

An Influential Mother

II Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15

A teacher asked a boy this question: “Suppose your mother baked a pie and there were seven of you – your parents and five children. What part of the pie would you get?”

“A sixth,” the boy replied.

The teacher said, “I’m afraid you don’t know your fractions. Remember, there are seven of you.”

“Yes,” said the boy, “but you don’t know my mother. She would say she didn’t want any pie.”

During the Sunday school presentation a little boy forgot his lines. Sitting in the front row, his mother began to prompt him gesturing and forming words silently with her lips, but it didn’t help. Her son’s memory was blank. Finally, she leaned forward and whispered the cue, “I am the light of the world.” Beaming with great feeling and a loud clear voice, the child said, “My mother is the light of the world.”

One day in class a teacher gave her second graders a lesson on the magnet and what it does. The next day in a written test, she included this question: “My full name is six letters. The first letter is M. I pick things up. What am I?” When the test papers were turned in, the teacher was astonished to find that almost 50% of the students answered the question with the word “mother.” That’s what you call a magnetic personality.

Lorne Sanny of the Navigators once wrote of his mother: “My mother gave birth to me in a frontier house on a Midwestern prairie. On the kitchen counter she placed a list of the ingredients necessary for my formula. At the top of the list was ‘prayer,’ and that remained at the top of her list for me throughout her life...I have her to thank for firmly establishing my spiritual roots.”

Abraham Lincoln was once quoted as saying: “No man is poor who has had a godly mother.”

Today we want to honor the second oldest institution since creation, the first being the institution of marriage, the second being mothers. **Someone has said that “to become a mother is not so difficult; on the other hand, being a mother is very much so!”**

I especially want to honor those of you this morning who, regardless of age, wear the badge we call “MOTHER,” and I make no apologies for doing so. You deserve our appreciation for all you have done and continue to do and at times for what we put you through. If it weren’t for you, we wouldn’t be here. So, thank you -

For all the peanut butter and jelly or bologna sandwiches you made and the times we forgot our lunch and you had to run to school with it;
For helping with homework assignments;
For washing our uniforms and making sure we had clean socks for gym class;
For reading bed time stories and lying next to us when we were sick;
For playing games and listening to silly jokes;
For holding our heart when it was broken by failed love;
For making chocolate chip cookies and having pizza ready when we got home from a game;
For bandaging scrapes and drying tears;
For staying up late when we were past curfew;
Thank you for your love when we needed it, your patience when we didn’t deserve it and your forgiveness when we should have gotten something else.

Whether you had a golden child or not children are a gift from the Lord. There may have been times when you wanted to get a refund or exchange us for a better model citing that the current one is broken. Children are a real labor of love. Maybe you consider your children as a real work of art – *more work than art*. **Can I get a witness from any Mom’s?** Still, there is something about a mother’s

love and compassion. You hold a great influence over your children.

Speaking of her own children, Bonnie Barnett writes “No one on earth holds more sway over their precious little hearts and minds than I do. For many years, I can shape their world by my life, my words, my touch, and my prayers. Even my dear husband who proclaims God’s Word faithfully can’t come close to what God has given me. I can melt them with love, steel them with truth, shape them with conviction, guide them with insight, and all that is what God called me to do.”

That sums up quite well the influence of Moms.

There are a lot of influencing factors in the world today – television, movies, internet, iPads, iPhones, Smart phones, peers, teachers, commercials, musicians, authors and the list goes on ad nauseum. With all these influences perhaps the greatest and yet least appreciated is the influence of a mother. Life is filled with stumbling blocks, pitfalls and broken dreams, soiled diapers and spoiled plans. With the territory of motherhood comes the constant demand for love and care. Often overwhelmed with the monumental task of mothering you labor to ensure those under your care are nurtured.

Someone has said that a mother’s love is “stronger than steel, softer than down, and more resilient than a green sapling on the hillside. It closes wounds, melts disappointments, and enables the weakest child to stand tall and straight in the fields of adversity.”

This morning I am using my Grandmother’s Bible. This would be my Dad’s Mother. It was given to her as a Christmas gift in 1932. That was three years before my Dad was born, so I’m not exactly sure how old she was when she received it, but given it uses her maiden name tells me she was not yet married. Although she grew up in a very strong

and loving Christian home, I’m not even sure if she was a Christian herself. I’m not entirely sure this Bible ever made it to a church service, so this may be its very first time. Nevertheless, I wanted to preach this morning from her Bible. By the way, I should tell you that it is the King James Version.

Turn in your Bible’s this morning to a passage that describes the ongoing influence of a mother on her son. Our passage is **II Timothy 1:5** and **3:14-15**. Follow with me as I read these three verses.

How would you describe your mother? What adjectives come to mind?

Loving
Caring
Thoughtful
Forgiving
Nurturing
Demanding
Critical
Positive
Encouraging
Forgetful
Fun
Energetic

As you think about your mother would you describe her as someone who influenced you and if so, how much influence would you say she had on you?

The word influence literally means “a flowing in.” Originally it supposedly meant the flowing of an ethereal fluid or power from the stars, thought by astrologers to affect the character and actions of people. (That sounds like a definition that came out of the 60’s.) People thought it was some imaginary substance that filled space beyond the moon and in some way affected the behavior of people here on earth. Now if that isn’t the stuff B rated science fiction movies are made of I don’t know what is.

Closer to home, and according to the dictionary, influence is said to *be the power of persons or*

things to affect others seen only in its effects on the activities and behaviors of those they influence.

That's a head spinner.

In short it means that any influence you have on others is seen in actions and attitudes of others. Influence can be direct or indirect. Influence affects the values, beliefs and behavior of others – for good or bad, positive or negative.

Take for example Jim Jones who founded the People's Temple in Guyana. You may recall that in 1978 he influenced over 900 people to commit mass suicide by drinking poisoned cool-aid. He had a very charismatic personality that influenced people to follow his cult and ultimately to their death.

A doctor can influence a patient to eat healthier when the lab results come back.

A sibling can influence a younger sibling to do something in disobedience to the parents.

We can influence someone to change behavior out of sheer guilt or domination. With today's technology there is a broader reach of what sociologists call the "*sphere of influence*," or the factors that affect the character and behavior of others.

In our passage today we discover two women who had a tremendous positive influence on a young man by the name of Timothy. The two women who shaped his life were his mother Eunice and his Grandmother Lois.

From our text today I want to focus on one very positive and important influence of these women. **They influenced Timothy with God's Word.**

Now, before we go any further, I want to say that while we are honoring Mother's today and this passage is about the influence of mothers on their children, this in no way singles out mothers to the exclusion of everyone else. Each one of us in some

way has influence over others. It could be family members, classmates or teammates, co-workers or neighbors, even complete strangers. The power to influence others is strong. **Will it be for good or will it be to do wrong?**

This past week I spoke in chapel at David's school for the third through fifth graders. I spoke on what makes a good friend. My first point was that a good friend will encourage you to always do what's right. After I was done, the principle reinforced that point by noting that sometimes a boy can influence others next to him to misbehave during chapel.

Mothers and grandmothers, people, never underestimate the power of your influence on your children and grandchildren. Your influence will shape them like putty. Your example early in their life will influence them to make wise or foolish choices. Sometimes you can think your example is good only to find out when you turn around to see if they are following you that they MIA – missing in action.

I recently read a story about a mother duck leading her little ducklings across a busy road. Motorists stopped to allow the ducks to reach the other side safely. Ducklings faithfully waddled behind their mother. As she reached the edge of the road she walked across the gutter with a grated cover. Her large webbed feet had no problem walking across the grate as she waddled on. The ducklings however, had a little more difficulty. One by one the small ducklings fell in between the cracks of the sewer grate. The mother duck boldly lead on thinking her babies were safely following her.

Every so often it would be good to check behind us to see if those we want to influence are still there.

Years before this letter to Timothy was written the Apostle Paul visited the city of Lystra on his first missionary trip to spread the gospel. It was there that he met two women – Eunice and Lois. They

were mother and daughter. Most scholars agree that it was during this first trip to Lystra that they were saved, first Lois then Eunice.

Acts 16 tells us that Eunice was a Jewess and we assume that her mother, Lois, was as well. Many scholars believe that these two women were Old Testament saints, believing in the Messiah who would come and save them from their sin. Their faith would be like that of Abraham or Moses or Daniel or any of the prophets, or even like that of John the Baptist. So when Paul preached that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus and how He died for sin and was resurrected, it was a natural step of faith for them to believe.

Though Eunice was a Jewess she was not an orthodox Jew since she had married a Gentile. Nevertheless, it is evident that her husband allowed her to retain her Jewish practices. This would have meant obedience to many of the customs of her Jewish tradition. The only exception we can see from Scripture is that he was not in favor of having Timothy circumcised as that took place when he began ministry with Paul.

Now here's the difficulty. That Scripture only speaks about his father being a Greek and only about the faith of his mother and grandmother leads us to believe that his father never became a Christian. That posed challenges for these women in influencing Timothy to follow their faith. He had the influence of a non-Christian father and a Christian mother. Who would he follow? I have to believe that they took very seriously the admonition of Solomon in **Proverbs 22:6** to **“train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.”**

They learned his personality and helped shape him.

Or how about the exhortation from **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all**

your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”

When Paul begins his letter to Timothy, he is writing to a man who had been greatly influenced by the women in his life. Paul speaks to and encourages Timothy by the very fact of the strong faith that was instilled in him by his grandmother and mother. It was a faith that was sincere, genuine, and real. There wasn't anything fake about the faith they taught this young man. It wasn't a Sunday only faith. They lived it in front of him every day. It was faith without pretense, deceit or hypocrisy. They consistently taught Timothy God's ways, God's will and God's Word. Paul was convinced that this same strong and vibrant faith was at the core of Timothy as well. In order for him to come to the same faith of his grandmother and mother, he had to hear it taught to him.

Romans 10:17 **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”**

Let me ask you Mothers and really every one of us, what kind of faith are we passing on to others? Is it a faith that comes from the Word of God? Is it sincere, genuine and consistent? I am so grateful for the faith of my mother. It wasn't a perfect faith, but it was a growing faith, a faith that daily looked at trusting the Lord with all her heart, a trust that worked at not leaning on her own understanding, a trust that wanted to follow the Lord in all her ways. It was a trust that believed God's ways were always best. Mom wasn't perfect but she believed in a perfect God and all the while growing up and even until her very last breath she modeled a genuine faith teaching us the importance of faith in the Lord.

How genuine is your faith? Do those around you see a faith that is evident every day? Are you passing it on?

According to research from the Barna group, many young adults are dropping out of church because they believe they see a hypocritical faith, faith that isn't genuine, faith that is inconsistent.

Whatever discouraging events were happening to Timothy that prompted this letter by Paul, one thing is evident Paul is reminding Timothy of his spiritual heritage, bolstering his faith by remembering the faith of his Mother and Grandmother. Paul wanted Timothy to continue in the strong faith he learned from them.

You may be here today and be a first generation Christian. What a tremendous privilege and great responsibility you have to influence others with your faith – to pass it on.

You may be here today and have a great heritage of faith behind you. You have a great cloud of witnesses surrounding you from your family line that encourages you to keep your faith strong so that it can be passed on for generations to come. Let their faith encourage you just as your faith encourages others. They had a sincere faith.

Now, turn to **chapter 3:14-15**. It is in this passage that we see where their faith comes from.

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou has learned them, And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

“But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. You have been taught the Holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom

to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.” NLT

The word **“continue”** means to *stay or remain*. Sometimes it is translated as **“abide”** perhaps best seen when Jesus instructs His disciples to abide in Him just as the branch abides in the vine in order to bear fruit. Paul's instructions are for his protégé to remain resolute in the faith he has been taught from early childhood through the Word of God so that he stands fast, unshaken by the trials and pitfalls he may encounter in life. He knew those things to be true because he saw his mother and grandmother live them out and he knew that those who taught them could be trusted. Hold fast to your faith and don't chuck it out the window.

The word **“assured”** comes from the root word in the Greek that means *faith*. In this context it refers to something that we can have confidence in. Since it is God's Word, we can trust it because His promises, His Word has not, nor will it ever fail. Paul is telling Timothy that He can always trust God's Word to be sure. From infancy they taught him the reliability of and obedience to Scripture.

Hold on to the faith you learned about through the teaching of Scripture. It is in Scripture that he learned about his need for salvation and who could provide it. This is not teaching that salvation comes from one's heritage but rather solely by faith in Christ. We learn about Christ from the Bible.

Timothy owed his mother and grandmother a debt because of their constant godly instruction. By strongly and confidently holding on to God's Word his faith would not slip or falter. When we see or hear about someone who says they have lost their faith we can almost be guaranteed that they were not holding on to God's Word, they were not convinced of its truth. We can trust God's Word to be true.

Warren Wiersbe wrote “It is inconceivable that God would give us a book we couldn’t trust.”

Timothy’s mother and grandmother instilled confidence in Scripture.

They would have taught him to thirst after Scripture.

They would have taught him that God’s Word is a lamp to his feet and a light to his path.

They would have taught him that in order to keep from sin he should meditate on God’s Word.

They would have taught him that someone who delights in God’s Word meditates on it day and night; that God’s Word provides a deep, solid and lasting foundation on which to live.

They would have taught him that God’s Word is like a shield on which he can always hope.

Paul then stressed to Timothy that **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (God-breathed) and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished (equipped) for every good work.”**

Warren Wiersbe says that “The Bible teaches us what is right, what is not right, how to get right and how to stay right.” I think those are many of the lessons Eunice and Lois would have taught young Timothy. Obeying it will help avoid many pitfalls.

On my Mom’s side of the family, my Great-grandmother taught my grandmother who taught my mother to live by God’s Word, to obey it the best she could. My mother then taught each of us five children and her grandchildren to love God’s Word.

Do your children or grandchildren or children with whom you may have influence see how important God’s Word is to you?

If I could encourage you, take time either first thing in the morning or just before you go to bed to read your Bible. Let your family see you reading it. Let

them know how important it is to you. Let them know about what you are reading. Teach them when you sit and when you walk along the road.

Colossians 3:16 “Let the Word of Christ rule in your hearts...” (rule – to umpire)

KJV “Let the Word of Christ richly dwell in you.”

Let is to allow, invite, welcome or give self over to.

Word of Christ is a word, verse, chapter or book.

Dwell richly is to overflow, to drench, soak or permeate.

In you means in your mind, your heart, your thoughts, your life, your plans, your world.

In your life, let the Word of Christ rule your heart.
In your marriage, let the Word of Christ rule your heart.

In your home, let the Word of Christ rule your heart.

In your job, let the Word of Christ rule your heart.
In your school, let the Word of Christ rule your heart.

The key to a successful life is a Word filled life. We need to instill that in those we have influence over.

Joshua 1:7-9 “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left (don’t deviate or waver), that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Let me illustrate how something that dominates your thoughts influences your actions.

In 1903 Vladimir Lenin began Communism with a handful of followers. By 1917 he overthrew the Russian government with 40,000 Communist Party members. It was the fastest growing system in the world. In the 1950's his followers controlled 62% of the world's population. Communism triumphed largely because of the complete devotion of its followers. Billy Graham received a letter from a pastor that was written by a young woman who broke off her engagement because of the devotion of her fiancé to communism. This is what her fiancé wrote to her.

“There is one thing, which I am in dead earnest about, and that is the communist cause. It is my life, my business, my religion, my hobby, my sweetheart, my wife, my mistress, and my bread and meat. I work at it in the daytime and dream of it at night. Its hold on me grows, not lessens, as time goes on; therefore, I cannot carry on a friendship, a love affair, or even a conversation without relating it to this force which drives and guides my life. I evaluate people, looks, ideas, and actions according to how they affect the communist cause, and by their attitude toward it. I've already been in jail because of my ideals, and if necessary, I'm ready to go before a firing squad.”

Think for a moment what would happen if our lives, our marriages, our families, our businesses, our country were controlled to that degree by the Word of God.

I cannot impress enough today to you Mothers and Grandmothers, and indeed to all of us, how important it is to influence your families with the Word of God, to be consumed by it, to allow it to richly dwell in you.

In his book titled *The Joy of a Word Filled Family*, John Barnett writes that a Word filled heart is opened completely in love for Christ, meaning that we love Him most.

A Word filled body is offered completely to Christ, meaning that we die to self.

A Word filled will surrenders unreservedly to Christ, meaning we want to obey Him.

Word filled eyes are focused on Scripture, meaning we hunger to see Him in His Word.

Word filled actions are focused selflessly on love for others, meaning we love with Christ's love.

Word filled lives are spent intentionally bearing fruit for God's glory, meaning we walk in the Spirit.

To have a Word filled life you must **have a quiet time** by planning and preparing ahead of time. If you have it in the same place each morning, afternoon or evening you are less likely to misplace your Bible. You'll spend more time reading it and less time looking for it.

If you journal, keep your notebook and pen with your Bible.

Help your children and grandchildren develop their own quiet time.

Every night Robyn reads some Scripture to David. He is really into Lego's and Cindy introduced to us of all things, a Lego Bible called *the Brick Bible*. Bible stories are depicted with Lego characters in both the Old and New Testaments. It's very well done.

To have a Word filled life **include Scripture memory**. Every month we put in the bulletin a memory verse. Take advantage of those and learn them. Memorize verses for a Word filled life, verses that are good for every believer to know.

- Verses about God's Word
- Verses about basic doctrine
- Verses about fellowship with God
- Verses about the promises of God
- Verses about prayer
- Verses about salvation

Every night before they went to bed Dawson Trotman who was the founder of the Navigator ministry and his wife would memorize a verse.

To have a Word filled life you must *have a Word filled prayer life*. Take Scripture passages and pray them for yourself and for others.

For example, if you have a family member or friend who is not saved pray **II Peter 3:9** “**God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**” Replace the words “any” and “all” with the name of the person you pray will be saved. You can do the same with **John 3:16**.

There are some wonderful prayers you can pray for yourself and other believers in **Ephesians 1, Philippians 1 and Colossians 1**. Pray for others to put on the armor of God from **Ephesians 6** Use these to pray over your children and grandchildren. Use scripture to influence them.

Timothy was fortunate to have a mother and grandmother who instilled godly character through Scripture. He was fortunate to have someone like Paul who came along to encourage him to remember his strong godly heritage. Maybe you are here today and your heart is heavy because in spite of your very sincere and best efforts to train them by teaching and modeling God’s Word, your children or grandchildren have made poor choices and do not follow Christ. Take hope. Keep praying. Surrender them back to the Lord. I know, I was once a wayward child.

John Barnett offers advice about wayward children.
 A wayward child is no surprise to God.
 A wayward child is an opportunity for God to see our response.
 A wayward child drives us to pray.
 A wayward child opens us to a situation where only God and His Word can encourage us.
 A wayward child fills us with hope in remembering that God is never through as long as we live.
 A wayward child reminds us that we have a perfect Heavenly Father who sees our imperfections.
 A wayward child humbles us.
 A wayward child can rebuke us for our imperfect parenting, but encourages forgiveness.

A wayward child makes us believe more each day that God is able to work in them in ways we can’t.
 A wayward child shows us God’s unending grace.
 A wayward child challenges us to never give up.
 So don’t give up.

Mom’s, Grandma’s, do you have a heart like Eunice and Lois? Many of us want to pass on mementos or family heirlooms after we die to those who remain – a quilt we pieced together, a handmade apron, a piece of furniture we built or a picture we painted. The greatest heirloom that we can pass on is faith, faith in Christ built from the foundation of God’s Word. Today’s culture with its competing demands and influences make it extremely difficult to raise a Word filled family. That’s why we have to be so intentional. They began when Timothy was just an infant and continued on to becoming a man. Paul encouraged him to remain faithful to his heritage.

The most important truth they taught him was to trust Christ as Savior. You have a tremendous influence that will last for eternity. Teach and live wisely according to Scripture so that those who come behind you will follow Christ.

A Mother’s Influence anonymous

I took a piece of plastic clay
 And idly fashioned it one day;
 And as my fingers pressed it still
 It moved and yielded at my will.

I came again when days were past,
 The form I gave it still it bore,
 And as my fingers pressed it still,
 I could change that form no more.

I took a piece of living clay,
 And gently formed it day by day,
 And molded with my power and art,
 A young child’s soft and yielding heart.

I came again when days were gone;
 It was a man I looked upon,
 He still that early impress bore,
 And I could change it never more.