

## Pass It On (Various Scriptures)

Around our house we think Calvin and Hobbes is the greatest comic strip ever created and perhaps one of the greatest pieces of artwork of the twentieth century. There's one daily strip of Calvin and Hobbes that my kids find absolutely hilarious and that they quote from time to time that concerns me a bit. I'll put it on the screen here and walk you through it.

This strip is so funny because it connects to a very big and important truth that can, at times, also be quite hilarious. Parents have a massive influence on shaping their kids in good ways, bad ways, and weird ways. We grow up and take our affections, loves, and views of the world largely from our parents. This is both sobering and a glorious gift from God in many ways. One 19<sup>th</sup> century pastor put it like this:

*"We are made what we are by training. Our character takes the form of that mould into which our first years are cast. We depend, in a vast measure, on those who bring us up. We get from them a colour, a taste, a bias which cling to us more or less all our lives. We catch the language of our nurses and mothers, and learn to speak it almost insensibly, and unquestionably we catch something of their manners, ways, and mind at the same time. Time only will show, I suspect, how much we all owe to the early impressions, and how many things in us may be traced up to seeds sown in the days of our very infancy, by those who were about us...And all this is one of God's merciful arrangements. He gives your children a mind that will receive impressions like moist clay. He gives them a disposition at the starting-point of life to believe what you tell them, and to take for granted what you advise them, and to trust your word rather than a stranger's. He gives you, in short, a golden opportunity of doing them good." - J.C. Ryle*

It's Mother's Day today and I want to briefly celebrate the influence of parents on their children, and I also want to show you the importance in Scripture of the training of the next generation of believers and how vital that is to the continuing work of God in the world and through His church. Last week we saw in Exodus 10:1-2 that God performed the 10 signs in Egypt so that the Israelites could proclaim His character and deeds to the coming generations, to their children and grandchildren. I want to quickly walk you through the history of Israel and show you how important the discipleship of the next generation was for parents and

then move forward into the NT and show you how the role of parents continues, but there's an expansion of discipleship out further to include the entire family of God. Here's how I would summarize what we are saying today: **Discipleship of the Next Generation takes place by the proclamation of the deeds and character of God.**

We've already begun in Exodus 10 but let's move forward to the institution of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread in Israel. Why must they continue to hold these feasts through the coming years? Listen to Exodus 13:8-10, 14. The feasts were to be held and the parents were to explain their purpose and meaning by pointing to God's redemption of Israel from slavery. You can see how their children were to continue to teach this to their children. In other words, it was not to simply stop 1 generation after Sinai. Each successive generation was to teach and instruct.

Of course, Israel leaves Egypt and God delivers them through the Red Sea and then they encounter God at Sinai. They are formed into a nation and God gives them the law and His covenant with them. When they leave Sinai and get to the border of the Promised Land they fail to trust God and enter the land so they are judged by wandering for 40 years in the wilderness. The generation that failed to trust God dies out and the second generation, many of whom were born in the wilderness, once again come to enter the Promised Land. At this point God gives them the law a second time, which is recorded for us in the book of Deuteronomy. Over and over again in this book God tells them how important it is that they teach and instruct their children about the deeds and character of God.

Listen to Deut. 4:9-10. Danny read all of Deut. 6 this morning but listen again to 6:4-7, 20-25. Moses made it quite clear that the instruction of the next generation was always a high priority for the Israelites. If they were to remain faithful to God in the land, it would require teaching and training for the next generation.

Moses dies and Joshua takes the leadership and the people do enter the Promised Land as God had Promised to them. The book of Joshua recounts that victory and described the allotment of land to each tribe. But of course, the time comes for Joshua to die and the generation that entered the land and conquers dies along with him. Listen to this chilling passage in Judges 2:6-10.

If you've ever read Judges you know how horrific it is for the nation of Israel and all because of their sin and unfaithfulness to God. This passage in Judges 2 sets the entire book up this way. The author clearly understands that the knowledge of God's character and proclamation of His deeds for Israel were not passed down to the next generation.

I want to show you one more OT passage and then jump to the NT. Turn to Psalm 78:1-8. This Psalm comes in the 3rd book of the Psalter. The third book generally takes place and is aimed at Israel post David and during the divided kingdom. The people and their leadership are increasingly given to idol worship and wickedness. Throughout Psalms 73-89 we see exhortations to remember God's working and specifically to instruct and teach the coming generations. Let's read these verses.

Unfortunately, the stubbornness and rebellion continued to the point where God's people went off into exile and based on what we've seen in the OT, much of the idolatry and sin was passed on from generation to generation. The people consistently failed to teach about the deeds and character of God.

Amazingly enough, when we turn to the NT we find a continued emphasis on the training and instruction of parents and grandparents of children. Listen to 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-16. Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother in the Scriptures and he learned of God's salvation and redemption through them.

Listen to Ephesians 6:1-4. Parents are responsible to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. In other words, we teach through the structure of our families and homes as well as the specific teaching and instruction we give with our mouths.

But it's interesting in the NT that I think you find an expansion out of the discipleship model from only parents to include the local church and others within the local church. While parents are still quite important for the instruction and training of children in many cases, the faith is now often passed from generation to generation apart from the biological family and through the church family.

Listen to Titus 2:1-8. All of this means that it is a biblical responsibility for each one of us to consider future generations and the legacy we will leave behind. It's not godly to only consider my generation and my time period. We have to think about future generations and disciple them. This happens in the home, but not

exclusively in the home. We proclaim the deeds and character of God and work toward training the next generation to know Him and love Him. Let's pray.