

**When Is a Mother's Work Ever Done?**  
***II Timothy 1:5-7 with Psalm 78:3-7***

Mother's Day Message by Pastor Bruce Montgomery  
Grace Church ~ May 14, 2017

**INTRODUCTION**

How many mothers here today? Grandmothers? It's hard work being a mother! Would you agree? When is it over? [Never]. Mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, your role may change over the years. But your primary responsibility remains. And that is to pass on the faith to the succeeding generations.

**Timothy's Heritage**

***II Timothy 1:5 I am 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.***

Paul calls Timothy "***my dear (beloved) son.***" He was Timothy's spiritual father and his mentor, but he recognized that his wasn't the only spiritual influence in Timothy's life. Timothy's sincere (*unhypocritical*) faith had come down to him from at least two generations on his mother's side.

Timothy was the product of a mixed marriage – different cultures, different religions. ***Acts 16:1 He came . . . to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek.***

Presumably his Greek father was an unbeliever. Don't know when he passed away, but the general consensus is that he was already dead when Paul first met the family. And we assume that Timothy's grandmother lived with her daughter.

These two truly believing Israelites reared Timothy in the true faith of Israel. Paul and Barnabas advanced this faith to faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, during Paul's first visit to Lystra during his first missionary journey (***Acts 14:6***). We can't be certain whether or not they found the Lord first, and then they passed on the gospel to Timothy, or if he was converted at the same time they were.

Even before they discovered that Jesus was the Messiah and placed their faith in him, his godly mother and grandmother

had instructed Timothy out of the Old Testament. Later in this same letter to his prodigy Paul writes

***II Timothy 3:14,15 Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have 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.***

By Paul's second swing through Lystra on his second missionary trip, Timothy had gained a good reputation among the Christians both in Lystra and the surrounding towns, and Paul took him along as he traveled strengthening the growing churches in Europe.

**Paul's Heritage**

In **verse 3** Paul mentions his own ancestors who served God. ***II Timothy 1:3a I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience.*** He would not have been the man he was if it hadn't been for his own parents' spiritual influence, their encouraging him to leave his hometown of Tarsus and move to Jerusalem to study at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the greatest Jewish scholars and rabbis of the day.

Of course Paul's faith had become richer, fuller and deeper when Christ revealed himself to him. Yet it was substantially the same faith as that of Old Testament believers like Abraham and David (as we saw in our study of **Romans 4**), for Jews and Christians believe in the same God!

It is important to remember this when we are witnessing to Jewish people today. Gabby and Michael met two young Israeli men this week and had a chance to share the gospel with them – the first time they had heard it. I had the opportunity to share with a Jewish friend who stopped by my office this week, that all of us who believe are children of Abraham! A Jew's acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah is not in any sense an act of disloyalty to his forefathers, rather it is the fulfillment of his or her ancestors' faith and hope.

**My Heritage**

I can certainly identify with Timothy and Paul.

**Photos of my mother Ruth Montgomery and Connie's mother Norma Workman.** Mom died a few months before my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Norma was a mother figure to me almost as long - became "mom" to me when we were married, 46 years and a few months later she died. Norma survived my own mom by nearly 18 years, so was the only mom I had for those years.

Both loved God and were servants of the Lord.

Then **wedding photos of our grandparents at our wedding** - including my Grandmothers Della Phillips and Lila Montgomery.

Role my grandparents played in my own life, their influence. When I turned eighteen and graduated from high school my parents, who had been on furlough, returned to Pakistan. My Grandmother Phillips took me in, and I lived with her when I wasn't attending college for the next two years, when Connie and were married. Practical advice.

Came to Missouri and introduced me to our "kinfolk" in the Ozarks. Told me stories. My favorite was how she and my Grandfather found the Lord at the same time as her parents, in the early 1900s at brush arbor meeting conducted by a travelling evangelist.

Influence didn't stop. Was a cherished great-grandmother to my own three children until she died at age of ninety-eight.

Grandmother Lila (and my grandfather Bruce for whom I am named) believed in me. Even though they were initially disappointed that I chose not to attend Stanford University (grandfather's alma mater), they greatly assisted me in gaining my education, paying my tuition my last year in college in Springfield at Evangel (already had my Bachelor's degree from BBC) and then all three years tuition at Talbot Seminary.

I barely remember my great-grandmother Hertha Yaeger, Grandma Montgomery's mother. When I was eight and a half-years old we visited her. She was an invalid, having suffered a severe stroke. My Dad knelt by her bedside, took her hand, thanked her for never giving up praying for him. Reminded her that he had found the Lord during service in World War II, felt the call to be a missionary, and had been

-serving the Lord in Jordan - seeing many hundreds of Arabs come to the Lord. First time she had spoken in years - just two words, "oh Bobby!"

### **Your legacy**

Paul, Timothy and I each illustrate the principle of spiritual heritage or legacy.

Mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, your role may change over the years. You transition from changing diapers, wiping noses, bandaging skinned knees, attending PTA conferences and running your children to ball games and piano lessons, but your primary responsibility never ends. And that is to pass on the faith to the succeeding generations.

Solomon mentions in **Proverbs 13:22** that a grandparent's role is to leave grandchildren with an inheritance.

**Proverbs 13:22** *A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children.*

Scripture talks about two ways grandparents leave an inheritance: (1) financial - passing money to next generations (e.g. living trust). (2) reputation - a "name" is passed on, bringing with it either honor or shame. **Ecclesiastes 7:1**

***A good name is better than fine ointment.***

Some grandparents spend their financial inheritance on themselves, thinking little about the financial needs of their descendants. E.g. bumper sticker seen on back of motor homes, "I'm spending my child's inheritance." The pattern of Scripture is to leave one's children and one's children's children with a portion of your inheritance.

Grandparents, whether you have a lot or little wealth, the greatest inheritance you can give your family is a godly heritage that is passed down from one generation to the next.

Women -and men- what are your hearts set on? Are you spending your time and energy storing up for your future, accumulating stocks and bonds, homes and cars?

Or are you investing in relationships centered around discipleship, godliness and kingdom living? Investments in God's kingdom pay eternal dividends. Pour yourself into the instruction, encouragement, training and development of those treasures God has given you - your children and grandchildren.

As a wise woman once said, *“The only things I can take to heaven with me are my children and my grandchildren.”*

### **THE NEED**

Society by and large has lost its compass regarding how and why the generations should interact, and the responsibilities each has to the other. America has created a “new social contract” that includes non-interference by grandparents, emotional independence from children, and personal autonomy.

Families unconsciously operate with the understanding that their children will grow up, move away, start their own family, and become independent from one another. This set of assumptions and values has amputated generations from one another and left countless grand-orphans who don't have the intimate influence of a grandparent in their life.

What scholarly research has been done has been limited to sociological and psychological studies. Particularly absent from discussions of the grandparent-grandchild relationship is the spiritual influence of grandparents. Grandparents have the opportunity to make significant spiritual impact, but are settling for an independent existence that does not interfere with their adult children's decisions and places them at the periphery of family life.

May I suggest that God designed grandparenting, and therefore He – not society - should get to define their role.

Grandparents have a unique role that is irreplaceable and influential. After parents, grandparents are the greatest potential influence in the life of a child – more than peers, pastors or teachers. Their affirmation and affection is second only to parents in its impact on children.

There are hundreds of references to grandparenting in the Bible. Their central thrust is that God designed grandparents to be key disciple making influences in the lives of their grandchildren, coming alongside godly parents, and in the case of ungodly parents being a surrogate spiritual mentor.

They are another voice encouraging children to embrace the gospel. They provide good counsel and wisdom, and set the

example of godly living. When crisis hits the home they are a last line of defense and a built in support system.

Before we briefly look at a couple of examples in Scripture, it's worth noting what the Bible does not say about their role.

The Bible never portrays a godly grandparent as self-focused, emphasizing fun as the goal, disconnected from the younger generations of their faith community, or living a separate life from their children and grandchildren.

At the risk of stepping on many toes, let me say that the Bible never encourages a season of retirement to travel or play. It doesn't endorse self-indulgence as a reward for a lifetime of hard work. In short, it never encourages individual, autonomous lives between family generations. Grandparents, we need to reject the myth that the purpose of old age is a life of leisure and self indulgence.

Grandparents of the Bible were active and impactful, essential, not optional. Their lives were Jesus oriented, not self-indulgent.

***Psalm 78:2-7 I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old -<sup>3</sup>what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us.***

***<sup>4</sup>We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.***

***<sup>5</sup>He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefather to teach their children,***

***<sup>6</sup>so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.***

***<sup>7</sup>Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.***

Grandparents, this sums up what should be our vision. That our descendants would: (1) ***put their trust in God*** – i.e. their salvation and (2) ***keep his commands*** – i.e. their sanctification.

**Deuteronomy 4:9 *Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.***

God is very specific about what he wants us to discuss with our grandchildren. Recounting God's goodness, testimonies of your experiences with God, teaching and giving examples of what God has done and who God is. Tell about God's provision, God's faithfulness. Share your testimony of how you found the Lord. Honestly share what happened if you slipped away from God, and the joy of being restored to fellowship with him. Read Scriptures with them.

**Last picture: Photo of us reading Bible with Rob as a baby**

### **Looking ahead**

Last month at our monthly LOV luncheon I met Larry Fowler, the founder of Legacy Coalition.<sup>1</sup> Gary and Leona Johnson had been telling me about him and his ministry to grandparents. I'm glad to be able to tell you that we confirmed this week that he will be our guest speaker at Grace Church on Sunday, October 8th.

Our plan is to have at least one small group meeting for several weeks studying the subject in depth from the Scripture, and talking about the nuts and bolts of how you can apply those principles and become an intentional grandparent.

### **CLOSE**

Call up mothers and grandmothers to the front and pray over them. As they come forward: verse printed out top of your bulletin: **Proverbs 31:30 *Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. (Verse 28) her children rise up and call her blessed.*** Invite children and grandchildren to come forward with them and stand beside or behind them.

Remain standing at the front as we sing together the chorus of "***Find Us Faithful.***"

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<sup>1</sup> Legacy Coalition is a Ministry of Awana.