

PASSING IT ON

Mother's Day 2018 – 1 Timothy 1

A mother mouse and a baby mouse are walking along when suddenly a cat attacks them. The mother mouse shouts “BARK!” and the cat runs away. “See?” the mother mouse says to her baby. “Now do you see why it's important to learn a foreign language?”

Daughter: Mom, what's it like to have the greatest daughter in the world?

Mom: I don't know dear, you'd have to ask Grandma.

Today, being Mother's Day, I would like to have a conversation with you about the role of Christian parents in blessing their children. To do so, I'd like to travel to the book of 1 Timothy and learn a few things about two biblical moms. I read to you from 1 Timothy chapter 1:5. Paul writes:

⁵I 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. ⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (1 Timothy 1)

Did you catch it? What were the names of the two women in our text.

(Lois, Eunice)

Yes. He said: “*⁵I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice.*” The significance of these two women is made clear in the text. One of them is Timothy's mother. Her name **Eunice**. The grandmother is **Lois**.

Now please notice what it says: “I am reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now lives in you.

Do you notice the terminology? Passed down from one to the next. It sounds a little like a relay race on a track, where each person in the race has to take that little baton and run it to the next person, until the final runner crosses the finish line. Or like Green Bay Packer season tickets. People who own them don't just give them up to any buyer. The waiting list for those things is thousands. When they can't use them any longer either because they're too old or they're no longer alive, they pass them on to someone else in the family.

Now tell me again, what is it that gets passed on in our text?

(faith)

That's right. Faith. First Lois was a Christian, and then Eunice, (either that or the two women came to believe at the same time) and now Timothy. But, you know, you can't pass on faith like you can pass on Green Bay Packer tickets, can you? Faith is not property. Neither can you pass on faith like you pass down traits -- like the good looks and high intelligence that my children got -- from Amy. So how do you pass on faith? What do you think?

Let's face it. As a parent or grandparent, uncle, aunt, or brother or sister, you cannot force someone to believe. But you CAN share the truth and value of what you believe through your actions and your words.

Now, I am well-aware that only the Holy Spirit can create faith. But how many of you think it was the strong influence of your parents that assisted you in getting connected to the God of the Universe?

(hands raised)

How many of you would say that a grandparent had a lot of influence in you being a part of the church?

(hands raised)

Lois and Eunice had come to know Jesus, most likely, during the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Lystra. They were Jews, and when they heard these two sharing about Jesus' crucifixion for sins he didn't commit and His glorious resurrection from the dead, they were convinced that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. Their husbands may not have been convinced, and, in fact, Timothy's father appears to have denied him the Jewish rite of circumcision. It may even have been possible that members of Lois and Eunice's family were some of the ones that cast stones at Paul and Barnabas and chased them out of the city.

But Lois and Eunice believe that Jesus died for them -- and they also recognize that young Timothy, who is entrusted to their care, needs to know the truth. And so they make sure 1) that they tell Him about Jesus 2) that they show him, by example, that Jesus is important to them, 3) that they immerse him with others in learning the faith -- namely, in the church that begins in Lystra and finally 4) that they pray for him.

Now let's think about that for us, as people who are entrusted with children, with grandchildren, with nephews, nieces, and the like. What can we do to be like Lois and Eunice?

Let's start with the obvious -- or at least it seems obvious. Make sure they know why you're a Christian. But is it really so obvious. Have you ever bothered to tell them what Jesus means to you -- why He's important to you? Cause it's not just about going to church. It's about forgiveness of sins, joy and peace in the midst of trials, strength in weakness, and eternal life.

I'll be honest with you. I think I had great parents. But we didn't actually talk about faith that much. We just went to church. And I remember how gripping it was for me, about a year before my dad died, as he was struggling with cancer, that he took a walk with me and shared just how much Jesus meant to him.

My mother, as you know, struggled with Alzheimers. She didn't get to say much to me about faith just before she died, though she had as I was growing up. But in a statement attached to her will, she chose to add a faith statement -- to make sure that all of her children knew that Jesus was her Savior and that we would share eternity if we continued to trust in Him.

So...what's the first point? What's the first way we act like Lois and Eunice?

(telling what Jesus means to us)

2) Then there's the second one. Lois and Eunice showed by example that Jesus was important to them. How are you showing it to the people you want to impact?

There's an old line about husbands and wives. It says this, "the best thing a dad can do to help the success of his childrens marriages is to love their mom." The same is true of faith. The best thing you can do to help your son or granddaughter or whoever connect with the Lord of the Universe, is to show them that you do yourself.

Jeanette was a woman from Willowbrook place. She died a few years ago, and I presided at her funeral. After the funeral, Jeanette's nephew said to me that in every card she sent him she always included a Bible verse. He said it was incredibly meaningful to him -- in fact he credits his own faith, in many ways, to those cards.

I always enjoy the uplifting cards I get from Judie Schinker or Susie Cadwallader.

My parents sure showed it to us in the way they prioritized worship -- the way they volunteered for things at the church, their regular and sacrificial gifts. They showed it by being IN the Word of God and encouraging us to be IN the Word of God.

Every night, before we went to bed, my mom read from this book – Egermeiers Bible Story book. We sure enjoyed that time with our mom and savored the stories in the book.

All of my siblings are church attenders. It has a lot to do with the example we were shown.

So... What's the second point? What's the second way we act like Lois and Eunice?

(show our faith by example – especially being IN the Word)

3) The third thing Lois and Eunice did was to immerse Timothy in the faith community -- they encouraged him to get active there, and he soon grew to be a leader.

Gotta tell you, I LOVE it when I see parents nudging their kids to do things at church -- to help out at a rummage sale, to serve food at the gathering, to go to youth group activities, to be involved in a workday, to usher. These are the ways that they get intertwined with other people of faith. And soon, they feel close to these people and find support and strength there.

So, what's the third way we encourage faith?

(immerse and encourage people to be involved in the faith community.)

4) Finally, number four. Lois and Eunice, I'm sure, were women of prayer. It doesn't actually say it in the text, but given Paul's later instructions it seems a good assumption that these women remembered Timothy every day in their petitions to God.

The famous church father, St. Augustine, didn't come to be a Christian till later in life. Prior to his conversion, he admits to having quite an untamed, sinful spirit. Augustine credits his mother's fervent and regular prayers as the turning point from his unbelief to becoming a Christian. He says that she prayed "even when all hope seemed lost."

We Christians can do a lot of talking about prayer. The question is, do we really do it? God promises to hear and answer our prayers. We can count on Him to respond.

Finally... the fourth this Lois and Eunice did was....

(pray)

Well, my friends, a lot more could be said, but its time to wrap up. But before we do I want to say one more thing.

It is the Holy Spirit who eventually leads a person to faith, not us. So don't grow weary. You serve a God who loved us enough to put it all on the line for us -- who paid the price of our freedom with everything He had. When it comes to your loved ones you can be sure that His passion is as tireless as yours.

So, yes, you are His instrument. Yes, you have the calling to share His love. But He is also working tirelessly, every day, with the same goal as You. To share eternity with the one you love.

God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.