

MOTHERS DAY 2012

Text: II Timothy 1:3-7 (Pew Bible pg.1178)

Title: "Passing the Faith to Your Child"

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles with me to II Timothy 1. One of the most inspiring men in the NT is a guy by the name of Timothy. Two letters from the great Apostle Paul to Timothy are found in our NT. In addition to that Timothy is mentioned numerous times in Acts, as well as in ten other books in the NT. He's one of Paul's missionary teammates and later the pastor of the important church in Ephesus. On this Mother's Day you wouldn't be surprised to know that Timothy's illustrious life of faith began with the influence of his mother and grandmother. Timothy's name meant "honoring God" and we learn in these verses how to pass the faith along to children who will grow up honoring God. We read about it in II Timothy 1:3-7. Read text.

INTERVIEW - As we talk today about passing the faith to children I wanted you to hear a couple of women in our church describe how their mom passed the faith to them. Jan Lee and Jennifer Hughens are sisters and very involved in the life of our church. Jan is the wife of our worship leader John Lee. Jennifer is the wife of one of our deacons Kennon Hughens. Jan and Jennifer, and their other sister Micky have godly parents, Mike and Darnell Sims, who are also members of our church. Jan and Jennifer, your parents, and particularly your mother, played a big role in your spiritual development.

- Jan, personally, what did your mother do that most affected your faith as a child and a young person?
- Jennifer, how did your mother set a spiritual tone in your home that pointed you toward Christ?

Timothy was also blessed to have a mother and a grandmother who were used by God to sow the seeds of faith into the soil of Timothy's infancy.

2 Timothy 1:5 - 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.

Notice that Timothy had a "sincere faith" ... a real, genuine, authentic life of faith. Where did it come from? It came from his family, particularly two amazing women ... his mother and his grandmother.

How is the faith passed to children? That is primarily the responsibility of families. Don't just leave it to the church. We want to come alongside parents and grandparents to help them pass the faith to their children. Children need someone to...

1. EXPLAIN BIBLICAL FAITH TO THEM (v.5).

2 Timothy 1:5 - 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.

Timothy's faith "first lived in" his mother and grandmother. It dwelled in and resided in these women. It was just a surface faith or a faith in mere appearances ... it "lived" or "dwelled" in these two godly women in his life. Their faith was strong like a tsunami wave that rolled through their lives and kept rolling into the generations that followed.

Question: How did Tim's grandmother and mother come to know the Lord? We know from reading other parts of the NT that Timothy's family was from a town called Lystra, located in modern-day Turkey. We know from the Acts 16 that the Apostle Paul came through Lystra on his second missionary journey.

Acts 16:1 - He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek.

So at this point Timothy is a "disciple," a follower of Jesus Christ and his mother was a Jewish woman who had also become a believer. In I Timothy 1:2 Paul calls Timothy his "true son in the faith." We don't know for sure, but Paul may have been instrumental in leading Timothy's mother and grandmother, perhaps even Timothy himself, to Christ on a previous visit. But it is clear from reading II Timothy 1:5 that the first primary spiritual influences in Timothy's life were his mother and grandmother. We have no indication that Timothy's dad was ever a believer.

And specifically how did they go about passing the faith to their son? We're told later in II Timothy 3. Turn there for a moment.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 - But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

It says "from infancy" he knew the holy Scriptures. That means from the very earliest days of his childhood someone, probably his mother and grandmother explained biblical faith to Timothy. This mother being Jewish she would have schooled Timothy in the sacred writings which we have today as the OT.

And the OT points to Jesus Christ. So this faith that we pass along to our children is then the portal of salvation which comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

Note: It's important that Jesus be the center of this biblical instruction. We must introduce them to Jesus. Teach them to trust Jesus. Teach them to live for Jesus. Teach them to cherish and treasure Jesus.

If we are to develop into the people God intends for us to be we need someone to explain to us the biblical foundations of faith. We need someone to teach us the word of God that is able to make us wise unto salvation. Parents are the "first responders" in this in the life of a child.

Parents, you may be at a loss as to how to do this. It's really pretty simple. In fact, a good pattern to follow in this is found in Deuteronomy 6.

Deuteronomy 6:5 - Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:6 - These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

Deuteronomy 6:7 - Impress them on 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.

Deuteronomy 6:8 - Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

Deuteronomy 6:9 - Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Mom and dad, if your kids are to have a strong, biblical faith, it needs to live first in you. Now having said that, it underscores how important it is that the church come alongside parents in this daunting task. This underscores the importance of our preschool and children's ministry. I want to encourage you to seriously pray about volunteering to help out in Sunday Morning Bible Study for kids, or for Vacation Bible School, coming up in a little over a month.

So one of the basic things that has to happen, if we are to pass the faith along to children, is to explain biblical faith to them. Teach them the Word of God that is able to make them wise unto salvation which is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Next, they need someone to...

2. EXPLORE GOD'S CALLING WITH THEM (v.6).

When Paul came to Lystra he found Timothy who is called a "disciple" ... a follower of Jesus Christ. It wasn't just that his mother and grandmother made sure that He heard the Gospel and was saved so he could go to heaven. Something happened in the formative years of his life that caused him to live a particular life on his way to heaven.

2 Timothy 1:6 - For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

To this point his mother and grandmother were his primary spiritual influences in his life. They put in place the foundation of faith in Timothy's life, upon which everything else would be built, including his calling from God. After Timothy's mother and grandmother invested in his spiritual development, after their faith had taken root in his life, they laid the foundation for Timothy to explore the calling of God upon his life. It's at this point that God brings another influence into Timothy's life ... the Apostle Paul who spends hours with Timothy mentoring him.

Now what is this "gift of God"? It's not his salvation, though salvation is certainly a gift from God. The word here is *charisma* and it means a "gift of grace." Specifically it refers to a particular calling

that had been placed by God upon Timothy through the grace of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Young people need older people to challenge them to fan into flame the gifts and the calling of God upon their lives. I know from experience that those gifts and that calling are like an ember in a bed of hot coals. The heat was there, but not the flame. God brought more mature people into my life along the way to challenge me to fan my gift into a flame to where it was visible and active.

Again, Timothy's mother and grandmother, and the other more mature believers that God put in his life, didn't let him settle for just "being a Christian." They challenged him and helped him to explore and embrace the calling of God upon his life for service in the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

EXAMPLE: I think about Mary, the mother of Jesus, who saw the activity of God in His life and "treasured these things in her heart." She was prayerfully watching what God was doing and joining God in shaping that life for a lifetime of service to God.

So to pass the faith to children they need someone to explain biblical faith to them. They need someone to help them explore their spiritual giftedness. And they need someone to...

3. ENCOURAGE HOLY CHARACTER IN THEM (v.7).

Now there's some indication from reading these two letters from Paul to Timothy that Paul had spotted a particular weakness in Timothy's life that he wanted to work on. We get a hint of it in ...

2 Timothy 1:7 - For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Did Timothy have a fearful side to him? Did Timothy need encouragement to step up courageously to live the calling of God upon his life? It certainly seems that is the case. Timothy was presumably a timid young man by temperament ... naturally shy. He may have had the tendency to shrink back from difficult tasks. He needed encouragement.

I observe today that many children are not "raised." They are simply allowed to grow up. But who knows what will happen if they are not given the right direction and the proper correction.

ILLUSTRATION – I was looking at a friend's yard recently and I noticed that they had planted a young tree. As the tree began to grow, it naturally leaned to one side. So my friend drove a stake in the ground and tied the tree to that stake, pulling it upright so it would grow straight and tall. That's a great image of the task of passing the faith to our kids.

Obviously this requires parents and others who are interested and involved in the spiritual development of the child to be ...

- spiritually alive
- spiritually alert
- spiritually active

We all need someone who can model for us, and encourage us in the development of holy character. Next to pass the faith to a child they need someone to...

4. ENTRUST THE FUTURE TO THEM (2 Timothy 2:2).

When we explain biblical faith to them, and help them explore their spiritual giftedness, and when we encourage the development of holy character in them, then we need to entrust them with the future.

2 Timothy 2:2 - And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

In other words, we must be unleashing on the world a new set of leaders. We must pass the baton to our young people. They are the future. We must let them begin to influence the future.

CONCLUSION

ILLUSTRATION – Moms, if you want some real inspiration at this point, go read a biography of Susannah Wesley, the mother of great preachers and theologians John and Charles Wesley, *and 17 other children!* She grew up with a strong faith herself, reading the great writings of the Puritans. She taught her children the basic disciplines of a godly life and helped them come to faith in Christ. But her spiritual influenced pressed into John and Charles Wesley even when they were part of the great spiritual awakening that happened in the 1700s in England that gave rise to what was known as Methodism.

Later in life Susannah, now a widow, came to live in one of the rooms in John Wesley's headquarters in London. Throughout her life she suffered physically in much pain, but she always made light of it. On July 30, 1742 Susannah was on her death bed, with most of her remaining children around her. One of her daughters, Anne, wrote in a letter about her mother's great peace and calm in the face of death. Susannah's last request of her children was this: "Children as soon as I am released sing a psalm of praise to God."

Amazing! Susannah was coaching her children in the faith ... passing the faith to her children ... even with her dying breath.