

Reflection
Chinese Whispers

I am going to whisper in a few ears,
The name of a Bible story, and you whisper it to the
Person next to you, and down the pew and around your section of the
church...

Ask what last person heard...

Purpose of the Holiday Club is to pass on the story of God's big
Plan through five bible stories.
During the week, these stories will not be presented in a whisper,
But in brilliant, loud and exciting ways that the children
Will be able to relate to.
Our story today is from the Psalms, and many commentators
Believe that it was told with a shout,
Because it was that important,
And I hope that we in the local churches can do the same.

Now I want to share with you a few statistics about just how our
knowledge of the Bible has decreased over the generations...

The Builder Generation--born from 1927-1945—
65% of that generation are Christians.

If we go to the generation that followed them—
the Boomers--born from 1946 to 1964--

35% of that generation declares themselves to be Christians.

The next generation, Generation X--born from 1965 to 1976—
16% declare themselves to be Christians.

The latest generation of which there is research, the Bridgers—
born from 1977 to 1994--

4% declare themselves as Christians.

Now, do you notice any trend in the statistics?

Perhaps it's a little bit unfair. After all,

how can you compare someone who is 15 years old
with someone who is 80?

None the less, these are the facts.

You see the problem here.

There is very little knowledge of Scripture or faith history,
Being passed on down the ages.

It's a pattern in which each generation has to start from scratch,
where each generation has to come to faith simply on their own
with no momentum, with no training, with no discipleship.

It's not the way God patterned it at the beginning of time.

It's not the way it's supposed to happen here at church.

In my generation and those previous,

There was a much greater importance placed on

Teaching in the church, but this has slowly declined.

And whilst, there aren't so many Generation-Xer's in the church
today, I often reassure the parents and grandparents,

That as they mature in time, and circumstances change.

They will come to accept more of what they were taught on their own,

They will go through life experiences that bring them to places
where they trust in God more on their own.

But, for this to happen, such faith and knowledge has to be handed
them by a previous generation.

Interview

Something you learned from your parents or grandparents
Advice you would give to children today about how to live

PASSING ON THE WORD

Looking back to when I was growing up,
There were many stages at which the heritage of faith,
And the opportunity to learn more about the Bible,
were a key part of our Christian Education experience,
Which was I have to say very enjoyable,
And never felt forced, or even boring.

For example, we were given a Bible in the third grade (P4)
Which I still have, at the time of our first communion.

Soon, we were provided opportunities for
finding our way around the Bible.

Simple techniques, like opening the Bible in the middle
(to find the Psalms, like we have just heard today)

Then, we learned songs and acronymns,
Which helped us in memorise the books of the Bible in order.

And by late secondary school, we were a dab hand,
At what were once called sword drills,

Finding a particular passage in the shortest time possible.

Thirty or forty, or fifty, or more years on,
many of us can look back on simple songs,

which formed the foundations
of our faith and knowledge of Scripture,
and I don't know about you, but I still sing them today...

The B-I-B-L-E...yes that's the book for me...or

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, or
Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so,
And they give me great comfort, and assurance

That God is with me, in good times and bad,
Which is all well and good, but the gospel message is

Not just for me, or for you, it is for all people...

And that is what I want us to think about today.

For, each one of our readings today reminds us
that we are given gifts, we are given knowledge,
we are given miracles, we are given wonders,
and yet, these gifts, truths, wonders and miracles
do not belong simply to us for our own benefit.

They are given to us in order to pass them to the next generation.
It is not a new principle here in the middle of the Bible in Psalms 78;
it is a principle that is at the very beginning and
at the very end of the Bible.

If we go back to the book of Genesis,
to the covenant formed with Abraham, it says,
***Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation,
and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.***

(Why?) ***For I have chosen him.***

(Why?) ***So that he will direct his children and his household
after him to keep the way of the LORD
by doing what is right and just*** (Genesis 18:18-19a).

We hear it again in the words of the Shema,
In Deuteronomy 6, which we shared as our call to worship.
In the New Testament we read the very basic command
in Ephesians 6: ***Fathers, do not exasperate your children;
instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord***
(Ephesians 6:4).

Once upon a time, the kitchen table functioned
just as well as the family altar as it did to serve a meal.
Sadly, now in many homes, it barely functions at all,
as people eat on the run...on in front of the tele,
sometimes in three different sittings,
as seen on one cooking show during the week.

At one time, discipleship, training, and faith
were passed on in the home.

And there was a command, a responsibility and a duty
to take the grace of God that has been given us
and pass it on to the next generation;

because God had given us blessings that did not really belong to us,
they belonged to our children, and their children.

But, the statistics I shared with you earlier...

Which look at Christianity by generation,

Seem to indicate that we've forgotten all about this.

Our Psalm this morning, at the start of the Holiday Club week,

is calling us to account, for the error of our ways,

not just in the home,

But across society and within the church family, too.

Let's look more closely at Psalm 78,

Where we are told that God give his law so this people

Would trust God and obey his teachings,

And pass them on to the next generation...

I have asked you several questions this morning, now

We're going to ask some basic questions of the Psalmist,

Questions which children often ask adults everyday...

Our favourite one at the moment, What's that?

You know the Who What Where When Why Questions...

The first thing that jumps out in the Psalm is the WHO,

Oh my people, hear my teaching;

listen to the words of my mouth (Psalm 78:1).

Oh my people, hear my teaching.

This is not a Psalm that only applies to those who have children.

It's a Psalm that applies to the entire Body of Christ,

It says that the entire body of God's people have a responsibility

to pass down blessings.

The Word of God commands us to tell the next generation.

the wonders, the praises of God.

We will not hide them from their children;

we will tell the next generation (Psalm 78:4).

To whom does this passage apply? All of us.

We are responsible to pass on faith to

the next generation, to children and children's children.

He commanded our fathers,

our forefathers 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** (Psalm 78:5-6).

We're supposed to pass on faith to such an extent
that the unborn feel it and hear it.

The next question is WHAT?

What exactly are we supposed to pass on?

That's an important question to ask.

We pass on all sorts of stuff.

We pass on language and vocabulary.

We pass on mannerisms, character.

Children mimic exactly what they hear and see,
We pass on all sorts of things to children; but the Word of God
commands us to pass on two things in particular
to the next generation:

The first WHAT is answered in verse four:

***We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds
of the LORD, His power, and the wonders He has done*** (78:4).

The first is simply a knowledge of GOD. We tell of GOD.

We pass on GOD--His wonders, His power, His miracles.

Things that He has done. Things that He is doing.

It is time that we grab our children back and put them on our knees;

and if that means pulling them away from television,

or pulling them away from video games— or yet another activity,

wherever their time is being spent-- then so be it!

Let's bring them back on the knee and tell them the must know

stories of God and his people down the ages,.

For, We are not only responsible to pass on GOD;

we are to pass on the Word of God.

***He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel,
which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children***

(Psalm 78:5).

That is what our sermon series this summer has been about,

The must know stories that are too often not being passed on

To the next generation, simple stories,

which will help the next generation grow in faith.

Which brings us to the WHY.

WHY is this Psalm written.

What purpose does it serve?

. . . [s]o the next generation would know them,

***even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children.
Then they would put their trust in God
and would not forget His deeds, but would keep His commands***

(Psalm 78:6).

We are given faith, we are given gifts;
We are given His Word so that we will pass it on
to the next generation, so that they will believe!
For, How many times in scripture or in life do we see lived out

the final verse of our reading this morning,
***and then arose a generation which did not know God,
and did not know His ways;*** and so, it goes on.

In fact, that's what Psalm 78 really goes onto, for a full 72 verses.

From this point on to the end of the Psalm, it shows
the negative examples of what happens when faith is not passed on.

***The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows,
turned their back on the day of battle;
they did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by His law.
They forgot what He had done, the wonders He had shown them***

(Psalm 78:9-11).

To Quote Jesus in his final days,
They knew not what they were doing.
They had forgotten all that God had done for them.
And the Psalmist is saying, that ought not be the case with us,
not with God's people.
We are to be a people that receive the blessings of God,
the truth of God, the glory of God, the Word of God,
and pass it on to the next generation.
So, Psalm 78 provides a real challenge to us this morning.
God is perhaps raising the bar a little bit.
God is looking down at us and wondering,
"Who here is willing to take my wonders and my word
and pass them on to the next generation."
My prayer for us, is that this week,
We will respond, "Yes, Lord!"
Even if that yes is qualified,
with an I don't know that I know how to do it.
In fact, I'm a little afraid of trying to figure this out.
But if you would help me I would love to teach
the next generation about You,

so children aren't starting from scratch.

And I don't just mean those are helping with the holiday club...

This is for all of us.

You could easily be sitting here thinking, "I don't have children.", or

"My children aren't really around us."

This is for all God's children.

This is a call to pray for the holiday club,

and come and help with Sunday School,

and pass on the stories of faith and the knowledge of God,

which has been gifted to us.

This is to rally around each other and acknowledge that we live

in a world in which children grow up and don't all have

grandparents, at least who live nearby.

This Psalm is written for the Church, for the whole people of God.

So, let's gather the courage, to say, "Okay, here we go."

Rally together.

You, We, pass on GOD and His Word to the next generation,

right here. Lots of kids around Dollar.

They're all around us.

It's our responsibility to tell them of GOD—

Tell them of His wonders, what He's done—
and His Word, and pass it to the next generation.

Day after day and year after year our children and youth need to hear
the great stories of the Christian faith. We need to tell the next
generation not just the stories mentioned in Psalm 78
but also the stories of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, David,
Joseph, Daniel, Paul and Peter, Simon and Andrew,
Mary and Martha, and especially Jesus.

Not only that, but our children and youth need to see the
"praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power,
and the wonders he has done" acted out in our everyday lives --
at school, at home, at work, at play.

They need to be told that God is doing great things today as well.

Which brings us to the penultimate question:

How are WE to give their children the
loving Christian instruction that God want us to give?

Moses says: Hear, O Israel ...

These commandments that I give you today
are to be upon your hearts. Talk about them
when you sit at home and when you walk along the road,

when you lie down and when you get up.

And the psalmist says:

(Ps 78:1-4) O my people, hear my teaching;

listen to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things,

things from of old--what we have heard and known,

what our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children;

we will tell the next generation!

Notice the use of the words "hear," "listen," "tell"?

We must tell our children about God.

Naturally, in our day to day conversation, God –

His being, His acts, His commands – ought to come up.

Naturally, whatever we do, as we come and as we go,

we are to talk to our children about God.

We also ought to read to and with our children and youth

the great stories of the faith.

Moses says, Impress them on your children ...

Impress, imprint – God is talking about a lifestyle here.

You know the old saying: "Actions speak louder than words."

Well that is especially true with children.

They notice everything and miss nothing.

Our children are sponges, quietly soaking up all we say and do.

As parents we must make an impression on our children.

As people of God, we must set an example for our children.

If we don't want our children to swear and to fight,
then we ourselves cannot.

If we want our children to be honest and to speak the truth,
then we ourselves cannot be dishonest and full of lies.

If we want our children to have a close and living relationship
with God, then they must see us having that kind of relationship.

Finally, Why?

Why are we to give our children loving Christian instruction?

I touched on this at the beginning of the sermon:

so that by God's grace –

they end up knowing, fearing, and serving God.

The psalmist puts it this way:

(Ps 78:7) Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget
his deeds but would keep his commands.

But the opposite is also true. For, When we parents and churches

don't give children loving Christian instruction,
their children cannot help but grow up
differently with the sad result that when children do not hear about
God, they ignore His commands, and forget His deeds:
They become like their fore-fathers--a stubborn and rebellious
generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God,
whose spirits were not faithful to him,
and when they do, we have only ourselves to blame,
and so the choice is up to us,
Tell God's story and Impress his example on the next generation,
or watch the history of which the Psalmist write
repeat itself, as our children and our children's children,
become further and further removed
from the gift of faith and the knowledge of God's wonders and
miracles, which has been given to us by our forefathers.
Which will you choose?