

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Touching the Hearts of the Next Generation

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 78:1-8 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Psalm 37:4-7 | Proverbs 22:6 | John 14:6 | Ephesians 6:1-4

► SUMMARY

Christians are under a divine obligation to teach the next generation the truth of God's Word so they will understand that they are His children, know that He has a plan for their lives, and be equipped to face life.

This pattern of instruction should continue without a gap from one generation to the next. Parents, in particular, have the responsibility to introduce their children to the Lord.

► SERMON POINTS

The writer of Psalm 78 describes how God's truth should be passed down from one generation to the next.

- "Tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done" (v. 4).
- "For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should teach them to their children" (v. 5).
- "That the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children" (v. 6).
- "Put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (v. 7).

At the time this psalm was written, the Bible had not yet been completed. As the words of Moses in Genesis through Deuteronomy were taught to the people, they were expected to pass down information about the Lord to their children. They didn't have written copies of the Scripture so the parents taught God's truths verbally

from one generation to the next. Today we have the Holy Bible, the infallible, eternal Word of God in which is written everything we need to know about the Lord and His instructions to us.

The Divine Obligation

Like the Israelites, we too have been entrusted with the responsibility to teach by instruction and example the truth of God's Word, which results in a desire to walk obediently before the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. Since both instruction and example are necessary, we must have consistency between what we say and what we do if we hope to pass down God's truths to the next generation.

- **Our instruction should include the principles of God's Word that we have read, learned, and lived out in our own lives—in other words, our personal testimony.** And like the Old Testament saints, we must also teach our children who God is, what He has done, and how He expects us to live. But instruction alone is not enough; we must also teach them by example how to obey the Lord.
- **Although we may feel as if we don't know enough to pass on scriptural truths, we all have a story to tell.** First of all, everyone who's been saved by the grace of God understands what's required for salvation. And as we read the Bible, we should share what we are learning. Furthermore, we can explain how the Lord has worked in our lives by protecting, providing, encouraging, and helping us through life's hardships and pain.
- **Christian parents cannot entrust this divine obligation to someone else.** Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but

bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” We don’t have to be well-educated or seminary-trained to fulfill this assignment. Simply reading the Bible to our children and assuring them that God’s Word is true will be effective.

- **The state of our culture makes this divine obligation even more critical.** The world our children inhabit is full of errors, dangers, and distractions that could lead them away from Christ. Today’s technology can be used to promote the gospel, but it can also distract young people from what’s truly important.
- **We have many ways to teach the next generation.** We should begin with our own beliefs and life experiences, but there’s also value in passing down what we’ve learned about the Lord from our parents and grandparents. The key is diligence. We can’t afford to let teaching opportunities pass just because we feel inadequate. Although Sunday schools are important, they should never be a substitute for parental responsibility.
- **Grounding our children in scriptural truth is especially important as they head off to school.** Because we live in an anti-God environment today, we cannot rely on teachers and professors to teach truth. Although there are many teachers who love the Lord, secular education systems hinder them from talking about spiritual things. God has given us the responsibility to teach our children to discern between truth and error so they’ll be prepared to go out into the world. If we don’t courageously stand up for the truth of Scripture, our children and grandchildren may drown in secularism and unbelief.
- **We must talk to our children about spiritual matters.** Since our society is disinterested in the things of God, the most loving thing we can do for our children is to discuss spiritual truths with them. We should ask them what they are learning in school and what they believe about spiritual matters. It’s our responsibility to teach them that God is the Creator, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is the only way of salvation (John 14:6).

- **We are living in spiritually dangerous times and must take a stand for truth to protect our children.** In the 1960s, immorality and the pursuit of success and wealth were promoted, and by the 1970s many parents had lost their children to rebellion against God. Ever since then morality, and love and respect for one another, have degenerated. If God’s people do not take a stand, the culture will continue this downward trend. The line of testimony from faithful witnesses for Christ cannot be taken for granted, nor should it be ignored. Providing for our children doesn’t merely include physical needs, material possessions, and education. The most important thing we can do for them is to train them in the way they should go so they can live godly lives (Prov. 22:6).
- **The task is not too big for us because we have the Holy Spirit living within us.** He will guide our steps, help us understand God’s Word, and show us how to reach the next generation. As we open the Bible, we will become more familiar with it, our faith in the Lord will increase, we’ll learn His truths, and our lives will be changed. There are many searching, unsettled, and dissatisfied young people who desperately need to hear what almighty God can do in a life, and we have a testimony to share with them.

► RESPONSE

- What obstacles might be keeping you from teaching the next generation about the Lord through example and instruction?
- Think about your testimony and what you could share with someone younger. What have you learned in God’s Word? How has He worked in your life?

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