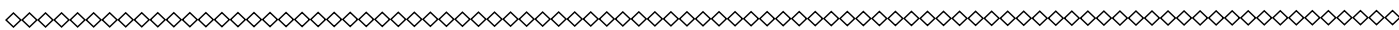




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Sermon Brief
Text: 2 Tim. 1:3-7
Title: Leaving a Legacy
Lorin L. Cranford

Seeking to faith-
fully proclaim
the whole coun-
cil of God in
scripture!



INTRODUCTION

Today is another wonderful opportunity for our church to celebrate the Christian family. With the dedication of Juliette and Alicia to God we reaffirm our commitment as a church to children, the Christian home, and to Christian parenthood. Raising children in today's world is challenging. Raising them in a cross cultural atmosphere is even more daunting. But the need for Christian parenting has never been greater. Our world is a dangerous place and is bursting with temptations to immoral lifestyles. With declining Christian influence in society, the Christian home becomes even more critical for the preservation of Christian values.

Our scripture text today gives us a brief glimpse into a Christian family in the middle of the first century. In Paul's second letter to Timothy in the middle 60s of the first Christian century, he makes a remarkable observation about the spiritual heritage of Timothy. Hear Paul's words:

3 I am grateful to God — whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did — when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. 6 For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; 7 for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.¹

The setting for these words in traditional understanding of the background of the text is helpful for our grasping of the meaning of the text. The time was the middle 60s. Paul was imprisoned in Rome again awaiting another appearance before Emperor Nero. This time the outlook was grim and Paul expected to be sentenced to death for his Christian activity. The aged apostle had come to the end of his earthly life. He was once again a prisoner of the Roman government under arrest in the imperial city of Rome as he faced imminent martyrdom. His younger assistants, Timothy, Titus, Mark, Luke, Tychicus, Erastus, Trophimus, and others, must now continue the work of the Gospel without the advice and help of Paul. Many churches had been started and some were strong and healthy, but others continued to struggle. Timothy remained in Ephesus working with the various Christian house-church groups scattered over the city and the nearby region. This Christian community had been in existence for over a decade since its founding in the early 50s on Paul's second missionary journey. The young missionary preacher had been laboring at Ephesus for several years seeking to help the community of believers progress in their Christian faith to a point of stability and spiritual maturity. The challenges to Timothy had been considerable, largely due to the growing impact of false teachers and twisted versions of the Gospel being promoted in Ephesus as well as in several other surrounding regions. Paul addressed this matter in chapters three and four of the letter. The apostle therefore pushed Timothy hard to be faithful to Christ and to the gospel throughout the letter. The situation Timothy was facing demanded deep commitment and steadfastness. Along with the pushing also came numerous affirmations of confidence in Timothy from Paul as well. The apostle was convinced that Timothy was up to the task and would be used of God in Ephesus. But as 4:9-13 indicate, Paul longed to see Timothy one more time before leaving this planet. And so he asked Timothy to journey to Rome as quickly as possible once he received this letter. Tychius, another trusted assistant of Paul, was bringing the letter to Timothy and could fill in for Timothy when he left for Rome.

The letter was intended to encourage Timothy in the work at Ephesus as well as provide instruction about how to lead the Christian community there. Additionally, a tone of finality saturates the letter making it clear that the aged apostle felt that his time left was very short and that death loomed ever larger in front of him. As it worked out, this was the final writing of Paul before his martyrdom at the hands of Nero in the mid 60s.

From this text today I speak to you today about "Leaving a Legacy." The idea grows out of the reference by Paul to the Christian faith in Timothy's grandmother Lois that was passed on to his mother Eunice and then to Timothy. Timothy is a third generation Christian according to this text and was the recipient of a won-

¹GNT: 1.3 Χάριν ἔχω τῷ θεῷ, ᾧ λατρεύω ἀπὸ προγόνων ἐν καθαρᾷ συνειδήσει, ὡς ἀδιάλειπτον ἔχω τὴν περὶ σοῦ μνηϊαν ἐν ταῖς δεήσεσίν μου νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, 1.4 ἐπιποθῶν σε ἰδεῖν, μεμνημένος σου τῶν δακρύων, ἵνα χαρᾶς πληρωθῶ, 1.5 ὑπόμνησιν λαβῶν τῆς ἐν σοὶ ἀνυποκρίτου πίστεως, ἣτις ἐνώκησεν πρῶτον ἐν τῇ μάμμῃ σου Λωΐδι καὶ τῇ μητρὶ σου Εὐνίκῃ, πέπεισμαι δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἐν σοί. 1.6 δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἀναμιμήσκω σε ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν σοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν μου. 1.7 οὐ γὰρ ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα δειλίας ἀλλὰ δυνάμεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ σωφρονισμοῦ.

derful legacy of Christian faith from his mother and grandmother. A legacy is something one passes on to the next generation.² Everyone of us leaves a legacy of some kind. It is largely the image of ourself that we have generated over a lifetime of living. It is especially the values and commitments that have governed our living. From another angle, it is to a large extent how we will be remembered by others after we're dead. Of particular importance is the legacy that we leave to our children. Our values and commitments that we have taught them and sought to instill into their lives and thinking are of critical importance. Their well being and the health of society in general depends on the quality of that legacy. When we as parents fail, we do our children a terrible disservice and run the risk of messing up their lives as well as our own. Most of the world's problems today can be blamed in part on the failure of parents to leave a good legacy to their children.

So leaving a good legacy is important. And for us as Christian parents, it is critically important. The example of Timothy's family provides helpful insight into this responsibility.

BODY

I. The Faith of Timothy Who was Timothy?

His name in Greek, Τιμοθεός, simply means 'honoring God.' Given the ancient tradition of the father determining the name of their children, we don't know where this name originated in their family. The religious orientation of his name perhaps signals a lot of influence by his mother in the naming process. In verse five Paul stresses the religious influence of his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois, but makes no mention of his father. In Acts 16:1, Luke mentioned that Timothy was "the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek." The nature of Luke's description strongly suggests that his father wasn't a Christian. Timothy grew up in a home with a Christian mother, but with a father having other, or perhaps no, religious orientation. The father had evidently refused to allow Timothy as a baby to be circumcised according to Jewish custom, because when Paul first met him as a young man in his twenties he was not circumcised, even though considered Jewish because of having a Jewish mother (Acts 16:3). In some ways then, the remarkable impact of Eunice on her son is a bit surprising, given parenting patterns of the ancient world.

Timothy grew up in Lystra³ in the Roman province of Galatia in central Turkey. This was a small town with a rather tough reputation. Education standards were very low; the moral climate in the town wasn't very good. The Lycaonians who dominated the area were a small Anatolian tribe with their own language and culture. Timothy was a Jewish boy with a Greek father living in the midst of this, along with a few other Jewish families. The Romans under Augustus at the beginning of the Christian era had made Lystra one of his military colonies as a fortification against the mountaineers south of Lystra who continually robbed and marauded settlers. Paganism was extensive in the city according to ancient Roman records. Not the best atmosphere for raising a family. And this makes the job that Eunice did all the more remarkable.



Paul first met Timothy when he and Syllas come through Lystra on the second missionary journey. Luke provides a very brief reference to this in Acts 16:1-5.

1 Paul went on also to Derbe and to Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father

²Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary: "2 : something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past <the legacy of the ancient philosophers>"

³Easton's Bible Dictionary, "Lystra": "a town of Lycaonia, in Asia Minor, in a wild district and among a rude population. Here Paul preached the gospel after he had been driven by persecution from Iconium (Acts 14:2-7). Here also he healed a lame man (8), and thus so impressed the ignorant and superstitious people that they took him for Mercury, because he was the "chief speaker," and his companion Barnabas for Jupiter, probably in consequence of his stately, venerable appearance; and were proceeding to offer sacrifices to them (13), when Paul earnestly addressed them and turned their attention to the true source of all blessings. But soon after, through the influence of the Jews from Antioch in Pisidia and Iconium, they stoned Paul and left him for dead (14:19). On recovering, Paul left for Derbe; but soon returned again, through Lystra, encouraging the disciples there to steadfastness. He in all likelihood visited this city again on his third missionary tour (Acts 18:23). Timothy, who was probably born here (2 Timothy 3:10,11), was no doubt one of those who were on this occasion witnesses of Paul's persecution and his courage in Lystra."

was a Greek. 4 As they went from town to town, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily.⁴

Whether Paul had played a role in Timothy's conversion during his earlier trip there on the first missionary journey is not stated. But now Paul meets up with Timothy some two to three years after first coming through Lystra preaching the gospel along with Barnabas. Out of this encounter came a life-long friendship between these two men. Timothy was in his twenties and Paul was approaching fifty years of age when they met. The book of Acts along with many of Paul's letters are packed full of references to Timothy and his service to Christ as a missionary associate of the apostle Paul. His name is mentioned some twenty-four times in the New Testament. When he left his home in Lystra his life would never be the same again. It would be filled with traveling, often in sparse circumstances and in the midst of danger and persecution. Yet his life would be lived out in Christian ministry touching the lives of countless numbers of people as he labored alongside Paul and the other associates of the apostle.

Who are you? What difference are you making in this world? Is your life impacting others, especially for Christ? Timothy's life stands as a marvelous example of how God can use an individual willing to walk in obedience and service to Christ. I challenge you today to follow that example so that your life can make a difference as well.

What was the quality of his faith?

The key factor in Timothy's success in ministry lay in the quality of his faith. The primary trait Paul highlights in our text is his **"unhypocritical" faith** (τῆς ἐν σοὶ ἀνυποκρίτου πίστεως). What Paul sensed about Timothy -- and remember he is writing this in the middle 60s after first meeting Timothy in the late 40s to early 50s -- was his genuineness of commitment to Christ. Over the decade plus of service together Paul had found in Timothy a sincere desire to honor God in his life through ministry. This sincerity had shown itself over an extended period of time through Timothy's faithfulness to labor with Paul for Christ.

How important is genuineness for a Christian? The answer to that should be fairly obvious. It is critically important. Hypocrisy in religious faith is adamantly condemned by Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 6-7), Jesus soundly condemned the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. In Matthew 23, he literally 'roasted them' in some of the most severe condemnation found anywhere in the Bible. The key charge leveled at them over and over was "You hypocrites...". Thus Jesus absolute forbid His disciples to engage in this!

Religious hypocrisy can do horrific damage to the credibility of the gospel message. It will also destroy your credibility as a person. And of all people who can pick it up the quickest, it's our children. And they will be turned off to Christianity very quickly if they see in their parents religious 'play acting,' and not authentic commitment to Christ. Remember parents what Jesus said in Matthew 18:6, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea."

A second commendation of Timothy's faith comes from Acts 16:2, "He was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium." As a young man committed to Christ, Timothy had **a good witness to others**. Christians, not just in his hometown, but in nearby towns, knew of him and thought highly of him. When other young men were 'sowing their wild oats' in immoral living, Timothy was walking the straight path of holiness and righteousness in commitment to Christ. And other people realized this. Consequently people thought highly of him. And when he would talk about God and the gospel, he had their hear because they respected him. In other words, *his walk was consistent with his talk. And his walk gave his talk credibility.*

What about you? Particularly, you parents? How credible is your instruction to your children? If you live Christianity consistently in front of them, then you have a much better chance of teaching them how to please God in their lives.

II. The Legacy of His Mother and Grandmother

These two women, Eunice and Lois, appear by name in the Bible only in this one place. A tiny allusion to Eunice is found in Acts 16:3 where mention is made of her Jewishness. Beyond this we know nothing about either woman. But with but this tiny reference, what we do know is marvelous. These women have gone down in history as a mother and grandmother who passed on a genuine Christian faith to a son and grandson. And

⁴GNT: 16.1 Κατήντησεν δὲ καὶ εἰς Δέρβην καὶ εἰς Λύστραν. καὶ ἰδοὺ μαθητῆς τις ἦν ἐκεῖ ὀνόματι Τιμόθεος, υἱὸς γυναικὸς Ἰουδαίας πιστῆς, πατὴρ δὲ Ἕλληνας, 16.2 ὃς ἐμαρτυρεῖτο ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Λύστοις καὶ Ἰκονίῳ ἀδελφῶν. 16.3 τοῦτον ἠθέλησεν ὁ Παῦλος σὺν αὐτῷ ἐξελθεῖν, καὶ λαβὼν περιέτεμεν αὐτὸν διὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους τοὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς τόποις ἐκείνοις· ἤδεισαν γὰρ ἅπαντες ὅτι Ἕλληνας ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ ὑπῆρχεν. 16.4 ὡς δὲ διεπορεύοντο τὰς πόλεις, παρεδίδοσαν αὐτοῖς φυλάσσειν τὰ δόγματα τὰ κεκριμένα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων τῶν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις. 16.5 αἱ μὲν οὖν ἐκκλησίαι ἐστερεοῦντο τῇ πίστει καὶ ἐπερίσσευον τῷ ἀριθμῷ καθ' ἡμέραν.

that grandson became a leader in the Christian movement in the second half of the first Christian century. That's some legacy! And it raises the challenge to us parents here today. What are we passing on to our children?

Leaving a spiritual legacy in less than ideal situations.

One of the most interesting aspects about the legacy of Eunice and Lois is the interesting circumstance in which they passed on their Christian values to Timothy. Eunice was married to a non-Christian. He was of different ethnic background, and from all appearances possessed entirely different religious orientation from Eunice. This was a 'mixed' family in the truest definition of the social category. In such a world where the male was usually completely dominant over the household, the wife was expected to conform completely to the wishes and lifestyle of her husband. The atmosphere of this Greek-Jewish home in pagan Lystra was certainly less than ideal for raising up a dedicated Christian son! But therein lies the beautiful example and challenge of Eunice. In spite of less than desirable circumstances, she with the help of her mother managed to raise up a son who loved the Lord and would be mightily used by God in spreading the Gospel all over the northeastern Mediterranean world in the first Christian century.

Such an example challenges us today powerfully. Modern tendency is to look at the individuals in the Bible with the assumption that they operated under more ideal situations. So they could achieve these outstanding levels because they didn't have all the problems that we have. But such is just not true. Clearly Eunice had a difficult home situation in which to live out her Christian faith. She had the encouragement and help of her mother Lois, who may have lived with her, but most likely lived elsewhere in the town of Lystra. Through a deeply genuine, sincere faith in God she found divine help and guidance in raising up Timothy to share a similar faith commitment as hers.

So we moderns have no excuse here. Sure, we live in far less than ideal situations in today's world. We are surrounded by temptations. Raising kids today is full of intense problems and difficulties. But to excuse ourselves from the responsibilities of raising our children to be dedicated Christians on the basis that we have more difficult problems than Eunice did in the first century world -- to make such an excuse just won't work, because it's just not true. She had all the problems we have, and more. Yet, she was successful.

Also, we must not overlook the time line here. From every indication in the New Testament, primarily in Acts 14:8-23,⁵ the gospel was first preached at Lystra by Paul and Barnabas about 46-47 AD on the first missionary journey. When Paul first met Timothy on the second missionary journey according to Acts 16:1-5, it was only two or three years after the apostle's first visit to the town. So Eunice herself was only a few short years into the Christian faith herself, as well as her mother Lois. The only possibility of a longer experience in Christianity would be if these two women had moved to Lystra with Eunice's family from elsewhere in the Mediterranean world where the Gospel had been



⁵Acts 14:8-23 NRSV: 8 In Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet and had never walked, for he had been crippled from birth. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. And Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And the man sprang up and began to walk. 11 When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. 14 When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, 15 "Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. 16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; 17 yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good — giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy." 18 Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

19 But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. Then they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. 20 But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the city. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch. 22 There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." 23 And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

preached much earlier than the mid 40s. But absolutely no indications in the New Testament suggest such as having taken place. To the contrary, Eunice and Timothy are presented as life long residents of Lystra by Luke in Acts 16. Clearly, Eunice had raised Timothy intensely in her Jewish religious heritage. When Paul and Barnabas came through Lystra in 46 AD preaching the gospel in the Jewish synagogue there, she and her mother Lois were among those who accepted Christ as Savior and formed the initial community of believers in Lystra. Perhaps, Timothy made his confession of faith at the same time. If not at that time, then sometime soon afterwards. Consequently, this young man in his twenties had grown rapidly in his Christian faith over a very short period so that his zeal for Christ had become well known in the church at Lystra and at nearby Iconium, some 35 kilometers to the north.⁶ This makes the accomplishments of Eunice all the more amazing. And challenging!



What do we make of this in our world today? Folks, we have a tremendous example in this godly Christian mother and grandmother in the ancient world. She should inspire and motivate all of us as Christian parents to aspire to do the same thing for our children as Eunice did for her son Timothy. Our church must have parents with this kind of commitment, if we are to nurture the children and young people in the Lord properly. Then through church and home our kids have a wonderful opportunity to grow up dedicated to Christ and willing to serve Him faithfully throughout their life. As your pastor, I want to go on record that the IBC church Cologne is committed to family. We must do everything within our power to duplicate the example of Eunice and Lois. Our children need this kind of spiritual legacy. We must provide it to them!

Passing down authentic Christian values and commitments.

When Paul mentioned the ‘unhypocritical faith’ that he was convinced Timothy possessed, he went on to indicate that this kind of faith was first exhibited in Lois and Eunice before it surfaced in Timothy. The situation described by Luke in Acts 14:8-23 concerning the establishment of the church in Lystra indicates serious religious problems among both Gentiles and Jews in Lystra. When Paul healed a crippled man in the city, the Lycaonian people watching thought that the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes had come down reincarnated as Barnabas and Paul to visit their city. These two missionaries could hardly convince them otherwise. To make matters worse, Jews from Antioch and Iconium then showed up and convinced these fickle people in Lystra that Barnabas and Paul were dangerous heretics and should be stoned to death. This they attempted and almost succeeded with Paul. The religious atmosphere in Lystra was anything but stable and solid. This was true in the town generally as well as in the Jewish synagogue there. That Eunice and Lois exhibited a sincere, genuine faith in such an atmosphere is all the more inspiring.

The point I want to stress briefly here is the importance of passing down the right legacy to our kids. These two ladies in Lystra developed a genuine faith in a religious climate that had turned most of the people the opposite direction. It was this genuine faith in God through Christ that they instilled in Timothy. Not some screwball religious belief that could have easily been picked up from the prevailing religious atmosphere of the town. Parents, God calls upon you to pass on to your children authentic Christian faith. Commitment that is solid and based clearly on the Bible. That means you had better know what such religious faith is. Our city is full of some of the strangest, most twisted religious thinking that I have ever encountered anywhere I have traveled in my almost 68 years. Sadly, an alarming number of evangelical Christian churches in our city are full of screwballish teaching, and the Christianity produced in the churches is far from the standards set by scripture. Much pure pagan superstition is present in the teachings of many of these churches. The unhypocritical faith Paul is talking about in our text can only come out of the truth of the Gospel as set forth in the Bible. And it is that divine Truth which you must communicate to your children. This is the only way to leave your kids a true spiritual legacy.

Do you know what the Bible teaches? How much time do you spend reading and seeking earnestly to understand scripture? Our church is seeking to teach God’s Word faithfully through our programs on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. More of you need to take advantage of these opportunities. And then you need to set aside time for family devotions at home. Your kids won’t learn Christianity without your concentrated efforts.



The Family Altar

CONCLUSION

What an inspiring example two largely unknown women from the ancient world provide us! The names Lois and Eunice in today’s world are primarily linked to these two ladies who accomplished something wonderful is passing to their grandson and son Timothy a marvelous spiritual legacy. What’s your legacy to your children?

⁶Acts 16:2 NRSV: Timothy “**was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium**” (ὁς ἐμαρτυρεῖτο ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Λύστροις καὶ Ἰκονίῳ ἀδελφῶν).