

FAITH THAT LIVES ON

2 Timothy 1:5, “I remember your genuine (sincere) faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.”

The AMP says, “I am calling up memories of your sincere and unqualified faith (the leaning of your entire personality in Christ, and absolute trust and confidence in His power, wisdom, and goodness). A faith that first lived permanently in the heart of your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now, I am fully persuaded, dwells in you also.”

Notice, Timothy’s unique faith came to him through his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. The Apostle Paul’s preaching may have been used by God to bring Timothy to actual conversion, but behind his preaching were many years of godly influence by Timothy’s grandmother and mother. In **2 Timothy 3:14-17**, we also learn that the **sincere faith** of these women was combined with ‘*instruction in godliness*’ from early on. Their example, and the conspicuous results in Timothy’s life, show us that ...

Through faith in God, and by honoring His Word, godly mothers have great influence - as they train their children. As Paul thought fondly of Timothy and his **sincere faith**, he was reminded that such faith also dwelt first in Timothy’s grandmother, Lois, and in his mother, Eunice.

We don’t know when these women had come to faith in Christ. Even though they had Greek names, at least Eunice was a Jewish believer (**Acts 16:1**). Perhaps Lois had been converted in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and had returned to tell her daughter. Or, perhaps both women were devout Jews who responded to Paul’s preaching when he visited Lystra, their home city. But the implication is that their **faith** pre-dated that of Timothy.

Timothy’s father was apparently a Greek unbeliever (**Acts 16:1**). We have no clue as to why a godly woman of faith like Eunice would marry a pagan man. The Old Testament is very clear that Jews should not marry outside the faith. Perhaps Eunice, though raised by Lois in a faithful Jewish home, went through a time of rebellion, during which she got married, but later came to faith in Jesus as the Christ. We can only speculate. We do know that the Bible clearly forbids a believer from marrying an unbeliever. But Eunice’s story is in the Bible, and therefore, it can give hope to women in mixed-faith marriages.

If her son, Timothy, could grow up to follow the Lord as he did, then God can do the same for your children, even if your husband is not a believer. While God intends for the father to take the lead in the spiritual training of the

children, the mother can have a great influence even in situations where the father is passive or hostile to God. But the prime quality which such a woman needs is **sincere faith**.

The word “sincere” means, literally, “not hypocritical.” It is possible to have a hypocritical, not genuine form of faith. Phony faith is the mask that is put on in front of church members or out in public, but it’s set aside in the home. The parents may be fighting as they drive to church, but when they drive into the parking lot, they act as if everything is just great. Kids recognise that kind of phoniness a mile away.

Having a **sincere faith** doesn’t imply perfection. But it does imply reality with God. Such faith dwelt in these women; it was in them at home and outside the home - a comfortable, everyday sort of thing. Sincere faith means that you walk in reality with Christ each day, spending time in His Word and in prayer. It means that you measure yourself against Scripture, and when you fall out with a family member, you ask their forgiveness first and then seek to work on your own weak areas.

It means that you develop godly character qualities and attitudes of submission, thankfulness, and joy in the Lord. Your kids will realize that, while parents aren’t perfect, they do walk with God. Not only are godly parents men and women of **sincere faith**, but also they seek to “pass on” that faith to their children. Hypocritical faith can’t be handed down the generational line. If you’re insincere (a phony), your kids won’t want anything to do with your version of Christianity. But genuine **sincere faith** is contagious. Timothy’s faith could be traced back through his mother to his grandmother. He could see Jesus in them both, and it attracted him to the Lord (but through them). How can you be sure of “passing on” your faith to your children? One of the main ways is by training them in God’s Word. **Godly mums and dads honor God’s Word and train their children in it (3:14-17)**. In verse 14, “whom” is plural, pointing to Lois and Eunice, as well as to the Apostle Paul. The phrase, “*knowing from whom you have learned them*” points to the reality of God’s Word in all three people (Paul, Lois and Eunice) - those who had positively influenced Timothy.

The main way our children will grow up to love and serve God is through His Word. The best thing you can do for your kids is to instill in them from an early age the importance of reading, studying, memorizing, and obeying God’s Word. So how do you do it?

(a) A parent must grow in his or her own love for God’s Word. You cannot impart what you do not possess. If your children seldom see you seeking God through His Word, they won’t desire it for themselves. If they don’t see you changing through obedience to the Word, they won’t be motivated be

obedient to God and change themselves. If the TV is on every night, and the Bible is seldom discussed as a family, guess what the kids will assume is the most important? Our children should be able to see evidence that we love God's Word.

(b) A godly parent will use God's Word to lead his or her children to saving faith in Christ. "... from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (3:15). Salvation is built on the **knowledge** of the truth.

Children need to know more than "*Jesus wants to be your friend, so you need to invite Him into your heart.*" They need to know what God's Word reveals about the condition of their own hearts (and attitudes) - that they can be rebellious and disobedient toward God. They need to know what Christ did on the cross, and truly understand that God forgives sin because of His loving kindness, apart from good works, as this is grace.

In volume one of C. H. Spurgeon's *Autobiography* (Banner of Truth). He describes the mountain of guilt he was under from age ten until he was converted at 15. He was so graphic and consumed with his own sinfulness that I'm sure, had he lived today, we would swiftly take him to a psychologist! In an earlier chapter, Spurgeon tells how every Sunday evening, his mother would stay home with the children, read and explain the Scriptures to them, and plead with them to think about the state of their souls and to seek the Lord.

One time he remembers her praying, "*Now, Lord, if my children go on in their rebelliousness, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them if they lay not hold of Christ.*" Spurgeon says, "*That realisation, the thought of my mother bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience, and stirred my heart.*"

Most of the time, Spurgeon's father was away from home preaching. Once, as he was on his way to another service, he feared that he was neglecting his own family while caring for the souls of others. Feeling convicted, he turned back and went home. But when he came into the house, everything was quiet, except for the voice of his wife behind their bedroom door. He listened and heard her pleading earnestly in prayer for the salvation of all her children, and especially for her strong willed first-born, Charles. His father then became aware that he had a wife who was caring so faithfully for the spiritual interests of their children, that he could go about the Lord's business. So, he left again for his preaching engagement without disturbing her. Note, a crucial task for godly mothers is to pray for the ongoing salvation of her children.

(c) A godly parent will train his or her children in how to live by God's Word. God's Word is mighty to save, but also is sufficient for all of life and godliness

(**2 Pet. 1:3, 4**). It is profitable for teaching us the ways of God - how God wants us to live (**2 Timothy 3:16**). It reveals the very thoughts and intentions of the heart (**Hebrews 4:12**). It corrects us by showing us how to get right with God and with others. It trains us in righteousness, showing us how to keep on the path of obedience and blessing.

Godly mothers (especially) **have great influence on their children**. Who knows what lifelong influence Lois and Eunice had on young Timothy? Sure, he was strengthened greatly through his relationship with Paul. But the foundation was laid by his godly mother and grandmother. It is not too much to argue that world history is shaped in the home through godly mothers. Spurgeon says, *“Never could it be possible for any man to estimate what he owes to a godly mother.”*

President Theodore Roosevelt said, *“When all is said, it is the mother, and the mother only, who is a better citizen than the soldier who fights for his country. The successful mother, the mother who does her part in rearing and training aright the boys and girls who are to be the men and women of the next generation, is of greater use to the community, and occupies, if she only would realize it, a more honorable as well as more important position than any man in it. The mother is the one supreme asset of the national life. She is more important, by far, than the successful statesman, or businessman, or artist, or scientist”* (in Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations by Paul Tan).

This statement does not belittle the crucial role godly fathers must play in the family. But it should encourage godly mothers in the crucial role they play.

Conclusion - God can use you as He used Lois and Eunice, a grandmother and mother, in Timothy’s life. Walk with God in sincere faith, and then use His Word to lead your children and grandchildren into the same sincere faith. Remembering always to train them in God’s ways and not the ways of modern society.

Who knows, you could be mighty in influencing our nation and even world history for Jesus’ sake.