their trust in Him. But...

***3. If we DON'T teach God's deeds, (vs. 8-11) our tribe will crumble.***

The people of Ephraim did three things wrong:

1. They shrunk back on the day of battle. V.9 - They didn't believe God would fight for them, so they acted in fear, not in faith and "turned back" on the day of battle.
2. They didn't live morally. V.10 - They refused to live by the Law.
3. They forgot what God had done. V. 11

All throughout the Exodus, God worked wonders for Israel. The Ephraimites saw it. V. 12 says...

***<sup>12</sup> He worked wonders in the sight of their ancestors in the land of Egypt, the territory of Zoan.***

Zoan was the capital city of Egypt (the Egyptians called it "Tanis"). The Ephraimites watched God deliver Israel from Egypt during the 10 plagues. But when it came to battle, they forgot about all of God's faithfulness and shrunk back in faithlessness.

Asaph continues:

***<sup>13</sup> He split the sea and brought them across;  
the water stood firm like a wall.***

You know this part of the story! God parted the Red Sea. Why? Because God is a delivering God. When His children are trapped and have no place to turn, He provides a way out.

***<sup>14</sup> He led them with a cloud by day  
and with a fiery light throughout the night.***

God is a guiding God. Once they got out of Egypt, they needed to know where to go, so God led them, day and night. He never leaves us to wander on our own.

***<sup>15</sup> He split rocks in the wilderness  
and gave them drink as abundant as the depths.***

***<sup>16</sup> He brought streams out of the stone  
and made water flow down like rivers.***

***Psalm 78:15-16***

And God is a powerful and providing God. He split rocks to provide water. God was faithful to Israel all throughout the Exodus. Asaph is showing the next generations what God is like by telling them about what He has done.

Ps. 78 is 72 verses long. We won't read all of them.

In the verses that follow, Asaph tells the stories of God feeding them manna from heaven and when they got tired of manna, He sent quail to provide them a change of diet.

Verse 27 says,

***He rained meat on them like dust, and winged birds like the sand of the seas. Psalm 78:  
27***

In verse 32, Asaph reminds them of what God does when His children are unfaithful.

***<sup>32</sup> Despite all this, they kept sinning  
and did not believe his wondrous works.***

Verse 36 -

***<sup>36</sup> But they deceived him with their mouths,  
they lied to him with their tongues,***

***<sup>37</sup> their hearts were insincere toward him,  
and they were unfaithful to his covenant.***

***<sup>38</sup> Yet he was compassionate;  
he atoned for their iniquity  
and did not destroy them.***

***He often turned his anger aside  
and did not unleash all his wrath.  
39 He remembered that they were only flesh,  
a wind that passes and does not return.***

Even when they were not faithful, God remained faithful.

***41 They constantly tested God  
and provoked the Holy One of Israel.***

Why did they constantly test Him?... Verse 42 says,

***42 They did not remember...***

It's important to remember the stories of God!

***42 They did not remember his power shown  
on the day he redeemed them from the foe,  
43 when he performed his miraculous signs in Egypt  
and his wonders in the territory of Zoan.***

When we forget what God has done, we start living by sight and not by faith.

Asaph is teaching lessons about God to the generations to come. He's using stories to do it. Stories of God's faithfulness, and stories of people's unfaithfulness.

This is a Psalm worth studying, because it teaches us how to pass on our faith to the next generations. Skip all the way down to the final chorus, which starts in verse 67. Remember the earlier reference to Ephraim turning back?

Asaph explains why the Messiah came out of the tribe of Judah, and from the leading tribe of Ephraim: [God]

***67 He rejected the tent of Joseph  
and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.***

***68 He chose instead the tribe of Judah,  
Mount Zion, which he loved.***

***69 He built his sanctuary like the heights,  
like the earth that he established forever.***

***70 He chose David his servant  
and took him from the sheep pens;***

***71 he brought him from tending ewes  
to be shepherd over his people Jacob—  
over Israel, his inheritance.***

***72 He shepherded them with a pure heart  
and guided them with his skillful hands.***

***Psalm 78:67-72***



The city of Jerusalem sits on Mt. Zion. It's in the territory of Judah. David, the King, is from the tribe of Judah. The Messiah comes from the tribe of Judah. God chose the tribe of Judah because the tribe of Ephraim "turned back" (v. 9), because they lost faith. And they lost faith because they forgot the things God did for them.

How important is it to remember what God has done for us? It's the whole ballgame. Because we are called to walk by faith, not by sight. We can't see God, so we have to trust Him without seeing. We can't see, but we can hear, and remember what God has done.

And when we remember, we trust. And when we trust, we walk by faith.

## Summary

One day, a cymbal-player named Asaph looked at his children and said, "I want them to walk in faith. How can I help them do that?" His solution was to tell them the stories of God's faithfulness. That one technique, that one practice, was so effective, that his children's children's children's children were still singing God's praises 500 years later.

Friends, there is a God who is with us, and He is faithful. But He is invisible. You can't see Him, but you can see Him for what He does. You can see Him provide for you. And protect you. And comfort and encourage. Tell your children – and your grandchildren – about His works.

Tell them about His works of old – in the Bible.

And tell them about His works of new – His works in your family.

That's your obligation, and mine.

Asaph's solution to passing on faith was simple and effective: *If our kids are going to love God, they have to know what He's done.* So I'm going to teach them some history.

Let me give you a few suggestions:

### ***How to Pass on Your Faith to Future Generations:***

#### ***1. Teach them what God has done.***

The Bible is brimming with stories of God's guidance and provision and protection. Tell those stories and get your kids into programs that tell those stories (like children's ministry and VBS). Keep the stories and realities of all that God has done in front of your kids as much as possible.

As you're teaching your children about what God has done,

#### ***2. Teach them that God doesn't change. (Hebrews 13:8)***

Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.”

- What He has done in the past, He will do in the future.
- What He did for the children of Israel, He will do for your children.

Then, along with teaching kids what God has done for people in the Bible...

**3. Teach them what God has done for your family.**

- Tell your children about how you came to Christ.
- Tell them how He led you to your job. Tell them how He provided for you when you lost your job, or didn't have a job.
- Tell them how He led them to your spouse, if you have one.
- Tell each of your children how God brought them into your family.
- Tell them how He formed them in their mother's womb.
- Tell each of your children how God watched over them and protected them when they were little, and when they were sick.

Dads, I know you know how to tell stories. Most of us will tell anyone who will listen about the great things our favorite team has done to win championships or procure players. And grandparents, tell your God-stories too. Children need to hear from multiple generations.

And those of us without children, we too have a next generation obligation.

One of my mentors, Evangelist Junior Hill wrote the following some time ago...

*“We are seeing before our very eyes an itching ear generation,” Hill said. One attribute of “itching ear churches” is that they are dominated by grace without guilt. He explained, “A grace without guilt will eventually cause you to have a salvation without any joy. If you don't know what you have been forgiven of and you don't know from whence you have come, you don't have much to shout about in this generation.*

*“The reason the shout has left many of our Baptist churches is that we have a congregation of men and women who have done nothing more than cultural reforms and have sociological blemishes removed and they have never seen the guilt of unbelief and the devastation of wicked sin.”*

Asaph says...

***“We will not hide them from our children, but will tell a future generation the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, his might, and the wondrous works he has performed.”  
Psalm 78:4***

This Valentine's Day, here in the dead of winter, why not steer the conversation about love toward GOD'S LOVE. Tell some God LOVES YOU-stories. Tell some from the Bible, and some from your life as a family. This spring, teach them about the Resurrection. And this Summer when you are on vacation, make time teach them about

how God has provided the health and wealth and time to be able to take that vacation. And in the fall, teach them about Joseph's coat of many colors as you enjoy the beauty of the leaves. Teach them about God's faithfulness to you in every season of your life.

Keep the stories of faith alive and well in your family.

Personally, I don't think planet Earth will last another 500 years before the Lord returns. But wouldn't it be wonderful if it did, and your children's children's children's children were playing cymbals or singing His praises when He comes?

So, what story will you tell this week? Pick one right now.

And who will you tell it to?

And when will you tell it?