

Psalm 78:1–8 | “Tell It to Your Children”

*Preached on May 10, 2026 by Pastor Matt Brown (Mother’s Day)*

You can turn in your Bibles to Psalm 78, as we are taking a week break from Ecclesiastes to look at something for Mothers Day. *[pauseeee]*

Mothers and fathers hear a lot of voices about what to teach their children, but especially moms. *[pause]*

Crack open a parenting book, watch a YouTube video, or scroll through social media, and you will hear the voices. *[pause]*

Take your kids to the park and talk to another mom, and you may very well hear *another* opinion of what you should be telling your kids. *[pauseee]*

You will hear that you must teach them what foods to eat and what foods to avoid.

You are told to make sure to teach them how to play sports well, get good grades, or excel in the arts. *[pauseee]*

Nowadays, you are told from the culture that you must tell them how to regulate themselves, show compassion, be openminded, and be inclusive.

The list could go on with the things that you are told to tell your kids. *[pauseee]*

The constant bombardment of these ‘voices’ telling you what you must teach your kids can be overwhelming, but what does the Bible tell us to teach our children? *[pause]*

As Christians, what’s most important is not what fellow dad or mom down the street says. *[pause]*

What’s most important is not what the culture says, but what God says...

And what we find this morning from Psalm 78 is that parents are to tell their children of the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

Psalm 78 is a psalm that recounts Israel’s history of faithlessness amidst God’s faithfulness.

But before the psalmist gets to that ‘history lesson,’ he emphasizes the importance of hearing, knowing, and passing on the truth in verses 1–8. *[pause]*

Listen to what he says. *[READ]*

*If parents are to help their children be faithful to the Lord, they must first...*

**I. Pay attention to the truth! (1–3)**

In order to pass on the truth to others, you must first pay attention to it. *[pauseee]*

Let's say that someone goes to college to be a teacher, but sleeps through every class.

Are they going to end up being a very good teacher? Most likely not! *[pause]*

They didn't pay attention in class, so how could they teach others things that they never learned?  
*[pause]*

We could put the principle this way: in order to be a good teacher, you must first be a good learner, and the same is true for those intent on telling others about the Lord. *[pause]*

**So step #1: pay attention to the truth!** *[pause]*

Look at what he says in verse 1, "Give ear, O my people, to my teaching," so it's like he's saying, "Listen up!" *[pause]*

We need a command to listen because we are prone to not do so. *[pause]*

One reason we do not listen is because we are distracted by other competing voices. *[pause]*

The truth is that you can't listen to all the voices at the same time—ever try to do that in a group setting? *[pause]*

There's a bunch of people talking at once, and you try to listen to all of them, but what happens?

**You end up not understanding any of them.** *[pause]*

Something else that happens is these voices distract us away from the most important voice.  
*[pause]*

If you're not intentional, the voices all around you can pull you away from the conversation that you *should* be listening to.

And likewise, the world is full of voices calling you to hear them, but the most important voice you should heed is the voice of God in the Word of God. *[pause]*

To pay attention to God's Word also takes *a desire to listen.* *[pause]*

Have you ever been talking to someone, but you could tell that they weren't listening? *[pause]*

**It's because deep down, they didn't really want to hear you—it wasn't important to them.**  
*[pause]*

Well in order to pay attention to God's Word, you must desire to hear it...

He says, "Incline your ears to the words of my mouth!" *[pause]*

That word translated as 'incline' is a word that means to bend, turn, or stretch towards something.

So this demonstrates that you must have a listening posture, as you approach God's Word.

*[pauseeee]*

This takes humility because you can't act like you know it all and incline your ear to Scripture.

And it takes a reverence for Scripture *as* God's Word, which leads you to value its importance.

*[pauseeee]*

Many are more inclined to what the culture says or what the so-called experts of the day say about parenting...

But we are to be those who incline our ears to the words of God. *[pauseeee]*

When faced with a difficulty, we should think, "What does the Bible say?" *[pause]*

When seeking guidance, our ears should be turned towards the Scriptures, not elsewhere. *[pause]*

A characteristic of a Christian is a bent ear that's bent in the direction of God's Word. *[pauseeee]*

What's your ear inclined towards? *[pause]*

What the social media influencers say? *[pause]*

What the culture says? *[pause]*

What others say or what God says? *[pauseeeee]*

A writer once gave this illustration, "Before refrigerators, people used icehouses to preserve their food. *[pause]*

Large blocks of ice were cut, hauled to the icehouses and covered with sawdust. *[pause]*

One man lost a valuable watch while working in an icehouse.

[And] he searched diligently for it, carefully raking through the sawdust, but didn't find it. *[pause]*

His fellow workers also looked, but their efforts, too, proved futile. *[pause]*

A small boy who heard about the fruitless search slipped into the icehouse during the noon hour and soon emerged with the watch. *[pause]*

Amazed, the men asked him how he found it...

'I closed the door,' the boy replied, 'lay down in the sawdust, and kept very still. Soon I heard the watch ticking.'"<sup>1</sup> *[pause]*

That's the kind of focused attention we should have when it comes to the truth...

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<sup>1</sup> Originally from: *Directions* by James Hamilton. Found at: <https://illustrationexchange.com/illustrations?category=267>.

Let the distractions fade away, and intently incline your ear to the sound of what God says.

*[pauseeee]*

Look at what the psalmist calls us to listen to: his “teaching” and “the words of [his] mouth.”

*[pause]*

Since this psalm is in the Bible, then we know that this is God’s Word.

So God is using Asaph to write exactly what He wanted, and so communicating God’s very Word to us. *[pause]*

This is why we must ‘give ear’ and ‘incline’ our ears to *this*. *[pause]*

This is not some teaching off to the side that’s detached from Scripture, but this *is* Scripture that has been written, known, and passed on for generations. *[pauseeee]*

God has “opened his mouth” to us through the writers of Scripture.

He has ‘uttered’ his Word, and it goes to show that God is not silent! *[pause]*

That word “utter” is literally “pour forth,” so God has “poured forth” His Word.

It is clear, it is evident, it is here, and it is graciously given, but what will we do with it?

*[pauseeee]*

We are definitely without excuse, we who live in a day when the Bible is so readily accessible.

So our problem is not a lack of access, it’s a lack of listening. *[pauseeee]*

Before we can pass the truth on, we must pay attention to it.

So this ‘hearing’ is with the goal of ‘knowing,’ so that there can be a ‘passing.’ *[pause]*

Put simply: you must be willing to listen and to learn the truth in order to help others. *[pauseeee]*

When you go onto an airplane, they explain that in an emergency, you are to put on your oxygen mask *first* before helping others.

So also, the best way that you can help your children is for you to first know the Word, so that you can help *them* better. *[pauseeee]*

We are to learn in order to teach, hear in order to speak—our knowledge is not meant to die with us. *[pauseeee]*

Parents, this means that in order to teach your kids rightly, you must be devoted to being under the regular teaching and preaching of God’s Word. *[pauseeee]*

There are some parents, who neglect the gathering of the church, and wonder why their kids do not want to follow the Lord.

But you cannot expect your children to have a knowledge or love of the Word of God, if you don't. *[pauseeee]*

No matter if you are a father or mother or not, you should pay attention to the truth. *[pause]*

Realize that this takes a certain consistency...

You can't say, "I attend church once every couple months," and expect your knowledge to abound.

It takes a consistent, regular devotion to being immersed in the Word. *[pauseeee]*

Understand, too, that this takes discipline.

You need to discipline yourself to read your Bible daily, to sit under the preaching of God's Word, to attend Bible studies, and to study with another person 1-on-1. *[pauseeee]*

Ask God to help you, and rely upon the Spirit to grow your desire for the Word. *[pauseeeee]*

*So in order for a parent or other mature Christian to help others, they should first pay attention to the truth, but secondly, we ought to...*

## **II. Pass along the truth! (4–8)**

'If' and 'how' someone passes along something matters. *[pause]*

We know this when it comes to being trained at the workplace...

If you begin a new job, and they say, "OK, here are the keys, go ahead and get to work," then you won't be set up for success. *[pause]*

But if you are trained well, then you are on the road to success, for they have passed along the necessary information for you to excel. *[pauseee]*

Well parents are especially called to pass along the truth and to do it well. *[pauseeee]*

In verse 4, he says, "We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation." *[pause]*

We see first that passing along the truth takes *commitment*.

He says, "We will not hide them from their children, but *tell* to the coming generation." *[pause]*

There's a commitment displayed here: no hiding the truth, but telling it. *[pauseeee]*

The reason why it takes commitment to speak the Word of God is because our natural tendency is to shy away from speaking it. *[pause]*

The default is to stay quiet, so there has to be an intentionality to speaking the Scripture to others. *[pauseeee]*

Parents, you have to make a commitment to set aside time to speak God's Word to your children, or it won't happen regularly. *[pause]*

There are so many other things vying for our attention and time, so we need to commit to it.

There are sports games to go to, meals to prepare, errands to run, diapers to change, rooms to clean, etc. *[pauseee]*

If you let them, other things will consume your time, so you must make a commitment: "We will not hide the truth, but tell it!" *[pauseeee]*

If you are a parent or not, or even if your children are grown up now—make a commitment to speak God's Word to others. *[pause]*

Be intentional, set aside specific time, and do it.

You know the truth, so pass it along—do not hide it. *[pauseeeee]*

We ought to commit to telling the coming generation *what?*...

The second half of verse 4 tells us: "The glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done." *[pauseeee]*

Tell your children that they serve an all-powerful God, who works wonders—recount His glorious deeds! *[pause]*

Encourage them with His power, motivate them with His wonders, comfort them with His glory.

So tell them of His wonders in the Exodus, recount the glorious work of the Cross, speak of His might shown in the resurrection, relate how He saved *you!* *[pauseeee]*

Help them to see their situation in light of who their God is—show them that they can trust the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

Now *why* is it such a big deal to tell the coming generation of the Lord's glorious deeds?

We see the answer as we move onto verses 5–8. *[pause]*

Verse 5 says: "He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children." *[pauseeee]*

We teach our children about the Lord because the Lord has *commanded* it to be done.

So this is not an option, but a requirement. *[pauseeee]*

Many parents wonder, "How does God want me to raise my kids?"

And the answer is shown here: teach them the Word of God! *[pauseeee]*

This is the Lord's will: that His Word would be known and passed on to each generation.

And this means that when we are teaching our kids the Bible, we are obeying the Lord, doing something that He delights in. *[pauseeee]*

God established a testimony and appointed a law, and these words refer to His Word. *[pause]*

Since it was “established” and “appointed,” then it means that it has been set down and it’s unchanging. *[pause]*

God’s Word is something you can know—it’s not elusive or changing or questionable.

Therefore, the Bible is something given to us from God, which is set and stable, and not some hidden knowledge that we must search for. *[pauseee]*

Parents, this means that you don’t have to keep up with the latest developments like you do for other things. *[pause]*

You don’t have to be chasing trends, new scientific research, or things like that.

When it comes to the things of God: it is established! *[pauseeee]*

There is no updated version every couple years, like some textbooks, but the Scriptures you hold have been set.

Take comfort in that fact, and keep going to it! *[pauseeee]*

The goal of this teaching is found in verse 6, “that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.” *[pause]*

So we ‘teach’ that they would ‘know.’ *[pauseee]*

We don’t teach to get it over with, but we teach so that they would come to know God and His Word! *[pauseee]*

This is our goal: that they may know Him, and then they would pass it along to *their* children.

What a wonderful picture of a godly, family legacy! *[pauseeee]*

There are some people, who you ask how they have come to learn how to cook a certain thing so well, or how to build something a certain way.

And they say, “My dad taught me, and his dad taught him.”

And what a wonderful thing it would be if our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren could say...

“I know this because my parents taught me, and their parents taught them, all because *their* parents taught them.” *[pauseeeee]*

Let’s apply this for Mothers Day: moms, you pass along a lot of things. *[pause]*

Maybe you pass on cooking knowledge, or knowledge on how to dress and look beautifully.  
[pause]

You can pass on wisdom and a hard-work ethic, but the most important thing you can pass on is a knowledge of God and His ways! [pauseeee]

The purpose of God establishing His Word is so that successive generations would know Him, but it goes beyond that.

He wants people to not *just* know Him, but according to verse 7, to “set their hope in God.”  
[pauseeee]

God doesn’t want people who are merely intellectually aware of Him, but who *trust Him deeply*.  
[pauseeee]

Parents, your goal is not to just have kids who can win Bible trivia, but kids who hope in God!  
[pauseeee]

To ‘set your hope in God’ is to set your hope in the right place, where it is fixed and established in the Lord.

It’s to have a firm confidence in Him, trusting that He is the answer to everything. [pause]

Our goal is so that as our kids grow up, they know that their one and only hope is the Lord.  
[pause]

As they go through trials, as they even face death someday, they can have a firm confidence in the Lord that He will carry them through and bring them home. [pauseeee]

What a high and great goal to have in raising our children: I want my children to “set their hope in God”! [pauseeee]

When they know the Word and set their hope in God, they are those who will not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

And in so doing, instead of being like previous stubborn and rebellious generations, they will be faithful to Him. [pauseeee]

What will your children remember about what you passed along to them? [pause]

If all they remember is how to hit a baseball or how to save money then we have failed in the most important part of our parenting. [pauseeee]

It’s good to know how to budget your money, work hard, hit a baseball, or fix your car, but what’s most important is knowing the Lord and hoping in Him. [pauseeee]

When they are going through their hardest trials, they aren’t going to be thinking, “I’m so glad my parents told me how to hit a baseball!”

They are going to be saying, “I’m so glad parents taught me to set my hope in God.” *[pauseeeee]*

*We have seen this morning from the Bible that...*

**An essential responsibility of parents is to tell their children of the Lord.**

There are a lot of voices out there telling parents, and especially moms, what they need to do with their kids. *[pause]*

*You are shamed if you don’t feed them healthy food every single day. [pause]*

You are told how you need to do this and that, or else they will be traumatized for life. *[pause]*

**Well this is what God deems as an essential thing to do: tell them of the Lord! *[pauseeee]***

So pay attention to the truth, and then pass it along to your children—it’s such an important thing to do.

*And even if your kids are grown up now, you can still encourage them with the truth, so use the opportunities you have to share God’s Word. [pauseeee]*

As we apply this text for Mothers Day, first, be thankful for your mother, if she faithfully told you of the Lord. *[pause]*

*There are so many good examples of mothers like this represented in our church—praise God! [pauseeee]*

We should be so grateful that our mothers loved the Lord, and taught us to love Him.

**So thank your mother, if she’s still around. *[pause]***

And even if she’s not around anymore, thank the Lord that He gave you a mother like this. *[pauseeee]*

*Now maybe your mother wasn’t a good example of this...*

You can still be thankful for your mother, but also realize that God graciously used other people to tell you of Him. *[pause]*

*Are you grateful for the people that God *did* use? [pause]*

In His merciful and loving providence, He raised up others to speak of Him, so that you could know Him. *[pauseeee]*

**This reminds us that we are *all* called to tell others of the Lord.**

That means that we could play a part in someone else’s life, helping them to faithfully follow the Lord, and what a privilege and honor! *[pauseeee]*

*Do you tell others of the Lord? [pause]*

Seek to do this more and more, for it's one of the most important things. *[pauseeee]*

There are many things that will help other people right now, but telling them of the Lord not only impacts them *now*, but it impacts them for *eternity*. *[pauseeee]*

It helps them for eternity because in Christ, they can have an everlasting hope that is sure...

You see, the only reason why we can set our hope in God is because of the hope that Jesus Christ has secured for us. *[pause]*

We were sinners, without hope in this world,<sup>2</sup> for we all faced condemnation for our sin against the holy, perfect, and good Creator God.

Yet in love and mercy, Christ was sent to give us hope. *[pauseee]*

He lived a sinless life, died for our sins, and then rose again.

Now through faith in Him alone, we are forgiven and given eternal life. *[pauseeee]*

We now have a sure hope because of Jesus! *[pause]*

Scripture tells us that, “According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a *living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”<sup>3</sup> *[pauseee]*

So the reason why you can “set [your] hope in God” is because Christ has brought you hope.

So how could we not open our mouths and declare this good news? *[pause]*

How could we hide this from our children or others?

We have experienced “the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might...the wonders that he has done”! *[pause]*

May we always remember and speak about the power of our Rock, the Most High God, our Redeemer.<sup>4</sup>

May we be steadfastly faithful to Him.

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<sup>2</sup> A reference to Ephesians 2:12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 1:3 (italics is mine).

<sup>4</sup> Utilizing words and phrases from later in the chapter: Psalm 78:35, 42–43.