**A Legacy of Faith**

2 Timothy 1:1-7

**Today we celebrate Moms!** We give thanks for grandmothers too, of course! Listen again to verse 5 of 2 Timothy 1.

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” 2 Timothy 1:5

**The greatest gift** any parent or grandparent can give to a child is the gift of FAITH - the legacy of faith! We see this in Timothy, who became Paul’s apprentice, then his partner and finally his successor, giving leadership to the growing network of churches throughout the Mediterranean. Let’s rewind and get a little more of Timothy’s story, turning back to Acts 16.

“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.” Acts 16:1-2

By the time Paul met Timothy, **the young man was already well known** and well spoken of by the believers in the region. This means his reputation for service and teaching had gone beyond his home church, and he was already assisting with the broader work. As we saw a few weeks ago, Timothy was FAT - faithful, available and teachable. As we identify believers to invest in, that is what we are looking for - people like Timothy!

Notice that ***Timothy’s Mother was a known believer*** but it seems that his father was not. The fact that Timothy was not circumcised indicates that he was not raised as a practicing Jew. Either his mother was not very devoted to the Lord when she was married and had Timothy or his father was able to override her desire to keep the Jewish law by having her son circumcised.

I believe that Timothy’s Mother **Eunice** was not a very devout Jew but became a follower of Jesus through the witness of Paul and his team on the first missionary journey documented in Acts 14. They spent considerable time in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, doing many miracles, creating a lot of visible controversy, and setting up churches in each town. By the time Paul came back in Acts 16, I’m guessing Grandma Lois had led Eunice to faith, who led Timothy to faith.

This is often **how the gospel moves the most quickly** - through family and close friends.

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” 2 Timothy 1:5

I had previously assumed that Lois and Eunice were devout Jews, worshiping the Lord faithfully for generations. But it’s striking to me that Eunice married a Greek - something that would have been unusual for a faithful Jew. And she married a Greek who didn’t allow her to circumcise her son according to the clear custom of Moses. So that tells me ***she was nominal enough in her commitment to the Jewish Law*** to marry outside of the Jewish community and compromise on one of the most essential marks of the covenant people of God - circumcision.

So after studying this family recently, I now think the faith spread from Grandmother to Mother to Son rather quickly. However the faith passed along, the point is that it DID pass along. A legacy was begun in Lois that went on to Eunice and then lived in Timothy, and through him to others.

This is **what faith in Jesus is designed to for** - ***to be passed on***, like a baton in a race, from one generation to the next. This is why we do child dedications, to publicly bless children and call parents to a commitment to pass on their faith.

Let’s study 2 Timothy 1 and ask **three questions** as we consider the legacy of faith we are seeking to pass along in our homes.

**Q1.** Is your heart overflowing with **Love**?

“To Timothy, my beloved child… As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.” 2 Tim. 1:2,4

The **first priority of a Christian home** is the priority of LOVE. Do you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? Does that love for the Lord overflow in love for one another in your marriage and love for your children and grandchildren?

This is ***the primary mark of a Christian*** - “by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

Every child needs to feel safe and known and loved and accepted. That is the first job of any parent - to provide a safe, loving, accepting environment for your children.

Is your heart overflowing with love? Even if things are strained with your children right now, do you long for them? Do you consider them your beloved ones?

**A1.** Ask Jesus to fill you with His love as you remember **the promise of life** in Him.

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus… according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim. 1:1

Paul shows us here how to grow in our love for others - by remembering the good news of life in Christ. He prays this in **Ephesians 3** that the believers would so experience the love of Christ - “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” that they would be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Knowing, ***experiencing and rejoicing in the Gospel is the path to overflowing love***.

That’s the first question as you consider your legacy - is your heart overflowing with love? Here is the second question.

Q2. Is your home grounded in **Faith**?

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” 2 Tim. 1:5

As I said earlier, I think faith spread from Grandmother to mother to son in pretty short order - maybe a matter of days or hours. I expect the excitement of hearing the good news of Jesus took root in Lois’s heart and she shared that joyful news with Eunice who ran to find Timothy.

But look at the language here - “a faith that DWELT first in your grandmother.” For faith to exist, it needs ***a hospitable environment in which to take root and grow***. Is your home such an environment?

Do your children and grandchildren hear in you and see in you ***a life built on your faith in Jesus?*** Remember, Jesus said it’s not about HEARING His words it’s about **OBEYING His words**. The foolish man heard the teachings of Jesus and ignored them. The wise man heard and obeyed - and his life was like a solid house built on a firm foundation. The one who heard but did not obey is like the fool who built a little shack on sand.

Is your family built on the solid rock of **obedient faith** or on the sinking sand of nominal, apathetic faith?

This is the mistake many American families make - they give lip service to Jesus but in truth devote themselves to other pursuits. If you asked your children to list **what is most important in your home**, what would top the list? How important is PRAYER in your home? How important is WORSHIP attendance? How important is BIBLE STUDY and connection in a Community Group? How important is involvement in CHURCH MINISTRY? How important is OUTREACH to lost people? (Do you see how I went through the baseball diamond we use at Oakwood as our discipleship pathway?)

Now, by contrast: how many hours each week do we devote to Netflix? How much gaming do we do? How committed are we to following our favorite sports teams? Do our kids see us as excited about JESUS as we are about the Lightning?

Do you see the point? **We can SAY Jesus is the most important** but if they SEE that football and work and shopping and fashion and business and boating and whatever are MORE IMPORTANT - that is what they will take away and that is what they will internalize and live out later.

***What is the FOUNDATION of your home?*** Is it faith in Jesus? Is it believing and obeying the teachings of Christ? Or is it the American Dream? Is it materialism and self-indulgence? Is it educational attainment and career advancement?

Paul said ***he was constantly in prayer for Timothy***. Are we constantly in prayer for our children? Do they see that in us, do they feel that from us? We don’t just say, “I’ll pray for you,” but we actually pray for them…? Look at verse 7.

Q2. Is your home grounded in **Faith**?

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” 2 Timothy 1:7

**God our Father did not give us a spirit of fear.** He imparted to us His own Spirit of power and love and self-control. What spirit are we giving to our children? Are we giving them a spirit of fear? Are we controlled by fear for their safety? Are we governed by obsession with their happiness?

Where do your children think POWER comes from? You? Money? Work? Status? Or God? How do they know this? What is your legacy as it relates to prayer? ***Do your children believe that you believe in prayer?***

* When someone **gets sick**, do you pray first or last?
* When there is a **family crisis** do you pray or rush to problem solving?
* When you **discipline your kids**, do you conclude by PRAYING for them, asking God to help them change and grow?

If you are weak in faith, the way to grow is in PRAYER.

A2: Ask Jesus to **Strengthen** your faith as you rest in the grace, mercy and peace of God your Father

“To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” 2 Timothy 1:2

***How did Paul manage his concern for Timothy***, his child in the faith - his protege and apprentice? Paul knew how dangerous this work was! He knew Timothy’s life was in danger every single day. How did Paul keep fear from controlling him?

***He prayed.***

He committed Timothy, and all of his other co-workers, into the Almighty hands of the Father. He prayed grace over Timothy. He prayed mercy over Timothy. He prayed peace over Timothy - knowing all these and every good gift comes only from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

That’s how we can grow the faith legacy in our homes - by ***being people of prayer!***

In parenting, so much more is caught than taught. ***What are our kids CATCHING from us as we live together?*** Is your heart overflowing with love? Is your home grounded in faith? One more question:

Q3. Is your family growing in their **Gifts**?

“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.” 2 Timothy 1:6

Let’s be clear here: **Paul did not have magical hands**. There was nothing special about Paul’s hands. The laying on of hands was a symbol of commissioning - of prayerful empowerment. Sometimes Jesus touched a person when he healed them, sometimes he didn’t. The same was true of the apostles - sometimes they healed people by touching them other times they simply prayed or simply spoke. It isn’t hands that are magical. The power is in the Lord and we access that power through prayer.

The point is that ***Paul called Timothy to come and learn from him and to serve with him***. Paul trained Timothy, giving him opportunities to serve and to teach - opportunities to fail and to grow. Then, as he saw Timothy maturing, Paul commissioned Timothy - giving him more authority to pastor a church and to oversee a region.

Paul loved Timothy. He poured his life and faith into Timothy. And Paul empowered Timothy - giving him greater and greater responsibility. The books of 1 and 2 Timothy reverberate with **Paul’s love for his apprentice and his confidence in him**.

***Do your children feel your love and confidence?*** Do they regularly hear this message from you - “Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you?” God is the Giver of gifts - but we must “fan them into flame.” The spark is only there because God placed it there. But we have to add fuel and oxygen to help our gifts grow.

We know this intuitively because we see it in every part of life.

* When Kristin was a toddler she found her Mom’s **collection of buttons**. Hundreds of buttons of different shapes and sizes. Kristin would entertain herself for hours SORTING these buttons - sometimes by color, sometimes by shape and size. Her parents knew early on - this girl will be good at organizing things!
* By contrast, in third grade I had an assignment to **plant three kinds of seed** in a little terrarium. Two weeks after planting the seeds I had a moment of dreadful realization as all of my classmates had three definite sections in their containers - three kinds of things growing in three well separated areas. Not me. I had dumped all of my seeds in randomly and they grew up all over and on top of each other. My parents knew early on I would need a wife who was good at organizing things.
* Whether it’s sports or math, singing or dancing, organizing or talking - you can see what your child is good at and help them develop those gifts.

This is is how it works in every part of life. **God gives you some ability** - if you develop it, it will grow. God gives your child some ability - ***if you help them develop it, it will grow***. God gives the gift, the parent provides support, and the child has to do the work to grow.

The question for us as parents is whether we create a supportive environment that ***helps our children grow SPIRITUALLY***. Every Dad wants the next Arozarena or Kucherov or Brady. Every Mom wants the next Idena or Adelle or Whitney.

***But do you also want the next TIMOTHY?*** Do we was parents watch for spiritual gifts in our children as we do for natural talents?

* Do we cultivate the gift of FAITH and help our kids grow in prayer?
* Do we develop the gift of SERVICE so our kids become hard workers?
* Do we develop the gift of TEACHING, so our kids have opportunities to study God’s Word and share it with others?
* Do we develop the gift of COMPASSION, so our kids can counsel and support those who are hurting?

How are you helping your child “fan into flame the gift of God” that is in them?

A3: Ask Jesus to give you His **Spirit** of power, love and self control

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” 2 Timothy 1:7

***What we need most*** is what only Jesus can give us. ***What our children need most*** is what only Jesus can give them. Ask Jesus today to give you His Spirit - His power, His love, His discipline - so you can leave a legacy of faith for your children and grandchildren.

Paul invested well in Timothy, which was a big part of the development and care of the early church. Who invested well in you to get you where you are today?

***How can you invest in the next generation*** so they feel loved, grow in faith and develop their gifts?

**My two grandmothers** illustrate the two possibilities before us today. My Grandma Anderson was a typical, nominal Methodist in suburban Chicago. She and Grandpa allowed my Dad to go to church with some friends but they rarely went themselves. Dad’s brother eventually became an atheist. Thankfully my Dad was drawn to church and to the gospel - but it was in spite of his parents, not because of them. The Andersons modeled hard work, determination and the pursuit of the American Dream.

They worked hard, saved well and were able to build a lake house that our family enjoyed for decades. But ***Grandma and Grandpa were not people of faith***. They did not pass on a legacy of devotion to the Lord or kingdom values. As Grandma Anderson approached the end of her life I visited her several times and, toward the end, I think she sincerely prayed with me to trust in Christ. But she came to the Jesus party late - too late to pass anything on.

My **Grandma Randall**, on the other hand, grew up in a strong Christian home and raised my Mom and her three brothers with a strong and deep legacy of faith. I was the ninth in my family to attend Taylor University - a Christian college in Indiana. My Grandma and Grandpa attended there in the 1940s and Grandma was the first female cheerleader. So she not only passed on a legacy of faith, but a legacy of leadership and initiative.

Grandma Gwen was a strong woman. ***Growing up in the depression*** she learned to be frugal and to live simply. One of my clearest memories of Grandma was of cereal. We never got “sugar cereal” at our house because it wasn’t healthy. But Grandma had Captain Crunch. Her house was where I was first introduced to the magical goodness that is Peanut Butter Cap’n Crunch. The only problem was that when any cereal box was half empty, they would combine it with another half empty cereal in a tupperware container. So my Cap’n Crunch was half defiled by Life or Kix or some less sugary nonsense.

But for Grandma Randall this was part of her faith - part of what it meant for her to follow Jesus - to be frugal with everything they had.

* More about Grandma - reading the Bible, teaching about prayer, serving and singing in the church etc.

That is a tale of two Grandmothers. One who left a legacy of faith, one who did not. What legacy are you leaving for your children and grandchildren? How are you investing in the next generation?

Are you overflowing with love? Are you modeling and teaching a life built on faith and obedience to Jesus? Are you empowering the next generation to develop and exercise their gifts?

Let’s give thanks for all the moms and grandmas who went before us, leaving us a legacy of faith! And let’s do all we can to leave a strong legacy of faith to those who come after us!