

Lessons From My Mother

On this day that we honor mothers, I thought we would take a break from our verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of Mark and focus today on mothers and family.

A Junior High science teacher lectured on the properties of magnets for an entire class. The next day he gave his students a quiz. The first question read like this: "My name begins with an "M," has six letters, and I pick things up. What am I?" Half the kids in the class wrote, "Mother."

Ralph Waldo Emerson has said, "Men are what their mothers make them" and an old Spanish proverb says, "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy."

There are some great portraits of motherhood in Scripture.

I love the picture of the mother of Moses who cared so much for her son that she broke the law in order to save him and teach him the faith of his people.

Or Hannah, who asked God for a child, then gave that boy in service to the Lord for all his life.

We see the sacrificial love of the mother who appeared before King Solomon and told him that she was willing to have her son taken away by another woman rather than see any harm come to him.

And, the mother of King Lemuel, who gave some advice to her son about godly living and how to pick a good wife, in Proverbs 31.

Or, the mother of James and John who loved her boys so much that she wanted them to sit by the Lord's side in the heavenly kingdom.

I'm aware that Mother's Day is a difficult time for some of you.

Maybe you want to be a mother but you can't be for some reason

- Perhaps some of you have not had the best mother in the world.
- Some of you have had a mother who has recently died.
- Some of you mothers have lost a child to death.
- Some of you mothers feel the pain of a wayward child this morning.
- And, some of you are flying solo as you work hard raise your children.

This morning I want to begin by giving you the main idea of our text: A mother can make a significant spiritual impact on her children.

A Grandmother, a Mother, and a Boy

I'd like to introduce you to a young woman named Eunice. She was raised in a Jewish home and was greatly impacted by her mother Lois. Lois made it her job to train and teach her daughter the ways of God from a youth.

We're not sure about Eunice's husband. We only know from Acts 16 that she was a Jew and he was a Greek. Perhaps he was not a believer. Eunice had a son named Timothy. What we do know is that Timothy's Grandmother Lois and Mother Eunice both would tell little Timmy the stories from the Old Testament. They would pray for him and would train him ever since he was just a little child in the ways of God.

Then, one day, a preacher named Paul came to their town of Lystra and spoke about a man named Jesus. Both Lois and Eunice listened intently. They saw in Jesus the fulfillment of all the promises in the Old Testament and placed their trust in Him and were converted. These new believers in turn focused on teaching Timothy all about who Jesus was. We know from reading the book of Acts that Paul himself took a personal interest in Timothy and, partnering with his mother and grandmother, led him to saving faith.

Later, Paul and Timothy partner together in ministry as the gospel continues to spread throughout the area. Many years later, while Paul is in prison, awaiting his execution, he writes two letters to young Timothy. These letters contain some teaching about how Timothy should behave as a church leader and are also filled with some reminiscing and nostalgia on Paul's part. As Paul writes these letters, that we know as 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, he reflects on the mothers who made an impact in Tim's life.

In chapter 1 verse 5 of Paul's second letter to Timothy, he writes this:

For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.

With that as background, I'm going to draw from Paul's second letter to Timothy to show how a mother - and a grandmother -- can make a significant spiritual impact on her children. These are some of the same ways that my mother impacted my life.

My mother taught me:

1 - To Know and Love Scripture

In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul reminds Timothy that everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Then in verse 14, Paul urges Timothy to hang tough when the tough times come: **"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,"** Timothy not only learned things cognitively, he made a practice of owning what he studied by becoming convinced of its truthfulness. He didn't just fill his head with truth but internalized it and then lived it out. I think Timothy did this because he saw it modeled in his mother, in his grandmother, and in Paul himself.

2 Timothy 3:15 shows us what this truth was: **"and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."** Grandmother Lois and mother Eunice taught the Holy Scriptures to Timothy from the very beginning. The word "infancy" in some passages refers to a newborn baby or a toddler. Lois and Eunice teamed up to provide high-powered Bible Study Fellowship classes for young Timothy - even before he could crawl! They read to him, they talked about Samson and Samuel, David and Ruth, Abraham and Noah. They did everything they could to provide Timothy with the opportunity to learn all he could about the Bible.

In essence, they lived out the commands of Deuteronomy 6:4-7: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them upon your children.

Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

These two mothers had God’s Word in their hearts. Because they had internalized the truth into their own lives, they could impress it upon young Timothy by talking about it throughout the day, showing Tim how the Scriptures should impact every area of life.

Mothers, it is never too early to start teaching the Bible to your children - and, it’s never too late to start if you haven’t already. There is nothing that can replace your role in your child’s life. God wants to use you to instill within your children a respect for the Bible.

Four scholars were arguing over Bible translations. One said he preferred the King James Version because of its beauty and eloquent old English. Another said he liked the New American Standard Version for its literalism and how it moves the reader from passage to passage with confident feelings of accuracy from the original text. The third scholar was sold on the New Living Translation for its use of contemporary phrases and idioms that capture the meaning of difficult ideas. After being quiet for a moment, the fourth scholar admitted: “I have personally preferred my mother’s translation.” When the other scholars started laughing, he said, “Yes, she translated the Scriptures. My mom translated each page of the Bible into life. It is the most convincing translation I have ever read.”

Mothers, what kind of Bible is your child reading when her or she observes your life? Are you looking for ways to instill a respect for the Word of God into the lives of your children? Remember, you can make a significant spiritual impact on your children.

2 - To Live An Authentic Faith

The second way to make an impact in the lives of your children is by instilling within them an authentic faith. Again in 2 Timothy 1:5: **“For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.”**

Even though Lois and Eunice were believers, Timothy needed to come to a point in which he put his faith in Christ. Faith is not hereditary, it is learned. At the same time, when mothers model genuine faith, an environment is set up where children will be motivated to want that same kind of faith.

The word, “sincere” related to faith means that it was “unhypocritical.” It was real, without any pretense or false façade. Faith had come and taken up residence in his mother’s heart and in his grandmother’s heart - and was now alive in his own life. These two mothers were completely sold out to Christ. They were drop-dead serious about their faith. They were fully devoted and completely committed. And Timothy knew it. No one knows better than a child whether a parent’s faith is genuine.

Notice the chain here: Lois to Eunice to Timothy. We don’t read of a grandfather or a father anywhere in this equation. That’s not to say that a father is not important - he is. What I’m saying is this: a mother can make a significant spiritual impact on her children with or without the help of a father.

Moms, if you want to instill authentic faith in your children then you better take your own faith seriously. If you’re just going through the motions spiritually your kids will eventually see it, and tragically, may do the same thing when they are

older. As you demonstrate your faith consistently by reading the Bible, praying, attending worship, bringing your kids to programs that help them grow spiritually, and by participating in the life and mission of the church, you will send a strong message to your children.

While it isn't in the text, a mother who passes along a faith that is authentic is without a doubt a praying woman. Any home in which faith is passed on from generation to generation has to be a home of prayer. One cannot imagine Lois not praying for Eunice or Eunice not praying for Timothy. We read in Acts 12:12 that the mother of John Mark opened her home for a prayer meeting while Peter was imprisoned. In Acts 1:14, Mary, the mother of Jesus "joined together constantly in prayer" with the disciples. That's the hallmark of a godly mother.

Timothy's family environment was fertile to his faith development. Both his mother and his grandmother held their faith deeply and shared it freely. How fertile is the environment in your family for the reproduction and the nurturing of authentic faith in the lives of your children and grandchildren?

3 - To Serve the Lord.

The third way to impact your children is to instill within them a desire to minister, to serve the Lord. After Paul preached in Lystra, and Timothy was converted, he returned a short while later. Look at the story in Acts 16:1-3: **"Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. ..."**

I see three qualities in Timothy that were no doubt passed down from his mother, and his grandmother:

1. First of all, he was a strong believer. He is referred to as a disciple. As we have seen from our study of the Gospel of Mark, a disciple is a learner and a follower. A disciple denies himself, takes up his cross, and follows Jesus. As we've already established, his mother modeled this type of authentic, no holds-barred kind of faith.
2. Second, he had a good reputation. The believers in the area spoke well of him. People knew him as a man of integrity and as a man of the Word. He was rock solid. Again, this had a lot to do with his mother and grandmother.
3. Third, he was available. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey. As you continue to read the Book of Acts, you'll see that Timothy was eager to serve. He knew it meant leaving home and he knew it meant facing hardship. Friends, the best way to develop this kind of commitment to ministry is to model and encourage it at home.

When Paul stopped in Lystra for this second time, he enlisted Timothy to be his special assistant to replace John Mark. Paul refers to Timothy as his **"beloved son"** in 1 Corinthians 4:17 and in 1 Timothy 1:2, he calls him his **"own son in the faith."** In Philippians 2:20, Paul can't think of anyone like Timothy when he writes: **"I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare."** Paul thought very highly of Timothy and couldn't wait to unleash him for ministry.

Mothers, you can do no better for your children than to instill a love for the Bible, and to live an authentic faith. But these will ultimately lead to instilling within your

children a desire to minister. Our kids are to learn the Bible and grow in their faith so that they can become difference-makers in their world. So they can share their faith with others. So they can minister in the church and in their school. So they can serve those who are hurting. So they can serve as missionaries. So they can identify their spiritual gifts and use them on a regular basis.

We are saved in order to serve. We are to be disciples so that we can disciple others. We are equipped so that we can evangelize. We are sanctified so that we can be sent to a lost and dying world.

My mother set that example for me of serving the Lord.

In her book, *Call to Love*, Linda Riley tells the story of an aspiring missionary. From the time she was a little girl, she had a deep love in her heart for the people of India. She longed to serve them and tell them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead of marrying, she immersed herself in training and deputation. When she landed in India, she felt she was truly home, and simply went to work.

Within a short time of arriving, however, she received a shocking emergency letter. Back in the states, her sister and her brother-in-law had been killed in an automobile accident. The letter contained a plea for her to return home and care for their three orphaned children.

She did so, and relinquished her heart's desire. Instead of sacrificing for India's poor, she instead sacrificed her life-long dream and became a single, working mother to three grieving children.

She loved them tenderly, and they grew to love her. They grew to love her God. They also grew to love her beloved India. Today all three are grown...and are serving with their families as missionaries in India.

Saint - whether you are Jew or Greek, male or female, bond or free, God has given you areas of influence.

He doesn't call you to be fabulous, just faithful.

Summary

Let's see if I can bring all this together. Mothers, you can make a significant spiritual impact in your family with or without the help of a father. You can do that by instilling:

- A Respect for Scripture

- An Authentic Faith

- A Desire for Ministry

Closing

I want to applaud you mothers who take the task seriously of making a spiritual impact in the lives of your children. As Proverbs 31:28 says, **"Her children arise and call her blessed..."** We stand up this morning and call you blessed - thanks for pouring your lives into ours.

Proverbs 31:30 says that, "a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." We praise God for those mothers who worship and adore the Lord and who pass this legacy on to their children.