

## 12. The Biblical Foundation for Ministry as a Family

One of the great privileges of the Christian life is to learn to minister together as a family. There is nothing more rewarding to us as parents than to have the privilege of seeing our children faithfully serving the Lord, because as parents we ministered with our children as they were growing and equipped them for faithful and effective ministry. We will look at some key Biblical principles that will make it possible for us to minister as a family and equip our children for effective ministry.

When Paul made his second visit to the churches in the area of Derbe and Lystra, we read about one of the young men that Paul invited to become a part of his ministry team. Acts 16:1-3a says, “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him.” Here, we see that as a young man Timothy was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. Since these cities were about forty miles apart, this meant that Timothy already had an effective ministry in the whole region where he grew up and lived. That happened because he came from a family where there was an effective ministry as a family.

In writing to Timothy, Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:5, “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” Here, we see that Timothy was a man with a genuine faith. The word that is translated “genuine” is translated “without hypocrisy” in James 3:17. In 1 Peter 1:22, the word is translated a “sincere” love of the brethren. Timothy had a faith that was genuine and sincere and without any hypocrisy. This brings us to the question, how did that genuine faith develop in his life? The answer to that question is what helps us to understand what provides a foundation for ministry as a family.

In 2 Timothy 1:5 mentioned above, we see a little about the family in which Timothy grew and developed as a boy. His mother and grandmother were both what we would call Old Testament saints. They were true followers of the Lord before they ever learned about the death and resurrection of Christ. As true Old Testament believers, they understood the message of the Old Testament well enough to prepare themselves and Timothy to immediately accept Christ when the Gospel was presented to them. That probably happened when Paul and Barnabas made their first trip to this area recorded in Acts 14.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 tell how Lois and Eunice prepared Timothy so that they were all ready to accept the message about Christ as soon as they heard of His death and resurrection. Those verses say, “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The mother and grandmother had carried on a faithful ministry as a family by teaching Timothy the Word of God from his birth. The word that is translated “child” is the same word that is translated “newborn babes” in 1 Peter 2:2 and is also used to speak of Christ at His birth in Luke 2.

Growing Godly Family Series – Developing the Biblical Foundation for a Godly Marriage 12. “The Biblical Foundation for Ministry as a Family”

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That early training, plus the teaching the family received when they heard about the death and resurrection of Christ, prepared Timothy to become a mature man of God. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 goes on to say, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Timothy had become a mature man of God because of the faithful teaching of his mother and grandmother. That maturity had also produced an effective ministry by Timothy because he had been equipped for every good work.

That was the reason why Timothy had the good report of the brethren in Lystra and Iconium even though those cities were about 40 miles apart. Lois and Eunice had both taught Timothy the Word of God and had shown him how to effectively serve the Lord in the entire region surrounding the area where the family lived. (As I was growing up, my parents put thousands of miles on our cars as we traveled as a family to serve the Lord. My father had a small farm and sometimes the cows got milked at 3 in the afternoon, so that we could minister as a family and other times at 10 at night, after we got home from ministering as a family. That may not have been good for the cows but it did help us, as children, to learn to serve the Lord as we were growing up. When my brother, sister and I reached driving age, our parents gave us freedom to take the car to minister in the entire surrounding area. Once I got my driver’s license, I taught a weekly Bible study on the Lummi Reservation and a Sunday school class in Canada while still in high school.)

As one of those who had become a spiritual son of Paul as a young adult, Timothy continued to carry on and expand the ministry that he had developed before he started traveling with Paul. Paul gave some key instructions that carried on the teaching that Timothy had received from his mother and grandmother. Those instructions help us to see five key things that we want to develop in our children as we minister as a family to equip them to serve the Lord throughout their lives.

First, 1 Timothy 4:12 says, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” The first way that we develop our children for effective ministry as a family is to help them develop and become an example. This verse mentions six areas where we want to develop their example. The key to helping them become godly examples to others in these six areas is to be godly examples to our children in these six areas so that we can say to our children as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” We will never succeed in this area by just telling our children to be an example. Instead, we must provide our own lives as an example and invite them to imitate us.

Second, 1 Timothy 4:13 says, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” Here, we see that we teach our children by giving them opportunities to gain experience in the reading and explaining of Scripture. As Timothy was growing up, he was given opportunities to read the Scripture publicly in the synagogue. As he continued to grow, he was also given opportunities to explain and teach the Word of God. As a result, Paul told him to keep on doing what he had been doing from the time that he was growing up as a boy.

Third, 1 Timothy 4:14 says, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by

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prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” Here, we see that we help our children develop an effective ministry by helping them learn how to use their spiritual gift or gifts to serve others. 1 Peter 4:10-11 tells how we help our children develop their spiritual gifts. Those verses say, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” If our child has a speaking gift, we show that child how to share the Word of God. If our child has a serving gift, we show that child how to serve the Lord with the ability that God supplies.

Fourth, 1 Timothy 4:15 says, “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” As we help our children to think about the example their lives provide, the opportunities the Lord gives to share the Word of God and the proper exercise of their spiritual gifts, we also want them to learn to ask the Lord what purpose He has for their lives. Every child needs to develop a spiritual purpose for his or her life so that their life has focus and purpose. As we help our children develop focus and purpose for their lives, this verse says that their progress will become evident to all.

Fifth, 1 Timothy 4:16 says, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” Helping our children learn to “take heed to yourself” means *to help them regularly examine their life so that they make sure that they are walking to please the Lord in all that they do*. This means helping them learn to walk in the Spirit – Galatians 5:16; learn to be led by the Spirit – Galatians 5:18; and live in the Spirit – Galatians 5:25; so that their lives bear the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23. As they are learning to do these things, our children will learn to walk in the true Christian liberty.

Christian liberty is described in Galatians 5:13 where we read, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here, we see that the true purpose of liberty or freedom in the Christian life is to provide the opportunity to learn to serve one another in love. This gives us a clear focus as we help our children to grow and mature in Christ so that they will have an effective ministry throughout their lives. We want to help them learn to enjoy the liberty that they have in Christ. That means we want to help them learn as a part of their growth to learn how to serve one another in love. That is why it is so important that we minister as a family so that we can show our children by our example as we serve others in love. The Lord will greatly use our example in the lives of our children and grandchildren to equip them to serve the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to serve others in love.