

Parenting is witnessing * 2 Timothy 1, 3 * Mother's Day

May 12, 2019 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

Well given that it is Mother's Day here, I thought that it would be fun to start off this morning with a little famous mother trivia. I have some famous moms here and I want to see if you can identify who they are.

I'll start off with an easy one – this is Carole. Do you know who she is? Carol Brady. What do you know her from? The Brady Bunch. For bonus points, who was the housekeeper who did her own fair share of parenting in that household? Alice Nelson.

Next famous mom – June Cleaver – the quintessential housewife.

How about this one – Maria von Trapp from the Sound of Music.

Ok, let's fast forward a few years here – Claire Huxtable – where is she from?

What about this one? Her name is Lorelai; where's she from? Gilmore Girls (Parenthood?)

Ok, this next one I'm going to do without the picture because that will give it away – two moms – Betty and Wilma – Flintstones.

One last one – Lois and Eunice. That one's a little bit harder, isn't it? Sounds a bit like Laverne and Shirley but that's not it. They're actually little known believers who are commended for their work as mothers in Paul's second letter to Timothy. Technically, Lois is grandma and Eunice is mom but they both set for us an example of what it means to be a Christian parent. And I am going to talk in terms of parents – because it IS Mother's Day but this applies to fathers and aunts and uncles and fellow church goers just as much as to moms. So let's turn to 2 Timothy to see what Lois and Eunice teach us about parenting. 2 Timothy is back towards the back of your Bible, after 1 Timothy obviously but before Hebrews. We'll start off in chapter 1.

Now in the years that followed Jesus' death and resurrection, the news of salvation in His Name began to spread all over the ancient world. Some of His disciples were particularly good at spreading the Gospel and one of those was Paul. Paul had originally opposed Jesus – he had been a devout and zealous Jew – but when he met Jesus face to face everything changed and Paul became one of Jesus' foremost missionaries.

Paul took a really amazing message to the world – and you can see it encapsulated here in 2nd Timothy. Look at verse 9 –

9 [God] has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

Let's just camp on that for a minute. God has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of who WE are but because of who HE is. Not because of what WE have done but because of what HE did on the Cross. God is so rich in mercy that He choose to save us through the death and resurrection of sin Son so that He could offer us life, entirely by grace. Paul continues

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, (not once He knew how we would act, not after we did things we shouldn't and left good things undone – no – before the beginning of time, God committed to redeeming people -

10 but it has now [that redemption] been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2Ti 1:9-10 NIV).

This is the message that Paul took on the road – Our greatest enemy has been destroyed – Jesus crushed death when He rose to life again. And death no longer has the final word in our lives; Jesus enables to live well and to live forever. All by grace. That's a great message.

And wherever Paul went, it made a big splash. Sometimes, hundreds of people believed at one time. Sometimes, Paul got chased out of town but wherever he went, he faithfully shared the Good News with anyone who would listen.

Now when Paul travelled through what we know today as Turkey, he stopped in a place called Lystra, and in Lystra he met a charming little family – Lois and Eunice and Timothy. Lois was the grandma, Eunice the mama, and Timothy was the son. Now there's good reason to believe that Timothy's father had already died, but we know for sure that Timothy's father was a gentile. According to Acts 16, he was a Greek man who followed pagan customs, he wanted nothing to do with YHWH and in fact would not allow his son to be circumcised as a member of the covenant community. Lois and Eunice on the other hand were faithful Jewish people. They knew the OT promises; they knew that God was going to send a redeemer; and when they heard about Jesus, they realized that HE was the One that God had sent, and they gave their lives to following Him. Paul would later observe that in Lois and Eunice he saw 'a sincere faith.'

But what about Timothy? His dad didn't want anything to do with YHWH and boys often follow in the father's footsteps. Would he go off and ignore the Gospel? Nope. Timothy too came to faith and he actually joined Paul on missionary journeys to spread the news about Jesus throughout the world. And eventually, Paul sent him off to do ministry in his own right but kept in contact with him through his letters.

And that's what 2nd Timothy is – the second of two letters that remain from Paul to Timothy. And look at how he starts his letter: Chapter 1, verse 5 -

5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

That's a really neat testimony for this family. Paul can trace a line of faith that goes grandma, then mom, then son – all of them have a sincere faith, a genuine belief in the Lord Jesus.

Now how did that happen? There was a dad there who ignored Jewish customs; Timothy could very well have wandered off and turned his back on God. But he didn't. Why?

I'll answer that, but I want to be careful here because there IS a lot at play. Whenever you're talking about children and faith, there is a degree of free will, a degree of self-determination, where you could do everything right and a child could choose to go astray and that's on them, not you. Don't feel like I'm

putting pressure on you to say that unless your kid turns out a missionary, you've really failed them. I'm not saying that. The prodigal son is not the father's fault.

But listen, our children will make their own decisions and those decisions may not always be what we think best, but we can for sure give them a firm moral foundation and teach them right from wrong, so that when they DO make those decisions, they're making them from a wise place. That's true for life and I think that's true for faith too and Lois and Eunice show us a couple of ways to point our kids in the right direction. And remember, I'm not just talking about Ben and Anna and Ethan and Hannah and Emma and Collins; I'm talking about your grown kids too. Even if they're fifty or sixty, they're still your kids and Lois and Eunice can still show us how to parent wisely.

So what do they show us?

Lois and Eunice show us the importance of teaching the word and living it out. Lois and Eunice started Timothy on the road to sincere faith by teaching the Word and living it out and I think that we can benefit by following their example.

Let me show you why I say that and to do that, we're going to flip ahead to chapter 3, because Paul there alludes to Timothy's upbringing and Lois and Eunice's parenting. 2 Timothy, chapter 3 and look at verse 14 –

Paul is saying look Timothy – the world will go from bad to worse, but you, stand firm on the foundation that your mom and grandma laid for you. Verse 14 –

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,
15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul highlights two very important parts of Lois and Eunice's parenting – they taught the word and they lived it out.

1. They taught the Word. Even as a child, Timothy learned the Scriptures from his mother and grandma. They told him all about the covenant God made with Abraham, the miraculous deliverance at the Exodus, how the lamb died to set them free, how God promised David an eternal kingdom, how God was forever faithful to His people; they laid a foundation so that when he heard about Jesus, Timothy could see that Jesus was the Saviour God had promised and trust in Him for himself.

It's a little different for us because we're not moving from Jewish faith to faith in Jesus, but we can still have an impact on our kids by sharing the Bible with them. I'll never forget my grandma Gladstone teaching me about Daniel's colleagues – Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego – even if it was just to get me to go to sleep, because she called them 'Shadrach, Meschach and to-bed-we-go.' My grandma was my Sunday school teacher for awhile; they weren't teaching me seminary classes, but they were teaching me to know the Bible, and to value the Bible, so that when I was old enough, I could make my own decision to trust it as God's Word.

So we can nurture real faith by teaching the Word, but even more importantly, I think, (2) we can nurture real faith by living it out.

That's that 'you know those from whom you learned it' part.

Paul is saying to Timothy – there will come a time when people around you will scoff at the idea of a sovereign God who intervenes to help His people – but listen – remember the people who taught you about that sovereign God. Did they freak out when things went bad? Did they crumble when they didn't get their way? No – Lois and Eunice (apparently) lived in a way that was consistent with what they taught. They didn't just say – 'The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want – what a nice idea' – they lived with confidence and trust in the Lord who WAS their shepherd, who led them safely through dark places, who provided all that they needed.

Paul points to grandma, Paul points to mom, frankly, he points to himself too as a spiritual father – and sometimes spiritual parents are just as important as biological ones– he points to all these people that he knows and he says 'Timothy, keep the faith, because you've seen it at work in our lives and it is for real.'

That's why it's so important for us as parents to bear witness to the Gospel in our living, so that our children understand that the Bible is not just 'some nice words' but the very Word of God who cares for us and cherishes us. He didn't wait to see if we would love Him back; from the foundation of the world, God chose to lavish His redeeming love on us; our kids need to see that reflected in our lives and in our parenting.

The phrase 'do as I say, not as I do' should never be a part of a Christian's vocabulary; it should always be 'do as I say, 'cause I do it too,' as I follow Jesus.

It was fascinating to me to look at the Greek word behind that phrase 'sincere faith.' It's literally ἀνυποκρίτου (2Ti 1:5 BYZ). Anhypocritou – do you see a word in there that you recognize? Anhypocrite. Like, not a hypocrite. Paul is saying – Timothy, Lois, Eunice – your sincere faith in an un-hypocritical faith – you act in light of your beliefs; your life is consistent with what you teach and that is really important.

As I thought about it this week, I got to asking myself, is my parenting consistent with my belief that God loved me not because I deserved it but because He is merciful? Sometimes as parents we fly off the hook a little and start to think 'why should I do anything nice for you?;' I think from time to time we need to pause and say 'are we showing unmerited love to our kids?' because that's what God showed to us. Absolutely this is tricky, because part of parenting is discipline, but even that I think we need to do in a way that is not malicious but gracious.

And I got to thinking too – many of you are living with health issues and age related stuff – you can have a tremendous impact on your children by showing sincere faith in the face of those difficulties. A lot of people whine and complain about their problems and act as if they're alone in the world – not so with you. You have a loving Saviour who is caring for you, who is in His time preparing an eternal home for you and He is working for good in the here and now. Let that shine for all to see. And you know what? It might not be flashy. It might not be impressive. But simple faith and confidence that God is at work is all it takes to show that God is good. I think of Sharon, of Jean, of Pauline; their actions showed me that God was trustworthy, and that deepened my trust in God even more.

We can nurture sincere faith by teaching the Word and living it out.

Let me close with this. Parenting IS witnessing. For better or for worse, we are teaching our kids how the world works. We're defining reality for them. Don't believe me? Ok, what's this? A spatula or a flipper? What's better, coke or pepsi? Which way do you hang TP? Where'd you learn that? Your parents. And it's not like they sat you down and said 'now this is called a flipper' and 'coke is better than pepsi.' But they showed by their words and actions that this is a spatula and this is a flipper.

So here's the question – what are your words and actions teaching your kids about Jesus? That He is Lord? Or that He doesn't matter much? That He is the central organizing figure in your life, or that He is someone you stuff in around the edges when you have time. Because for better or for worse, your kids will pick that up from you.

And the best thing that we can do as we parent is to point our kids to the best Father of all, just as Lois and Eunice did.

We can nurture sincere faith by teaching the Word and living it out.

BENEDICTION

17. 2 Th. 2:16-17 - Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.