

## “The Power of One” (2 Timothy 1:5)

Ana M. Jarvis was deeply attached to her mother whose name was Mrs. Ana Reese Jarvis. Mrs. Ana Reese Jarvis had been the daughter of a pastor and had taught in a Methodist Sunday school at Grafton, West Virginia. Mrs. Jarvis died in 1905. Two years later, the Sunday school superintendent of her Grafton congregation asked Ana to help him arrange a memorial for the woman who had been so influential in that church. This set Ana thinking. It seemed to her that children often do not do enough to show their moms that they appreciate them while they are still alive.

Grafton held its special service on the second Sunday of May in 1907, the anniversary of Mrs. Jarvis' death. The following year, Ana convinced her own church in Philadelphia to hold a Mother's Day service on May 10, 1908. Ana supplied the church with white carnations, which had been her mom's favorite flower. After that, Ana wrote thousands of letters and held many interviews to promote a national Mother's Day. She enlisted friends behind her effort, too. It took them six years, but in the end they succeeded. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1914, both houses of the United States Congress passed resolutions establishing a Mother's Day observance. Acting on the authority of that resolution, President Woodrow Wilson instituted Mother's Day on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1914. Thanks to the efforts of one Christian lady, Mother's Day is observed everywhere in the United States on the second Sunday of May. But it is observed on that day in other countries as well, by Christian and non-Christian alike—including Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Turkey, and parts of Africa and South America.<sup>1</sup>

This demonstrates the power of one woman to make a difference. Because of Ana Jarvis' love for her mom she impacted the world and gave us a greater appreciation for women. Never, ever dismiss the power of one person to change lives. You may be a single mom, you may be married to a husband that is not walking with God, you may be a mom that is married to a committed Christian, you may be a widow or single, or you may be a woman that doesn't have children. Regardless, God has called you to exercise your influence and impact this generation and generations to come.

In the book of 2 Tim, Paul writes his second letter to his mentoree and son in the ministry, Timothy. Paul begins his letter by informing Timothy that he constantly remembers him in his prayers night and day (1:3; cf. Acts 20:31). He goes on to say that he longs to see him so that he may be filled with joy (1:4). In 1:5, Paul then explains the reason for his fond feelings for Timothy: **“For I am mindful<sup>2</sup> of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.”** In this crucial verse, Paul reminds Timothy of the disciples that played a huge role in his life, his grandmother and his mother. They passed on their “sincere faith” to him. In this verse and a few parallel verses, we will see how a mother can pass on her faith to her children.

**1. Trust in Christ and model your faith.** The greatest gift that you can give your child is a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. But you cannot give away something that you do not possess. Therefore, the most important thing that you can do for your child is to trust in Christ. If you have never trusted in Christ, you can do so today. Simply acknowledge your sin and your need of a Savior and trust in Christ's person and work as your only hope of heaven. Jesus says, “...the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37b).

After you trust in Christ, it is imperative that you model your faith. Paul notes that Timothy's “sincere faith” was passed down from his grandmother and mother. In Acts 16:1-3, Luke tells us that Timothy's father was a Greek and his mother, Eunice, was a Jewish believer in Jesus. Eunice was a single mother in a scary world. She'd been married to a Greek unbeliever, who'd either left or died. Like today, raising a child in a single-parent home was no picnic.<sup>3</sup> Yet in spite of a divided home, Lois and Eunice infected Timothy with a sincere faith, which stayed with him the rest of his life.

The most formative influence on each of us has been our parents and our home. Hence good biographies never begin with their subject, but with the subject's parents, and probably grandparents as well. True, no man can inherit their parents' faith in the way that he/she inherits facets of their personality. But a child can be led to faith by their parents' teaching, example, and prayers.<sup>4</sup>

"Eunice" literally means "good victory." She lived up to her name by passing her faith on to her son. If you will have a priority in your own life for God's Word, and simply live it before your children, and be ready to answer their questions, you will be teaching them. On the other hand, if you won't live it, don't bother to teach it in any other way. They will learn what you live. A child that sees their mother carry a Bible to church, but never opens it from Monday to Saturday knows that Christianity is only for Sunday. If your children see you serving in the church, they will likely want to serve in the church. If you spend time with your children and show them love and patience, they will see Christ in you.

The great Baptist preacher, G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945), had four sons. They all became preachers. At a family reunion a friend asked one of the sons, "Which Morgan is the greatest preacher?" With his eyes beaming with delight, the son looked over to his father and said, "Why, it's Mother!"

[If you want to pass on your faith to your children, you must trust in Christ yourself and model your faith. Then you must...]

**2. Commit to your child's salvation, instruction, and service.** Our children have everything. Game boys, computers, expensive sneakers, television sets, VCR's, soccer balls. We give them these things. We give them all they need and almost everything they want. We want them to go to good schools, good universities, and get out and get good jobs. Do we care as much about their souls? Share the gospel with your children. Teach them the truths of the faith. Don't expect someone else to do something that you are not willing to do...it is not someone else's job. Mothers (and Dads), don't leave the mission to the preacher, Sunday school teacher, or anyone when it comes to your precious children. A Spanish proverb says: "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy."<sup>5</sup> Do all that you possibly can to share the gospel with your children and lead them to faith in Christ. As a Christian parent, that must be your goal.

Before entering pastoral ministry, a former coworker and seminary graduate told me that he didn't want to push his faith on his kids. Instead, he wanted them to come to their own conclusions. Whatever you do, do not make this same mistake. Someone will influence your children and grandchildren. It can be you or it can be a peer that may have a detrimental effect. Your children and grandchildren will be influenced by something. It can be the Word or it can be the media. Like Joshua, we must be bold and courageous enough to say, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).

Ladies, not only must you commit to your child's salvation, you must also commit to your child's instruction. In 2 Tim 3:15 Paul reminds Timothy that, "**from childhood you have known the sacred writings.**" The word "childhood" refers to either an unborn child or an infant.<sup>6</sup> Lois and Eunice taught Timothy "the sacred writings" (i.e., Old Testament Scriptures)<sup>7</sup> while he was still in the womb or shortly thereafter!<sup>8</sup> These godly women filled his head and his heart with God's Word. The Christian world owes Lois and Eunice a tremendous debt of gratitude, for who can possibly calculate the number of lives that have been challenged and strengthened over the centuries because of Timothy and the two letters written to him.

Ladies, please do not minimize your role. Research indicates that most boys are closer to their mothers. So Mothers, take advantage of your relationship with your boy. Teach him the Word and help him grow spiritually. Grandmothers, your grandkids may be more prone to listen to you instead of their parents. Use this to your advantage and teach them God's Word. Model it before them and speak it into their lives. You will leave a lasting legacy if you do.

Evidently, Lois and Eunice raised Timothy with a heart prepared to serve, because in Acts 16 Timothy exhibits a willingness to follow Paul. His commitment to ministry is further demonstrated in his willingness to be circumcised (16:3). Ladies, are you encouraging your sons and daughters to be involved in Christian service and ministry?

The world pushes transitory values—money, position, power, and fame. You can sense that with a quick look at the TV lineup for most evenings—*American Idol*, *Fear Factor*, *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire*, and many more.

The best formula I know for teaching children is to bring them to church on Sunday and apply what is learned on Sunday all throughout the rest of the week. Mothers, nobody will make you do this. In fact, it is just the opposite today. With God removed from public places and the schools faithfully teaching secular humanism, your child has little chance of growing up to be a Timothy, or with any kind of Christian values, unless YOU teach him!

As wonderful as being a mother is... it is just as scary to raise a child today. There are thousands of books from Dr. Spock to Dr. Ruth. We are bombarded with suggestions and authority from our own mothers to Oprah and Dr. Phil. What's a mother to do? Answer: Dump the trends and fads. Be a godly woman. It's been said, "Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression."

How did Lois and Eunice hand down their faith to Timothy? I don't know how they did it. But I do know how my mom did it for me. My mother read the Scriptures to me. My mom prayed for me. Frankly, she still prays for my brother and me. She prays for our families. She prays about our relationship to God. And I know she prays for my ministry and this church. She involved me in ministry. And my mother modeled her faith for me.

[If you want to pass on your faith to your children, you must trust in Christ, model your faith, and commit to your child's salvation, instruction, and service. Finally, you must also...]

**3. Value motherhood and invest time in your children.** Motherhood is not valued as a vocation. Motherhood is not appreciated as a skill. Motherhood is not considered a sacred calling. Yet, it is a vocation, it is a skill, and it is a sacred calling!<sup>9</sup> Timothy was the kind of man that he was because of the kind of mother and grandmother that he'd been blessed with. Their faith and love for God shaped Timothy into being a powerful worker for God.

Ladies, you have an amazing potential to affect the lives of your children and grandchildren. This is an awesome responsibility. And it is a responsibility that a mother or grandmother should not take lightly. You may feel that you are "no big deal" in the church, or even in the kingdom of God. Maybe Eunice and Lois felt that way, going about their lives and living day-to-day. But in their care, and being influenced by their teaching and example, was a huge part of the growth of the church, and a person who would be vitally important! They didn't know it at the time, and you may not know it now with your kids and loved ones. But the children that you are raising today have the potential to become significant in the building of the future church.

We must recognize that God can profoundly use the influence of a mother and grandmother to forge a godly legacy. We must elevate and affirm these roles in the church. The Christian mother or grandmother who is committed to her high calling is an awesome weapon in the hand of God, for she is producing polished arrows for His sturdy bow.

The story of Brooke Ellison is one of the greatest success stories of our time. A car struck Brooke on her first day of school in the seventh grade (1990). She was given little chance of survival. After a day-and-a-half in a coma, she awoke to find she was a quadriplegic. But Brooke was a courageous young woman that was bent on success. Since she had no sensation below her neck, Brooke began driving an electric wheelchair and using a keypad built into a retainer on the roof of her mouth. Miraculously, she was able to pass every grade in junior high and high school. She then had the extraordinary privilege of being able to go to the prestigious Harvard University. She graduated from Harvard with an A- average (2000). Her honors thesis was, "The Element of Hope in Resilient Adolescents."

What gave Brooke the hope to persevere through all of these challenges? Brooke claims that the real hero in her life's story is her mother, Jean Marie. She attended every class with Brooke since the eighth grade. The Ellison family even decided that mom and daughter would go together to Harvard, to live in the dorm, leaving husband and son on their own. Her mother helped by setting up a voice activated computer, did the research on the internet for papers, and turned pages of text books for her daughter during study times. Her mom was with her everyday, and when Brooke graduated, her mother was given a mock degree in virtual studies.

Brooke's mother was with her everyday. Moms, you are with your children everyday of their lives.<sup>10</sup> When they venture forth from Thurston County they will go carrying the values you instilled in them during these short years you have them. Will you have passed on your faith? Will your children have trusted in Christ because you modeled your faith and instructed them in God's truth? If you are a mother or grandmother, this is what it's all about! You have the power to affect the next generation and generations to come.

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I thought you'd enjoy this list of things our mothers taught us:

- My mother taught me LOGIC: "If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can't go to the store with me," as well as, "If everyone else jumped off a cliff would you do it too?"
- My mother taught me MEDICINE: "If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they're going to freeze that way."
- My mother taught me TO MEET A CHALLENGE: "What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you... Don't talk back to me!"
- My mother taught me about GENETICS: "You are just like your father!"
- My mother taught me about my ROOTS: "Do you think you were born in a barn?"
- My mother taught me about the WISDOM of AGE: "When you get to be my age, you will understand," or, "I will explain it all when you get older."
- My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION: "Just wait until your father gets home."
- My mother taught me about RECEIVING: "You are going to get it when I get you home."
- My mother taught me RELIGION: "You better pray that will come out of the carpet."
- My mother taught me FORESIGHT: "Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."
- My mother taught me about the science of OSMOSIS: "Shut your mouth and eat your supper!"
- My mother taught me about CONTORTIONISM: "Will you \*look\* at the dirt on the back of your neck!"
- My mother taught me about STAMINA: "You'll sit there until all that spinach is finished."
- My mother taught me about WEATHER: "It looks as if a tornado swept through your room."
- My mother taught me about HYPOCRISY: "If I've told you once, I've told you a million times: Don't exaggerate!"
- My mother taught me THE CIRCLE OF LIFE: "I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."
- My mother taught me about ENVY: "There are millions of less fortunate children in this world who don't have wonderful parents like you do!"
- And the all-time favorite thing my mother taught me, JUSTICE: "One day you will have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you. Then you'll see what it's like! I can't wait!"

A godly parent is a child's best guide to God.

The best gift you can give your children is your time.

Don't just spend time with your children—invest it.

The values children absorb now are sure to flow out later.

There is no legacy as rich as integrity.

Teens tend to rise to the level of their parent's expectations.

The greatest gift a parent can give is a worthy example.

If children are to find the way to God, parents must point the way.

Motherhood is a partnership with God.

A godly parent is a child's best guide to God.

A Christian heritage is the best legacy we can leave our children.

What we leave in our children should concern us more than what we leave to them.

Children may close their ears to advice, but their eyes are always open to example.

Be as patient with your children as God is with you.

The greatest gift a mother can give to his/her children is herself.

Little children are a big concern to God.

## Study Questions

1. What kind of impact did your mother have on your life? As a result of your mother's influence, what strengths and weaknesses do you now possess? If you are a mother, how are you shaping your children's lives? What do you think they would say about you? Where would they say you are strong? Where would they say you could improve?
2. Do you have godly relatives or spiritual mentors as Timothy did? In what ways has this person further developed you? Make a list or share some stories about what they have done for you, thanking the Lord for them.
3. Research indicates that most boys are closer to their mothers. Why do you think this is the case? If you are a mother, how can you take advantage of your relationship with your boys? What have you found that works for you? Can you share your learning with others?
4. How have you passed the baton of faith to your children? What practical things have you seen fruit from? Where have you failed? How can others learn from your successes and failures?
5. Ruth Bell Graham, the famous wife of Billy Graham, once said, "If I cannot give my children a perfect mother, I can at least give them more of the one they've got — and make that one more loving. I will be available, I will take time to listen, time to play, time to be home when they arrive from school, time to counsel and encourage." What stands out in your mind after reading this quote? How can you balance life's competing demands and give your children the time they require?
6. What will be said about you at the end of your life? Have you left a godly heritage to your family? Have you shaped the life of someone to help him/her become closer to Christ? Have you faithfully served Christ who rescued you from your sin?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See the staff or associates of Christian History Institute, “May 9, 1914• President Woodrow Wilson Proclaimed Mother’s Day,” *Christian History Institute* (<http://chi.gospelcom.net/DAILYF/2003/05/daily-05-09-2003.shtml>, 4/29/05).

<sup>2</sup> The noun *hupomnesis* (“mindful”) is used only here and 2 Pet 1:13; 3:1.

<sup>3</sup> The biblical ideal: a husband and a wife committed in love to both the Lord and to each other. The frequent reality: the divided household.

<sup>4</sup> John R.W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 27.

<sup>5</sup> Russell Brownworth, *A Mother On Mission: 2 Timothy 1:1-5*.

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=58070&ContributorID=1292>

<sup>6</sup> Gk. *brephos* refers to a child that is still unborn, a fetus (Luke 1:41, 44) or a very small child, baby, infant (Luke 2:12, 16; 18:15; Acts 7:19; 1 Pet 2:2). See BDAG, Electronic Ed.

<sup>7</sup> Bible commentators point out that the early Church Fathers, Philo and Josephus, used the phrase *hiera grammata* (“sacred writings”) to refer to the OT Scriptures.

<sup>8</sup> Jewish boys start formal instruction in the Scriptures at age five.

<sup>9</sup> Paul holds up the occupation of being a faithful wife and mother as a high and sacred calling! (Titus 2:4-5)

<sup>10</sup> Fred Mueller, *Catching Faith: 2 Timothy 1:1-10*

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=36140&ContributorID=4540> See Brook’s website:

<http://www.brookeellison.com/> After graduating from Harvard, Brooke earned a Master’s degree in Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in political psychology at Stony Brook University (5/7/05).