

The Influence of Mothers

Good morning, my name is Jerry Eisner. I'm your Interim Pastor here at St. Jacobi Congregational Church.

One day a little boy was talking to his mother, asking her some questions. Mamma, you say the Easter Bunny brings us candy and eggs? Yes. And the tooth fairy brings us money for our teeth? Yes. And Santa Claus brings us presents? Yes. And the Lord gives us our daily bread? Yes. Well, what do we need daddy for? We all know the importance of a mother.

My message this morning focuses on 2 Timothy 1:1-6 (NIV), which I've titled "The Influence of Mothers." I've always felt a relationship to Timothy. Like Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, my grandmother, Anna, and my mother, Frieda, were mothers of influence to me.

The Bible tells us about many mothers and their influence on their children. Some of the mothers were a positive influence and others were a negative influence. There was Rebekah, Jacob and Esau's mother. She could be considered both a positive and negative influence. There was Jochebed, Moses' mother. She was a positive

influence. There was Naomi, who loved her son's wife, Ruth. She was a positive influence. There was Bathsheba, a complicated wife of David. She had a strong influence on her husband's life and on the life of David's son, Solomon.

There was Hannah, the mother of Samuel who was a very positive influence as a mother. There was Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Of course, there was Mary, the mother of Jesus. And then, there are the mothers mentioned here in 2 Timothy.

In 2 Timothy 1:1-6, we find mentioned here a women named Lois, who had a daughter name Eunice. And Eunice had a son named Timothy. These were mothers of influence. Their influence was so great the God chose to have them mentioned by Paul in his Holy Word. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:5 (NIV): "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." Their influence on Timothy would help equip him to be one of the first leaders of a worldwide movement: the church.

Eunice was a Jewish believer who had been married to a Greek man (Acts 16:1), which would explain the fact that, as an infant, Timothy was not circumcised as all Jewish boys were. It was the responsibility of Jewish fathers to oversee that rite, and, since Timothy's father was Greek, circumcision would not have been his custom. Paul had Timothy circumcised before they began their missionary journeys together in order not to offend their Jewish audiences (v. 3).

What can we find in these two mothers' lives that can help today's mothers to be a strong influence in their children's lives? What principles can we draw from these two mothers?

Let me answer those questions, by dividing the rest of my message this morning into four sections. The first section I've labeled: **mothers can influence the present situation**. The second section I've called: **mothers can influence the spiritual formation of their children**. The third section is: **mothers can influence generations to come**. And the fourth section is: **mothers can influence their children's faith**.

Okay, let's look at my first section, **mothers can influence the present** situation. Timothy's mother was Eunice, who lived in Lystra, which is in, what is now, Turkey. She was a Jewish woman who had become a Christian, probably the result of her mother, Lois. But there was something going on in Eunice's family. She was married to a Greek, which is the Bible's way of saying he was an unbeliever. So, Timothy was raised in a split household – his mother was a Christian but his dad was not.

This was also the situation in my family while I was growing up. My dad took us to church but he did not go in with us. He would also take my brother and me to Sunday school and pick us up from Sunday school. Again, this is why I've always felt a relationship to Timothy.

This is not an easy situation to raise a child. I know. And so do some of you. It's hard to instill Christian values in a home where only one of the parents is a Christian.

Despite the difficult circumstances, Eunice raised Timothy with Christian values. If you're a mother in a similar situation, you can take hope from Eunice.

So, what is it that a mother must do to be a Christian influence in a split household? First, you **do not compromise** and second, you **keep your family together**. Let's look at that first point of **not compromising**. Don't let go of your faith and don't let Jesus get kicked out of your house. Next, love your husband which is what it tells us in 1 Corinthians 7:15-16 (NIV): "God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband!" And you do that by letting him see Jesus living in you. Let him see what a real Christian looks like. Let your children see what a real Christian looks like. This is what my mother did in our family. And after my brother and I went off to college, got married and started our own families, is when my dad started going to church with our mom. Let me conclude my first point of **not compromising** by saying, you never know how God might use you.

My second point of what a mother must do to be a Christian influence in a split household, is to **keep your family together**. It's so easy today to just give up and write off your marriage. For a few hundred dollars and a

lawyer you can throw it all away. 1 Corinthians 7:13 (NIV) says: “If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.” Pray for your husband. Pray for your children. Pray for and preserve your family. Mothers, you can be a strong influence right now, in whatever situation you’re in. This concludes my first section that **mothers can influence the present situation**.

The second section of my four sections of today’s message is **mothers can influence the spiritual formation of their children**. 2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV) is probably the most definitive verse on the nature of the Bible: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.” So, this verse tells us that all Scripture is God-breathed. And Paul wants to make sure Timothy, and we, hold to the truth, the Word of God. But Paul started talking about the Scripture in verse 14: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from

whom you learned it.” And in verse 15, we find out that Timothy had learned and known the Bible since he was a baby: “and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” It appears his mother and grandmother started teaching Timothy the Word of God very early. They were influencing Timothy with the Word of God from the start.

Again, mothers can have a huge influence in the spiritual formation of their children. I recently read an interesting comment. The writer said, “We are outsourcing our children’s spiritual formation.” What the writer meant was that they were depending on someone else to teach their children about Jesus. Too many mothers, and fathers, are depending on their children’s Sunday school teachers to teach them only. Too many mothers, and fathers, are depending on the Youth-Minister and the Church to raise their children to know Jesus only. Youth Ministry has become a phenomenon in the past 30 to 40 years. Youth Ministry has become so important because

it's the only place most kids are exposed to Jesus and the teaching of God's Word.

We need to stop outsourcing our children's spiritual formation only. We need to start teaching them what we believe about Jesus and the Bible when they are young. We need more children who see their mother with the Bible open in their laps. We need more children who are being influenced toward the Lord by their mothers. When more children see this in their homes, then the combination of a Youth Ministry is a good thing.

I know some of you may feel like you don't know the Scripture well enough to teach them to your children. If this is your situation, then teach them what you do know and learn together. It's okay if you and your children discover the truth in God's word at the same time. For Lois and Eunice, they taught Timothy the scriptures from infancy. Clearly what they taught made a huge difference in his life and led to his conversion at an early age.

The third section of my four sections today is **mothers can influence generations to come**. We have a

grandmother here, Lois, who is influencing the third generation. She must have been a great influence on the life of her daughter, Eunice. And now she's continuing her godly influence in the next generation, Timothy. One mother's faith had a positive influence on, at least, the next two generations. Her love for the Lord was passed down from generation to generation. The key is for mothers to know they can influence generations to come. You do that by pouring yourself into your children's lives and showing them what a real Christian looks like. So, what are some things you can do to pour yourself into your children's lives? You may live many miles away from them and you may not be able to get out and run and chase them. But you can pray for them. You can also share with them what God has done in your life. You can get involved with the youth of our church. And for you older mothers, DON'T RETIRE ON GOD. He still wants you to influence other lives.

The fourth and final section of my message today is **mothers can influence their children's faith**. Because of their dedication to the Lord, God used Eunice and Lois to

make a difference in Timothy's life. When Paul came to Lystra in Acts 16, Timothy was already a believer, as was his grandmother, Eunice, and his mother, Lois. Although the Bible doesn't tell us about Timothy's salvation experience, it's very possible the Eunice was instrumental in leading Timothy to the Lord. God honored Eunice and Lois' faith by using them to influence Timothy's faith in Jesus Christ.

Mothers, you can be an influence in your children's faith. **How?** **First**, witness with your life – let your children see Jesus in you. As important as it was for Lois and Eunice to teach Timothy, it was of equal importance that they lived what they believed in front of him. When it comes to matters of faith, the old adage, “do as I say not as I do” simply does not work. We cannot expect our children or grandchildren to imitate a faith they don't see lived out in our lives.

Second, go to church with your children. Go with them, as my mother did with my brother and me. Don't just drop them off as my father did. Don't use the church for

a Sunday baby sitter. Let your children see that church attendance is important to you.

Third, tell them what Jesus has done for **them**. Let them know how much Jesus loves them. Tell them how they can have a relationship with Jesus. And finally, influence your children's faith by telling them, "Mama can't save you, but Jesus can!"

Lois and Eunice are examples of the powerful influence a mother or grandmother can have on a young man's life. Many times, I've heard personal testimonies include statements such as "My mom (or grandma) took me to church, taught me right, and prayed for me every day." Paul recognized the life-changing contributions of these two women in a day when women were rarely mentioned by name. He honored their impact in preparing his young protégé, who later joined Paul in his travels (Romans 16:21) and eventually became the pastor of the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Lois and Eunice should encourage all Christian mothers and grandmothers, reminding them that their godly influence

has an eternal impact on the lives and futures of the children and grandchildren.

I usually end my sermons with a prayer. But today I want to end with a story to remind all of us to pray for others.

Singer/songwriter Robert Hamlet wrote “Lady Who Prays for Me” as a tribute to his mother, who made a point of praying for her boys each morning before they went to the bus stop. After a woman heard Hamlet sing his song, she committed to praying with her own little boy. The result was heartwarming! Just before her son went out the door, his mother prayed for him. Five minutes later he returned – bringing kids from the bus stop with him! His mom was taken back and asked what was going on. The boy responded, **“Their moms didn’t pray with them.”**

Now, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught his disciples.

Our Father who are in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us
our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the
kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen.