

#### 4. The Biblical Foundation for Leading Children to Christ

The greatest concern of every godly parent should be to lead their own children to Christ. We see the impact of a godly grandparent, a godly parent and a spiritual parent in 2 Timothy 1:3-5. Those verses say, “I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, 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.” We see that in the case of Timothy it was both a physical grandparent and physical parent as well as a spiritual parent that helped Timothy to develop as an effective spiritual leader for the Lord.

Lois and Eunice helped Timothy to come to a true faith in Christ. Later, Paul had the opportunity to become a spiritual parent to Timothy and help him become equipped to develop and expand his ministry for Christ. Today, we want to focus on how his mother and grandmother helped Timothy develop a genuine faith in the Lord. These verses point out that the most important thing that helped Timothy to develop a genuine faith was their example. The word that is translated “genuine” in these verses is used six times in the New Testament. It speaks of *something that is genuine or without hypocrisy*. This is a key to understanding the impact of Lois and Eunice in the life of Timothy.

A hypocrite was an actor who wore a mask in a play to show the character of the person that he was supposed to represent. An actor would use several different masks during a play to represent different people. As a result, it came to mean a person who is one thing when others can see him and something different when the world is not watching. To have a genuine faith is the opposite. It means a faith that does not change whether anyone is watching or not. Timothy had seen that the faith of his mother and grandmother was the same when they were home alone as when other people were watching them. That is why example is such a key in the spiritual development of a child. When a child sees that a parent is consistent whether or not anyone else is watching, that child knows that he can trust the example of his parent or parents.

However, Lois and Eunice did more than just provide an example for Timothy. 2 Timothy 3:14-15 says, “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.” Here, we see that Lois and Eunice began teaching the Word of God to Timothy while he was a child. We see that they had followed the instructions given in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and taught Timothy from infancy.

They had diligently taught Timothy from the earliest days of his life. The word that is translated “child” speaks of *a newborn child*. It is used twice in Luke 1 to speak of Christ before He was even born. Then, it is used of Christ twice in Luke 2 to speak of Christ when the shepherds came to visit Him right after He was born. Luke 18:15 says that parents brought their infants to Christ so that He could bless them. Acts 7:19 uses the word to speak of the babies that were killed by

Pharaoh in Egypt. It is also used in 1 Peter 2:2 where we read, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” This is the only other place that this word is used. Here, we see that the time to begin teaching children the Word of God is right from birth. This was what Lois and Eunice had done.

In addition to teaching Timothy the Holy Scriptures, we see that they had taught him specific things from the Scripture. It says that they had taught him those things that were able to make him wise unto salvation. Remember that Lois and Eunice did not have the New Testament. They only had the Old Testament. However, they helped Timothy to understand what the Old Testament taught about the way to receive salvation. Here, we see that his grandmother and mother were Old Testament saints that looked forward to the time when Christ would come to take away sin instead of just cover sin.

Timothy had been taught many things from the Old Testament as he grew as a boy. He had learned how sin changed the life of Adam and Eve. Lois and Eunice may even have shown Timothy from Genesis 3:7-13 that sin changed our relationship with God - there is separation; our relationship within ourselves - we are now motivated by fear, guilt and shame; and our relationship with others - there is blame. The reality of sin and the consequences of sin are things that all godly parents need to teach their children so that children realize from an early age that sin produced separation from God and that they need their relationship with God restored.

As Lois and Eunice taught Timothy the Scriptures, passages like Genesis 4:1-5 provided them with the opportunity to help Timothy understand that his own efforts could never remove the separation between him and God. In those verses, God made it clear for Timothy and everyone else that because Cain depended on his own efforts, his sacrifice was rejected. He had to learn from the example of Abel that there must be an offering for sin that God would accept. Isaiah 64:6 also makes this same point clear when it says, “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” As a result of this kind of teaching from early childhood, Timothy knew that He had to place his faith in the promises of God and not in his own efforts.

Every year, the Jewish Day of Atonement reminded both children and adults that sin had to be covered until God provided a sacrifice that would take away sin. All Jews were required to fast on the Day of Atonement so parents could teach their children the fact that sin must be covered until God provided a sacrifice that would take away sin. That was why the statement of John the Baptist in John 1:29 had such a powerful impact on the disciples of John the Baptist. That verse says, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” Godly parents used opportunities like the Day of Atonement to teach their children that sin had to be covered until God sent One who could take away sin.

Of course, the parents could also use the Passover lamb each year to show that God required the sacrifice of a lamb without spot or blemish to cover sin so that the death angel could pass over that house when he killed the oldest child in each family in Egypt. These and the other feasts and sacrifices meant that parents had many opportunities throughout the year to teach their children

about the need for salvation to both cover and take away sin. We see that Lois and Eunice both were able to share the Old Testament Scriptures with Timothy so that He knew that a sacrifice was needed to pay for sin so that his sin could be covered and removed.

Although we do not know what passages Timothy learned, he probably became very familiar with passages like Isaiah 55:6-7. Those verses say, “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” This passage and many other Old Testament passages point out the need to turn from sin and turn back to God (repentance).

When Paul and Barnabas came to the area where Lois, Eunice and Timothy lived on their first ministry trip, Acts 14:21 says that they preached the Gospel in Derbe. That was probably where the three first heard about the death and resurrection of Christ. They heard that Christ had shed His blood to pay for sin. They heard that the Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ had made and showed that by raising Christ from the dead. As Old Testament saints, they and many others in that area repented of their sin and placed their trust in Christ and His payment for their sin. As a result of the patient teaching and training of Lois and Eunice while he was growing up, Timothy became a follower of Christ along with his mother and grandmother.

Here, we see that example and the faithful teaching of the Word of God to children as they are growing will lead many children to place their trust in Christ while they are still children. They will know the importance of repenting of their sin and placing their faith in Christ because they have been taught those things from birth. In addition, as they see the example of how the Lord has changed and is continuing to change their parents, they will also see that their parents are learning to take root in the love of Christ so that they are led by the love of Christ. Scripture teaches that most children that are trained in this way will not depart from the love of Christ but instead will take root in His love. Christ showed in the parable about the prodigal son that even those who may rebel for a time will be drawn back to the parents and to Christ by the love of the parents.

One of the great privileges of a Christian parent or grandparent is to have the opportunity to teach their children and grandchildren by example and words and then have the opportunity to lead them to Christ. It is as we teach them the Word of God that they will learn they are separated from God by sin; they will learn that Christ died for their sin; they will learn that God was satisfied with the payment and showed it by raising Christ from the dead; they will come to understand that they need to repent of their sin of unbelief and ask Christ to forgive their sin and give them eternal life. As we pray for them, we will see the Father work in their hearts and draw them to Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop the Biblical foundation that will lead your children and grandchildren to Christ.