

# (Education for Exultation) One Generation Shall Praise Your Works to Another

by John Piper

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of education for exaltation, where parents and the church work together to transmit knowledge through praise, filling the hearts of the next generation with love for God.*

**Duration:** 37:18

**Scripture:** Psalm 78:5, Psalm 145:1-13, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Discipleship Training", "Faith Transmission"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on verse 4 of a biblical passage, which emphasizes the duty of the older generation to pass on the knowledge of God's mighty works to the younger generation. The speaker highlights the importance of teaching, preaching, and modeling the faith to ensure that the younger generation learns how to read, think, trust, obey, and rejoice in God. While the relationship with God should be primary for the older generation, it is crucial for them to transmit their knowledge and faith to the next generation. The speaker also mentions the need to prioritize spiritual matters over worldly distractions and comforts, urging the audience to be aware of the lost souls and unreached people groups who need Christ.

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## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org) Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 145. I'll read verses 1 through 13.

I will extol thee, my God, O King, and I will bless thy name forever and ever. Every day I will bless thee, and I will praise thy name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.

One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of thy majesty, and on thy wonderful works, I will meditate. And men shall speak of the power of thine awesome acts, and I will tell of thy greatness.

They shall eagerly utter the memory of thine abundant goodness, and shall shout joyfully of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and great in loving kindness. The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works.

All thy works shall give thanks to thee, O Lord, and thy godly ones shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power, to make known to the sons of men thy mighty acts, and the glory of the majesty of thy kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endures through all generations.

Everlasting God and ruler of all things, we need mercy now to finish this service faithfully. And so I ask for another season of mercy. Give us breath, give us life, give us faith, give us a revelation of your glory through your word.

Give us strength, provide healing for any who are ailing in the room, I pray. Men relationships where they are so stressful it's hard to sit beside each other. Pour out your spirit for providing resources where people feel like they are spent, and give wisdom for tomorrow's perplexity.

And beyond all that I can ask or think, Lord, make this word suitable for the needs of your people. I have ideas of what I want to say, and you may have very different ones, which is just fine. Whatever you have to do, Lord, get through.

Save sinners, strengthen saints, unify the body, cause us to exalt in you. Shape us for a week of obedience that magnifies your name. Let worship extend right through the week, we pray, through Christ.

Amen. I'm going to focus on one verse in this section that Stephen just read, namely verse four. One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts.

The first thing I infer from that verse is that it is a biblical duty for an older generation to see to it that a younger generation hear about the mighty works of God. It is not God's way to drop a new Bible on every new generation, or to give new revelation to every new generation that comes along. It is God's way for the older generation to teach the newer generation how to read, how to think, how to trust, how to obey, how to rejoice, how to get along.

Not at all to deny that the relationship with God should be secondary for the second generation and primary for the first generation. No, no, no. Don't misunderstand me.

The Holy Spirit, who is God himself, comes on every new generation to call out for himself a personal relationship with the people. But he does it in conjunction with a horizontally delivered word about God. So they meet like this.

Here comes the word from generation to generation being passed along faithfully through horizontal teaching and preaching and sharing and modeling. And here comes God loving this new generation and takes that word, sets it on fire by his Holy Spirit and forms through faith a relationship between them and him that is authentic and doesn't need a generation before for a relationship to exist. Once it's got the truth and got the Spirit, it's got God.

But it's God's way that he doesn't deal with this second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth generation apart from what is transmitted about him through teaching based on the book, the Bible. That's the first thing I see in verse four. Every generation is responsible to get into the heads of the next generation what God Almighty can set on fire by his Spirit and make them his own.

Now here's a second observation. We're really not interested and God is not interested in simply one generation stocking the brains of a second generation with thoughts about Jesus. We are interested in

filling heads with true thoughts so that hearts can explode with love to God kindled by that truth in the head.

And if the second doesn't happen, we've wasted our time. You can't do an end run around the head. Truth has to be there.

But if the head doesn't provide tinder for the explosive fire of love to God, it's just going to produce intellectualism and waste. Now I see that in this verse in that the psalmist did not choose to say one generation shall teach your works to another. Doesn't say that.

That's true, probably, but that's not the word it uses. It says one generation shall praise your works to another. Now, what's the point of saying it that way? Well, the point is that the goal of this transmission and now we see the means toward the goal is exaltation.

That's just another word for praise. To exalt in God is to praise God. And here this verse says one generation is going to, out of its exaltation in God, spill over in praise to God for the next generation.

So there's going to be a transmission of knowledge. We're talking about the works of God here, but it's going to be through a certain mode called praise. Now what I think this implies pedagogically for Sunday school, Wednesday connection, parenting is that a very high calling rests upon those of us who are charged with the transmission of truth from generation to generation as everybody in this room is.

We're all charged with this task of transmitting from one generation to the next, the truth. And this verse says there's a way to do this so that you won't just produce eggheads. You won't just produce people whose brains are stocked with truth and whose hearts are cold.

Namely, when you do it, exalt in doing it. That is, praise it into people's lives, praise it into their lives. Isn't that what it says? One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts.

So Sunday school teachers, beware. Oh, beware. Most of you aren't here because the Sunday school is going on right now.

But someday, maybe out of this room, you will be a Wednesday night worker, a Sunday school worker, and there are many parents in this room. Beware of speaking the truth about God in a way that contradicts the value of the truth about God. Oh, how sad in college and in Christian schools and in Sunday school classes and in living rooms and in Wednesday night gatherings to hear people talk about the most phenomenal, glorious, valuable things in the universe as though they were no more significant than nothing.

There ought to be a way of talking about things that are valuable to us so that in the learning of them, the value of them is also transmitted. That's what I see the psalmist talking about here. One generation shall praise thy works to another.

Not just talk about them. So our goal here at Bethlehem is education for exaltation in the next generation. And now we see that's not just the goal, it's the means to the goal.

In Sunday school classes and Wednesday night meetings and in parenting, we have to be a certain kind of people. Namely, people who exalt in God. Otherwise, when we try to transmit the knowledge of His mighty works, the kids are going to hear them and say, they're not excited about this, so why should I be?

Doesn't make any difference to mom and dad.

Why should it make any difference to me? They seem quite bored with it, so why shouldn't I be bored with it? That's the message we'll give. And that is a lie. It's a half-truth at best.

Let me try to build a bridge from last Sunday's sermon to what I'm saying here. I said last Sunday, remember the topic was education for exaltation among the nations. And I said we want your kids.

We want to breed kids in this church who are God-exalting and Christ-centered and Bible-saturated and missions-driven and radically surrendered to Jesus and radically committed to the cause of world evangelization. And what we mean by the word radically is so deeply, so fully, so passionately surrendered and committed that when obedience is known, it is done no matter the distance, no matter the danger, no matter the cost. It's going to get done.

That's the kind of young people we want to breed in this church. So it's a dangerous place to bring your kids if you don't want that to happen in their lives, which Jim Elliott's parents were not sure they wanted. Jim Elliott was 22 years old when this happened.

One of you sent me this email, so thank you. I'll read back what I got in the mail. Jim Elliott was 22 years old, out of Wheaton College, ready to lay his life down in South America to the Kichwa Indians, he thought.

And so he wrote to his parents and said, that's what I think God's calling me to do. They were not excited about this because not that they were anti-Christian. They just saw a man who was extraordinarily gifted.

You know, he looked like Billy Graham. I looked at his pictures in *Shadow of the Almighty*. He looked just like Billy Graham at his age.

You know, kind of suave and debonair and cuts a good figure. It could be a famous evangelist in America. And he could be a teacher in a college, or he could have a big church and safely preach behind an American pulpit.

Why throw such a gifted life away on a tribe? And here's what he wrote back. Get ready, parents. I do not wonder that you were saddened at the word of my going to South America.

He replied on August 8. This is nothing else than what the Lord Jesus warned us when he told the disciples that they must become so infatuated with the kingdom and following him that all other allegiances must become as though they were not. And he never excluded the family tie. In fact, those loves which we regard as closest, he told us must become as hate in comparison with our desires to uphold his cause.

Grieve not then if your sons seem to desert you, but rejoice rather seeing the will of God done gladly. Remember how the psalmist described children. He said they were as an heritage from the Lord and that every man should be happy who had his quiver full of them.

And what is a quiver full of but arrows? And what are arrows for but to shoot? So with strong arms of prayer draw the bowstring back and let the arrows fly all of them straight at the enemy's hosts. Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious. Give of thy wealth to spread them on their way.

Pour out thy soul for them in prayer victorious and all thou spendest Jesus will repay. That's the kind of young person we like to see grow up at Bethlehem. So where do they come from? They don't grow on trees.

That kind of heart doesn't grow on a tree. Where does it come from? The first answer to that question is it comes from God. God makes hearts like that.

And before I give you the usual way He makes them, let me make sure you know that there are also unusual ways He makes them. God is sovereign. And He can make a heart like a Jim Elliott's heart out of a dysfunctional family and a failing church.

Is that clear? God can make a Jim Elliott out of one who grows up in an abusive, dysfunctional family and a failing church. He can do that. It is not His ordinary way.

That would be His extraordinary way. It's not the way He commanded it to be done. So I want to tell you how I see at this church the commanded way developing, trusting that God can do it any way He pleases, out of any family He pleases, in any class He pleases.

And to get there, let me underline a word in Elliott's response to his parents. Here's the sentence. I'll tell you the word.

Jesus told the disciples that they must become so infatuated, there's the word, they must become so infatuated with the kingdom and following Him that all other allegiances must become as though they were not. Why did He choose the word infatuated? It's because we're not just interested in, and He wasn't just interested in, producing people who are knowledgeable about the kingdom purposes, but who are driven by the kingdom purposes, who are thrilled by kingdom purposes, who are exulting in the God of the kingdom. And therefore, there has to be, what He calls, an infatuation with the king and the kingdom purposes of the world evangelization in order that the clawing, keeping, alternative values of the world will be done away with.

If you don't have an infatuation with the kingdom, if Jesus isn't your thrill as well as your commitment, then the gnawing, clawing, dragging down, keeping, ordinary rut of American prosperity will keep you from doing anything radical probably. You'll just say, I want to watch another little bit of March Madness. Thank you.

Don't worry me with the fact that my friends are lost or that there's a tribe out there, 187 people groups with nobody targeting them. Don't even bring to my attention that 95 of these basketball players, 95% of them don't know Jesus and need Christ more than they need anything so that I could turn maybe this watching into prayer. Don't worry me with those kinds of kingdom thoughts.

I just want to bracket reality and live in this dream world of comfort. Well, I hope that's not the kind of person you want to be. It wasn't the kind of person that Jim Elliot wanted to be.

It's not the kind of person we want to breed. And so the last thing I want to do is simply ask, how do you breed Jim Elliot types? And I have three answers from this Bible that are not in the text, but I think are pointed to by the text. And I'll take them very briefly.

Number one, parents educate children. These are three principles that will govern education for exaltation in the next generation here at Bethlehem. Number one, parents educate children.

That is, it is the primary responsibility of mom and dad or just mom or just dad if there's only just a mom or a dad to bring the works of God and a Christian worldview and a passion for Jesus and Bible memory and knowledge of doctrine into the lives of our children. That is our job. We may not pass it off to Sunday

school, Wednesday connection, parochial schools, or any other way.

It is our job. Deuteronomy 6, 4, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might, parents.

These words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart, parents, so that you may teach them diligently to your sons, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk or ride in your car and when you lie down and when you rise up. Fill your mouths, parents, with the Word of God and bring a God-centered perspective on everything from March madness to schoolwork to sex to money to whatever. Bring God to bear on it.

That's our job. And not anybody else's first. Psalm 78, 5 The Lord established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which He commanded our fathers that they would teach them to their children that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may rise and tell them to their children.

There are a lot of college students in this room right now. Wake up! Because if you don't hear this now and plan on this, you're going to wake up in five years and find yourself in a marriage totally out of sync with the woman you married on how to do this thing because you never talked about it. Now! And I mean talk about it in small groups, talk about it with somebody who might be a spouse someday and say, Are we together on this? This is our job.

It's not Sunday school. It's not Wednesday night. It's not the pastor.

This is our job. Are you with me in this? Can we do this? If not, no marriage. That's what marriage is about in large measure is filling the earth with the glory of the Lord by begetting children who become God-centered people.

So the first principle I lay down is that parents rear children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If you want a New Testament verse, Ephesians 6, for fathers, it's a special burden on fathers. It's not unique to fathers, but especially if there's a father and a mom, fathers, you bear the unique responsibility here.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord. Dads, teach your children. This is our vision at Bethlehem.

It's the reason why David and Sally have the titles they do. We try to choose titles here carefully. They are not pastor and minister for children.

They are pastor and minister for parenting and children's discipleship. That's the title. And it's intentional.

Second principle. Parents are assisted in their educating their children by the church. Or, turn it around, the church is a partner with parents in educating their children.

There are all kinds of reasons why this is needed and biblical. One, there are many kids without believing parents. We can't just throw them away and say, oh, too bad, you don't have any believing parents, you don't get taught the Bible.

Two, there are single parents whose homes are so stressed and so overworked, they need all the help they can get. Three, the whole range of competencies is out here in this room in terms of what you know and how effective you are in teaching. Some of it is sin when it's not there and some of it is just lack of gift.

And since there's a whole range of competencies out there, the church comes in alongside and supplements and reinforces. Fourth, even in the best homes where the best teaching is happening for children's knowledge of God, they benefit from reinforcement in Sunday school and other ways. And fifth, there are some things about God and His ways among His people and in the world that are learned best and I dare say only in the larger family of believers called the church in a class and in this room right here during worship, which is why we don't have children's church.

We believe with all our might in what happens in the lives of children in this room from age about four on. In spite of all the squirreliness, in spite of all the difficulties of training, we believe to watch mom and dad go hard after God and listen to preaching, 90% of which they do not get, is absolutely crucial for their lives. To listen to the hymns, to see church happen as big people do it is absolutely crucial.

Now let me give you a biblical warrant for that conviction. Deuteronomy 31.10 says, Moses commanded them, saying, at the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the feast of booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in the front of all Israel. Assemble the people, the men, the women, the children, the alien, so that they may hear and learn and fear the Lord.

So the children are to come, aliens are to come, men and women, old and young are to come. And here's verse 13. Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.

Now picture this. Every seven years, he says, there's to be this massive assemblage, and it isn't the only time, by the way, but here's one, where all the women, all the men, all the children come, and the law is read, and there's proclamation, and it says, the children who haven't known will hear and learn to fear the Lord. Does that mean that Moses counted on the delinquency of fathers? I doubt it.

I doubt it. I think rather that what it means is there are things to be known about God in His majesty, God in His covenant relationship to a whole people, God in His receiving and His being worthy of receiving great and glorious praise, God in His ability to manage huge crowds of people can only be learned in this kind of assembly. And therefore, it's fitting that there be children in other kinds of groupings under God than just nuclear families.

Very important that the church partner with parents to help parents do what they're supposed to do, but to do also what parents can't do, not because of delinquency, but because there are things about life, and things about God, and things about worship, and things about the way God moves in the world that are better imparted in a Sunday school class or in a worship assembly like this. I wonder if there's a New Testament pointer in this regard in Acts 22.3. Paul is defending himself, and he said, I'm a Jew. He's talking to a crowd that tried to get him killed in Jerusalem.

He said, I'm a Jew, born in Tarsus, brought up in this city, Jerusalem, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, as you all are today. What does that mean, educated under Gamaliel? Literally, in the Greek, it is sitting at the feet of Gamaliel. So the picture is, a rabbi, very schooled, trained, probably way beyond the average dad, who knows the Torah, backwards and forwards, probably by heart, all five books of it, and he is telling these young disciples sitting on the floor around him, everything he knows.

And Paul is one of those as he grows up. So Paul's parents sought to get him from Tarsus, we don't know why or how, down to Jerusalem, as a boy, and sit at the feet of a Gamaliel. Now I think that's a pointer to at least how the Jews in that day understood these texts in Deuteronomy that I've been quoting, namely that when it says parents teach, parents teach, parents teach, it doesn't mean only parents teach.

It means also avail yourself in the bigger family of God, of those whom God has gifted, called, trained, to do what you may not be able to do. Call it Sunday school, call it preaching, call it teaching, call it Christian high schools, call it Bethel, call it Wheaton, call it Northwestern, call it whatever, wherever you think this can happen, it might be that those people should partner with you in bringing children into a full-orbed Christian, God-centered worldview, functioning in society as light and salt. So that's premise number two.

The third one is very short. The first was parents teach the children and educate them. The second one is the church partners with the parents in teaching and educating the children.

And the last one is the church helps the parents to educate the children. That is, it targets the parents and not the children through the parents, Ephesians 4. Christ gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers. Why? Why did Christ, from heaven, ordain that there be and give evangelists and prophets and teachers and apostles to the church? Why am I here? Why am I doing what I'm doing? Why? What is this? And here's the answer, verse 12.

He did this. He gave pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry to the building up of the body of Christ. Now, just translate that into parenting.

John Piper is given to Bethlehem Baptist Church along with 15 other elders to equip the saints. Many of them are parents to do the work of ministry, much of which is parenting. So the third point is when the word is preached, when the word is taught here, TBI, adult Sunday school classes, small groups where each of you teach one another, the point is help them be the kind of people who can breed this kind of young person.

In other words, everybody in this room counts in this enterprise. Absolutely everybody. I'll close with this.

A church that only educates children is going to get shallower and shallower and shallower until the reservoir of truth and doctrine from the Bible has become so small you can't drink there anymore. Many churches once upon a time were God exalting, Bible saturated, mission driven churches and they began to minimize teaching of adults, growing adults, feeding adults with more and more biblical truth and just made it a child's thing. And they got thinner and thinner and thinner and what they are today is God belittling, Bible neglecting, mission absent social clubs of Christian nominal people.

And the aim of education for exaltation is that that not happen, but rather that the reservoir grow and grow and grow and that the water in it be a water not only that you can drink from, but you can swim in and you can enjoy and you can lavish your children with. So education for exaltation is all about the next generation and all about this generation, old and young, because it has to do with everybody in this room. And I mean that.

There is parenting yet to be done if your children are in their 60's. So if you are a parent, I want to pray for you. Let's pray.

Lord, those who are standing here have tasted and seen that you are good and that you are needed, needed, needed in this enterprise called parenting. And so I just want to give a closing prayer of blessing

upon them. Lord, we prayed for the children earlier, I just pray earnestly for the parents now.

Oh God, have mercy upon them. Our job is impossible because we have to be the kind of people, not just produce, but be the kind of people that would model for our older and younger children what Jesus is like. And we are not Jesus.

And we are sinners all. And we need mercy and we need help. And so I ask that you take every dad a little farther than where he is, maybe get him going on the fight or verses for his kids.

Take every mom a little farther than where she is, loving her kids, teaching her kids, and singing to them songs and blessing them as they go to sleep in her arms. Parents, oh God, or moms who have children so far from the Lord they haven't seen them for ten years, God, have mercy on moms and dads in this room and strengthen them and make them mighty in the Spirit and mighty in the Word, I pray, for the sake of their children. And now let's all stand together and I'll close with a benediction.

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

And all the people said, Amen. You're dismissed. [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org) 1-888-346-4700 Desiring God exists to help you make God your treasure because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

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