



May 8, 2011 - 2 Timothy 1:1-7

## **A Faith Full Mom** **Pastor Larry Adams**

If you have your Bibles, I would like you to turn with me, if you would, to 2 Timothy Chapter 1. We're going to be looking today at a passage where Paul shows his deep appreciation for two ladies who raised up what he called his "son in the faith." You know, Mother's Day is a day to be reminded that not everything is easy as a mom. It's a blessing, but it's not all easy.

I was reading about this wife of an army colonel who had made an all night flight to meet her husband at his latest military assignment in Germany. She arrived weary at Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany with her 9 children, all under the age 11. Collecting their many suitcases, the ten of them entered the cramped Customs area. A young Customs official watched them in disbelief. "Ma'am," he said, "Do all these children and all this luggage belong to you?"

"Yes, sir," she said with a sigh. "They're all mine."

The Customs agent began his interrogation, "Ma'am, do you have any weapons, contraband, or illegal drugs in your possessions?"

"Sir," she said calmly, "if I had any of those things, I'd have used them by now." [laughter] And it said she was allowed to pass through German customs without opening a single suitcase! [laughter] Only a mom could understand that, thank you.

2 Timothy. To our knowledge, Paul had no biological children of his own, but he had many sons in the faith. One of those was a young man named Timothy, a young man who went on to be one of the great leaders in the New Testament church, a leader at the church of Ephesus, suffered for his faith, was a co-prisoner with Paul on a number of occasions, a man who went on to be an inspiration to thousands. Paul was especially appreciative because Timothy had a sincere faith and had learned that sincere faith from his grandmother and from his mother, two ladies that had made a difference. In this letter, which many believe to be the last letter Paul ever wrote from a prison cell nearing the end of his own life. He writes to encourage his young son in the faith and reminds him of the difference a mother can make:

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

<sup>2</sup> To Timothy, my dear son:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>3</sup> I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. <sup>4</sup> Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For the God did not give us the spirit of timidity but the spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. <sup>8</sup>

Let's pray together.

*Love, power, and self-discipline, things that are woefully missing in many lives today. Things that are often learned in the context of family, families that are often shaped by the men and women who lead them. I want to thank you today for Timothy's life. I want to thank you for his grandmother and mother who made such a difference. In a less than ideal home, they were ladies who imparted to their son the reality of a life with Christ. And I pray today you will help encourage all the ladies who are here, regardless of their situation, to know that they too are making a difference as they invest in the lives of children. And I thank you for this time together. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

In the summer Olympics in Athens in 2004 the women's 4 x 100 relay team was anticipated to win the gold medal. The team featured Marion Jones, a sprinter who had won four gold medals in the prior Olympics in Sydney. The American team was already off to a strong start when Jones took the baton for the second leg of the race. She gained ground as she ran her 100 meters and approached Lauryn Williams, a young speedster who would run the third leg. Any of you who remember watching the 2004 Olympics, and particularly this race where they were so heavily favored, will probably never forget what happened next. Williams began running as Jones drew near, but when she reached back to receive the baton they couldn't complete the handoff. Once, twice, three times Jones thrust the baton forward but each time it missed Williams' hand. She couldn't seem to wrap her fingers around it. Finally, on the fourth try, they made the connection but by that time they had crossed out of the 20 yard exchange zone and were disqualified. Everyone knew they were the fastest team on the track. The night before, they had the fastest qualifying time. But when they couldn't complete the handoff, the race was over.

Bryan Wilkerson, in an article called "Generation to Generation," was commenting on that disappointment and disqualification in the 2004 Olympics because the handoff couldn't be made. And when he was done he shared this insight:

As important as it is for the previous generation to set the pace by living authentically, at a certain point the handoff must be made in which the next generation receives the baton of faith and begins to run with it. That handoff isn't as easy as it looks. It isn't automatic. It's the result of thousands and thousands of practice runs. Practice runs that are viewed by our children who watch us live out our faith day after day in a genuineness that they can trust and take hold of. And whether that faith is active and visible for them to see or whether that faith is denied and hidden, our kids will often take hold of whatever faith they see.

From God's perspective, the handoff of faith is the most important handoff we will ever make. And as we'll see, it's a handoff that two women named Lois and Eunice had made very well.

This is Mother's Day, a day set apart to honor the God-given role of motherhood and the women who give their lives to that calling. This is the best day of the year for some ladies. It is the worst day of the year for others. For some it is time to be queen for the day, breakfast in bed, gifts, being with your family, chauffeured-driven rides to the restaurant of your choice. It's a day to be savored. For others it is a day of sorrow. It is a day to be reminded that they can't stand in church with the other ladies because of a motherhood denied. A time to remember the kids who may be estranged, or maybe it's the first Mother's Day without mom. The emotions on a day like this are all over the map. But more than anything else, it's a day to remember that God establishes motherhood, and he cares about each of our situations. God sees the importance of mothers in making disciples and in strengthening society by strengthening families.

Being a mom is not easy. It is a blessing, but it requires sacrifice. It's not so much that you give up so much of yourself, it's that moms invest so much of themselves into the lives of their children for their good and for God's glory. So much so at times it may make you feel like you have nothing left. You do it in a world that often doesn't affirm your efforts, doesn't acknowledge the value of what you contribute which can leave many, many women feeling less than fulfilled. Seeming how somehow they've made a mistake because they've invested so much in the lives of their kids and then you pick up the papers, as I did this week, and you read a headline that encourages us to just be happy. In fact it said, "Come on, Mom, Be Happy." Written by Sue McAllister in the *Contra Costa Times*, it starts like this, "Sometimes the joys of parenthood can be rudely knocked aside by the sharp elbows of drudgery, anxiety, and resentment that often accompany caring for children."

UC Berkley Sociologist, Christine Carter, and author of the book *Raising Happiness* wrote, "In the last couple of years, parents have really been bombarded with statistics about how unhappy they are." "Including from a study that showed women today are less happy than their mother's were," she says, "another showed that childless couples were happier than those with offspring, a change in the trend in American life. More and more," she said, "emphasis is being placed on our kid's achievement at younger and younger ages, and this is not a path to happiness for the parents or the kids," she said.

Do you hear it? Implied in these messages, in these surveys, and a proliferation of books that you can get today about how mom's ought to be happy, we are told that the key to happiness, and therefore the key to success, is achievement - achievement for your kids. A mom's role is to help a child to achieve, but the question ought to be, "To achieve what?" Achieve wealth? Fame? Abilities? Power? Notoriety? Position? An easy life? What are our kids supposed to achieve? If the key to happiness supposedly is that our kids achieve and make something of their lives, then what is it they are supposed to achieve?

Jesus said, "What would it profit a man if he were to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his soul?" Achievements for your kids is not the goal of motherhood. Mothers are to help their children become, to become more of the person God wants them to be. And of all the things you can invest in your child, of all the things you can give, teach, or leave your children, the most important is to invest in them a love for and a faith in Jesus that is real. Be those children biological, adopted, or simply like Timothy a spiritual child of who is mentored. The scripture teaches very clearly that there is no greater joy than to see that our children are walking with Jesus. In fact in 3 John, the third letter that John wrote, 3 John, verse 3, John wrote, "It gives me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."

The Apostle Paul had that joy with his son in the faith, Timothy. And Timothy learned that faith full life from his grandmother and his mother. Writing from a prison cell to encourage this young man who was now a strategic leader in the church at Ephesus, Paul writes to him:

<sup>3</sup> I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. <sup>4</sup> Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup> 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 became a great man of God and eventually pastor-leader of this strategic church at Ephesus. He was a man who was Paul's companion in the early missionary work. He was a man who had suffered imprisonment along with Paul and had grown deeper and stronger in his faith. He was a godly man who came from a less than ideal or model home. It could not have been easy for Lois and Eunice to have raised this little boy. He had a Jewish mom and a Jewish grandma, but he had a Greek, unbelieving dad. His mom and grandma had come to know Christ, the natural conclusion of following the Jewish scriptures, and they began to invest that faith in their little boy. But dad, being Greek, was immersed in Greek culture. And if our understanding of the history and context is correct, he would have been raising his son in a society that would have promoted belief in many gods, pursuit of education, excellence in athletics, devotion to the arts. They focused on achievement.

You see, Timothy would have been raised in a home a lot like many homes today. He would have had a dad saying, "Son, you need to make something of yourself. Believe whatever you want about these gods, but achievement will come by hard work and education. Make sure to invest the right amount of time on the soccer field and in your baseball games. Make sure you do well in school and pick a job that will allow you to excel and make a lot of money. Be influential and have the kind of life that will make you want to live it."

People, you and I see every day in the papers, on line, and in the news, people that have been raised in that philosophy, that have gained everything the world can offer and are as miserable as any people you have ever seen because that's not the focus of what we need to be teaching our kids. Yes, we need to work hard. Yes, we need to

have a good ethic. Yes, we need to have power, love, and self-discipline. But Timothy had a mom and a grandma who lived a powerfully different life in the midst of that secular society. They lived a life full of faith, and Timothy chose to take hold of it. Every mom can give a faith full example to their children too because God asked moms to pass on to their children a faith full life. How do we do that?

You do it the same way Lois and Eunice did it - they lived it. The best way to pass the baton of a living faith is to let our kids see that that faith is fully living in us.

Paul said in verse 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."

In January, the Barna Group, one of the great polling groups, did a national survey of teenagers asking them about role models. They were asking these teens who, other than their parents, they admire most as a role model, who they pattern their life after. Parents were excluded because they said in their prior survey work kids want to have a great respect for their parents, and many do, but they don't want kids to feel obligated to say that. So they were asking, "Apart from your parents, who are your role models?" Thirty-seven percent said a relative other than a parent. Eleven percent said a teacher or a coach. Nine percent said a friend. Six percent said a religious leader they knew personally. Six percent was an actor or a musician. Five percent was an athlete. Four percent, a political figure. Four percent, a faith leader. One percent, business leaders, authors, scientists, doctors, artists, or military members. The high profile, people, our teens want to emulate include President Obama. Three percent said Jesus and a wide range of other celebrities including Lady Gaga; Taylor Swift; Oprah Winfrey; Lebron James; Peyton Manning; Bill Gates; Martin Luther King, Jr.; the Pope; and Yumi Tamura, a Japanese manga artist. "The results of this survey," Barna said, "points to several conclusions: 1) Teenagers, even churching teenagers, are choosing to follow a wide range of mentors and heroes based on their involvement in media or sports, not based on their Christian faith or character. 2) More than two out of three teenagers are emulating the people they know best: relatives, teachers, pastors, friends, and coaches. But this survey also indicated again, even though they asked the question to exclude the parents. It indicates by this that parents are still the #1 influence that kids want to emulate. And if increasing numbers of kids, including church kids, are choosing not to emulate the faith they are seeing at home, then it may not speak well for the kind of faith that is being modeled in many Christian homes. Imagine the impact of a home where mom and dad demonstrate consistently a love for Jesus and a living faith. Imagine the impact when they don't. Our kids are watching.

Yesterday I was headed to the store. On the way there I'm coming down a hill, and I can see this intersection in front of me and I watched this white car come up and pull a U-turn illegally across the left-hand turn lane and two other lanes of traffic, back up, and then get in the lane to do a "U'ie" while talking on a cell phone. Now, I don't know how they negotiated this turn illegally across those lanes, but when I got up close I could see there were little kids sitting in the back watching all of this. And emblazoned across their back window was "Not of this world. I live for Jesus, John 3:16." Now folks, I don't care what you have emblazoned for your bumper stickers on the outside of your car. What those kids are going to remember is what's going on on the inside. None of us

gets it perfect. The point is that how we live makes a difference. Our kids watch what we do, and they emulate that. And when there is a breakdown between what we profess and how we live, it can breed rebellion. That's why Lois and Eunice impacted Timothy's life. They lived the life full of faith that was so compelling, Timothy came to embrace it for himself, and it could not have been easy. The Apostle Paul was convinced that it was the mom and grandma whose life had impacted Timothy. He said, "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."

Sincere faith. The Greek word is literally "unhypocritical," that's literally how it reads. To be a hypocrite is to speak from behind a mask. There is a certain amount of hypocrisy in all of us. None of us lives completely for Jesus 100% of the time. I don't; you don't. The only one who ever has is Jesus himself. But there is a difference between professing something and then hiding behind that living totally differently. Sincere faith doesn't do that; it's the real deal. In good times and in bad there is a consistency that shows it is genuine.

In fact some years ago that word "sincere" -- I came across a study some years ago in a book called *The Quest for Character* by Chuck Swindoll. And in the book he was relating that in the first century in Paul's day the most common use of the word "sincere" was in the pottery industry. Our English word "sincere" comes from two Latin words "sine cera." It means literally "without wax." And Chuck Swindoll went on to say that in the pottery industry of the first century, particularly in the fine porcelain trade, they would fire those pots and many times they would come out with hairline cracks making them less than perfect and less valuable. The unscrupulous members of the pottery business would work some very fine wax into those cracks to make them disappear and then they would sell them at full price as though they were not cracked pots. People would buy it unsuspectingly, getting home and not knowing the difference until they put it in the light of the sun or filled it with a hot liquid. The wax ran out and the cracks were exposed, so the honest and scrupulous merchants began hanging around their pots a little sign in Latin that said "sine cera" "without wax." It was a term that came to mean "genuine" "the real deal" "it will hold up under scrutiny and the heat of everyday life." That's the term Paul used to describe the kind of faith that lived in Timothy because it lived in his grandmother and lived in his mother. Paul said this faith lived in them, now it lives in you. That word "live" is the word "dwelt in." It's a word indicating that it was a permanent fixture, not put on. It was a faith that flowed from within. This was not a Sunday faith or "let's be this way when people are over," but this was a faith that flowed from within. It was the same in private as it was in public. Timothy saw that there was no break in consistency, that whatever it was at home it was in public and visa versa. It's who they were. They were faith full women, and Timothy then became a faith full man. You might ask, "Where does faith like that come from?"

Well, when Paul was writing to the Roman church, he told them that this kind of faith in Jesus that's real and dwells in you, lives in you, comes from the word of God. It's how we know God. It's how we know his mind, his heart. It's how he lives and speaks in us and through us. It's what the spirit of God feeds on. Paul had told the Roman Christians in Romans 10 verse 17, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Faith comes from hearing.

Louis and Eunice were teaching and living the scriptures for Timothy to see. Now as Jews they would have been familiar with Torah, the first five books of the law, the books of Moses. They would have been familiar with the prophets and the writings, the Psalms, the Proverbs, and the other wisdom literature. From the Torah, Louis and Eunice would most likely have memorized the Shammah. It was a passage from Deuteronomy 6 given by God to Moses to establish the primacy of God's word in every Jewish household. It reads like this -- Louis and Eunice would have memorized it. Timothy probably would have had it in his heart. Deuteronomy 6 verse 4:

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Do you hear what he's telling them? God is telling Moses, "Instill this love of my word in the hearts of the Jewish people. Let them grow up knowing that the word of God is to prevail in their households. It is to be on the walls. It is to be at their bedtime. It is to be there in the morning when they get up at breakfast. It is to be with them as they go along the road in their everyday lives, and you are to impress this upon your children because you're not just to speak these things, you're to live them. LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. That's how you will impress that. It's the idea of a piece of clay and pressing an image into that clay. That's how these things and this faith will be impressed into the next generation."

Lois and Eunice had a faith full life because they had a faith filled love of God's word. And they passed that word along to Timothy not just in what they said but in how they lived. And later Paul would say to Timothy -- you remember, later in 2 Timothy 3:14? He said:

"While many are going astray, you, Timothy, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

"Timothy, your grandma and your mom have taught you the scriptures from the time you were an infant. Trust it. Hold onto that faith they imparted to you, and let it become your own. And keep building it yourself by putting your confidence and trust in the word of God." Live out the reality of God's truth every day, is what Paul's telling us. And that word will build a faith in your children. Live in obedience and show them a life that believes what God says and they can take hold of it.

Now, moms and dads, there's no guarantees with this. Kids can rebel even if you live it out genuinely before their eyes. Remember, God is the perfect parent and a lot of his kids choose not to follow him. But living a faith full life is the right thing to do no matter what, and it is the best opportunity to pass a baton of living faith on to our children.

People, when your kids go off to school, when they go away to college, when they go away into the world which they inevitably have to do at some point, they need to be equipped with truth. A truth that they've seen lived out and a truth they can hold onto. People, the world out there is seeking to steal the faith of your children, to get them to minimize the importance of a relationship with Christ and living in obedience to his word. I have walked this struggle as my wife has with each one of our children. And I've seen the assault that has come upon their faith and their beliefs, and yet I've watched each of them stand in those cases and testify powerfully to those who would seek to steal their faith away. And I think a lot of that when I look back has to do with the fact of watching Carla invest in them a faith that is real. It gives our kids a security they can hold onto.

I don't know if you've ever heard the name Robert G. Ingersoll. When you talk about the atheistic godlessness that prevails in most of our public universities today, he may have done as much in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to spur that godlessness on at the university level as anyone has ever done. Robert Ingersoll was born in Dresden, New York in 1833 into a pastor's home. A dictatorial and unsympathetic father and a kind but indulgent mother left him and his brother hating the church and led them to pursue a life of militant atheism. They had parents who professed Christ but who did not live it. Ingersoll became a powerful speaker and one of America's most famous skeptics. He targeted universities seeking to influence an entire generation of students on college campuses. Robert Ingersoll was a very powerful and eloquent speaker, and when he spoke, auditoriums would fill.

Norman Porath from Garland, Nebraska wrote an article once in the Lutheran journal that I came across some years ago about something that had happened with two college students who went to hear Robert Ingersoll speak. He said:

When Robert Ingersoll, the notorious skeptic, was in his heyday, two college students went to hear him lecture. As they walked down the street after the lecture, one said to the other, "Well, I guess he knocked the props out from under Christianity, didn't he?"

The other said, "No. No, I don't think he did. Ingersoll did not explain my mother's life, and until he can explain my mother's life, I will stand by my mother's God."

Someone has said:

The world has enough women who know how to hold their cocktails, who have lost all their illusions in their faith. The world has enough women who know how to be smart; it needs women who are willing to be simple. The world has enough women who know how to be brilliant; it needs some who will be brave.

We need women and men too who would rather be morally right than socially correct. The 21<sup>st</sup> century challenge to motherhood, when it's all boiled down, is that mothers will have an experience with God, a reality which they can pass on to their children. That's what Lois and Eunice did for their boy Timothy, and Timothy went on to impact thousands for Christ.

Ladies, you probably aren't told enough the value that you bring to the world, society, and to the kingdom of God. I mean that seriously. You're not told enough. The value you are to God, the church, the home, the family, and the world.

When Teddy Roosevelt took over leadership of our nation as president in 1901 after the assassination of President McKinley, he found a nation rocked. And he said, "It was the strength of the family that held the nation together." You know what else he said? He said that in his opinion more than any scientist, any scholar, any educator, any businessman, any general, he said, "It was the mother in America that gave the family its strength."

John Wesley, the great preacher and revivalist said, "I learned more about Christianity from my mother than all the theologians of England."

Ladies, your impact doesn't come from being stylish, wealthy, famous, smart, or beautiful in the world's eyes. You may be all of those or none of those, but your greatest impact comes from being in love with God and letting that faith full life be modeled for your kids. A faith your kids can see and take hold of as they run the next leg of this race for Jesus. You may think, "You know, it's too late. My kids are grown. They're gone. They've chosen not to walk with God. I didn't even know God at the time. I don't know why they're doing what they're doing, but it's too late for me." Or, "You don't understand. I'm in a home with all kinds of difficulties. I'm not supported by a husband. I'm doing this on my own. I'm barely making ends meet." I don't know every situation in this room. Only God can know that, but I will tell you this, it is never too late to start living your life completely for Jesus. To encounter him in a faith that's real and alive in your life and begin praying with that kind of effectiveness over your kids at whatever stage they are because the prayers of a faithful mom are powerful, and so will your example be. God can and will use your faith full life to make a difference, not just in the next generation, but in the kingdom of God. And, ladies, if no one ever else tells you the value you are and the importance of living that life, then hear it from God. He appreciates what you're doing.

*God, I want to thank you today for this Mother's Day reminder. Every mom and dad I know feels they're struggling. Every mom and dad I know feels they're not doing enough, not doing it right. We try so hard to give our kids everything, at times forgetting what they need the most, a godly faith filled example that can be passed on like a baton that they can take ahold of until it becomes their own. Thank you for Lois and Eunice who did that for their son, how Timothy taught many others to do it, and for the many ladies who through generations and even now are doing it still. Thank you, God, for this Mother's Day reminder. May you encourage all of us that with you we can make a difference, and we thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.*