

Sharing the Book

**Preached by Pastor Dan Farm
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Have you ever composed in your mind the last words that you were going to say to someone? Really—the last words.

The person is getting ready to depart this life; maybe a family member or a friend you're going to see in the hospital or their home and you know that this might be the last time that you will be with them.

You know that in this world this might be the last time you're together and you want to say just the right things: you want to say the things that express your love, and you also want to say the things that will give encouragement and honor to God.

Or, maybe...maybe you've had a loved one express to you his or her last words.

Last words are significant. If you've had an opportunity to receive last words from a friend or a loved one, you are blessed, especially if that friend or loved one knows Jesus.

And so, today I want us to be mindful of the fact that we are in the last of Paul's last words. The books of 1 and 2 Timothy is a letter comprised of Paul's last words to Timothy.

Paul knows now, by the time he gets to chapter three in our bibles, he's wrapping up his final letter to his beloved Timothy.

These are the last of the last words.

We can imagine him gathering in his mind that words to say, and how he wants to say the most important things, he wants to say them just right.

And so, I want you to be aware of what Paul says and how he says it, because Paul is in a situation where he has an opportunity to carefully compose precisely what he wants to share as his final words to Timothy, this dear son in the faith.

Now, immediately preceding these verses, Paul has been describing the false teachers who hold to a form of religion, but deny its power (3:1-9).

Paul urges Timothy to remain faithful, even through persecution.

He reminds Timothy of his own example, which Timothy has observed for many years now.

In Verse 10, he's encouraging Timothy to remember how he shared his life. He witnessed in Paul, a life of:

- Teaching
- Excellent Conduct
- Purpose
- Faith
- Patience
- Love
- Endurance
- Persecution and
- Sufferings

I want you to realize, Paul was not boasting in himself, but rather was saying, “Timothy, my life is open to you. You know my life and my teaching from the Word of God. I’ve shared my life completely with you.

You’ve seen me under persecution of the worst sort, including being stoned and left for dead in your home town of Lystra when you were a boy.

You’ve seen me go through imprisonment, beatings, shipwreck, and other hardships. You know that my life backs up my message, which is the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

“So after I’m gone, remember my example and my commitment to the Word and continue in it yourself.”

And so today, I’d like to highlight and celebrate the role of those godly biblical examples that shared and lived out the Word of God in Timothy’s life.

We not only saw this example in verses 10-11 in the life of Paul, but also by looking at the influence of Timothy's mother and grandmother.

In 2 Timothy 1:5 we learn that his faith came to him through his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice.

“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.”

The Apostle Paul's preaching may have been used by God to bring Timothy to actual conversion, but behind his preaching were years of godly influence by Timothy's grandmother and mother.

In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, we also learn that the genuine and sincere faith of these women was combined with their instructing Timothy from his earliest days from the Scriptures.

Their example and the results in Timothy's life show us that through faith in God and by honoring His Word, godly parents and mentors have great influence.

The first thing we notice about Timothy's mother and grandmother is:

1. They had genuine faith.

As Paul reminisced of Timothy and his sincere faith, he was reminded that such faith also dwelt first in Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and in his mother, Eunice.

We don't know when these women had come to faith in Christ. Even though they had Greek names, at least Eunice was a Jewish believer (Acts 16:1).

Perhaps both women were devout Jews who responded to Paul's preaching when he visited Lystra, their city. But the implication is that their faith pre-dated that of Timothy.

Timothy's father was apparently a Greek unbeliever (Acts 16:1). We have no clue as to why a woman of genuine faith like Eunice would marry an unbelieving man.

The Old Testament is very clear that Jews should not marry outside the faith.

Just maybe, Eunice, though raised by Lois in a faithful Jewish home, went through a time of rebellion, during which she got married, but later came to faith in Jesus. We're not sure, we can only speculate.

We do know that the Bible clearly forbids a follower of Jesus from marrying an unbeliever. But one of the reasons that Eunice's story could be in the Bible is to give hope to women in mixed marriages.

If her son, Timothy, could grow up to follow the Lord, then God can do the same for your children, even if your husband is not a follower.

While God intends for the father to lead in the spiritual training of the children, the mother can have a great influence even in situations where the father is passive or hostile to God.

This certainly plays both ways for husbands who have unbelieving wives.

One prime quality which a person in that situation needs is sincere and genuine faith.

The word “sincere” means, literally, “not hypocritical.”

Pastor John has used this term to mean, “without a wax covering.” It means authentic and not a cover up.

You see, a hypocritical faith is the facade that is put on in front of church members or out in a faith setting, but it’s set aside in the home and work.

It’s seen in...

- The family that is hanging on by a thread with conflict in relationships, but when they drive in the parking lot of church, they act as if everything is just great.
- The couples who speak harshly and painfully to each other, but at church they freely use the “Christian” vernacular.

- The person who wants to serve and be seen as an encourager at church, but at home, people walk on egg shells afraid of their next outburst..

Let me tell you, our kids detect that kind of phoniness and that contradiction is confusing to them.

Having a genuine faith doesn't imply perfection. But it does imply reality with God.

These women had that kind of faith; it was at home in them, a comfortable, everyday sort of thing.

- **Genuine faith** means that you have sincerely believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord.
- **It means that** you walk in obedience with Christ each day, spending time in His Word and in prayer.
- It means that you confront yourself with Scripture and judge your sin on the thought level.

- **It means that** when you do sin against a family member, you ask their forgiveness and seek help and commit to work on your weak areas.
- It means that you develop godly character qualities, such as the ones Paul mentioned earlier: faith, patience, love, endurance, and attitudes of submission, thankfulness, and joy in the Lord.

And when you live this way, your kids will realize that, while mom and/or dad aren't perfect, but, they do walk with God.

Parents, I beg of you, if you are building into the spiritual life of a child, if you are sharing the Word of God with them, then live out the Word faithfully as well.

Not only were Timothy's Mom and Grandmother people of genuine faith, but also...

2. They sought to pass their faith on.

Hypocritical or false faith can't be handed off. If we're fake, our kids won't want anything to do with our version of Christianity.

But genuine faith is irresistible.

Timothy's faith could be traced back through his mother to his grandmother. He could see the Lord in them, and it attracted him to the Lord.

So, how do we share our faith with our children?

One of the main ways is by training them in God's Word.

In the most reliable manuscripts of verse 14, "whom" is plural, It is literally pointing to Lois and Eunice, as well as to the Apostle Paul.

The phrase, "you know those from whom you learned it" points to the reality of God's Word in these people who had influenced Timothy.

He could look at their lives and see that the Bible is a reliable Book based on the model of their lives.

We currently live in a culture where parents are abdicating their role in spiritual training for their children to others. They feel that dropping their children off at church or religious classes is enough for their children to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

That couldn't be a bigger lie from the Deceiver.

You can't replace the role of the parent in spiritual development.

With that said, while the parents should be the primary agents for teaching their children God's Word, I urge you to pray for godly mentors for your children, such as Paul was to Timothy.

We can't be so protective as to think that we're the only ones who can influence our children.

Pray for godly Sunday school teachers, youth workers, small group leaders, or other men and women of God to influence your children for righteousness.

I'm thankful for a young couple in this church who had great influence on my daughter Joanna as her small group leaders during her high school days. They were a great model of Christ for her in those important years and could reach her in certain areas like her mother and I could not.

But again, let me emphasize, the main way your children will grow up to love and serve God is through His Word.

The best thing you can do for your kids is to instill in them from an early age the importance of reading, studying, memorizing, and obeying God's Word.

This passage says that Timothy was taught from infancy. They didn't wait for him to be able to read before they shared God's word.

It is imperative we share the Best of Books with them.

So you ask how do you share the Bible with them?

The first thing is...

A. Modeling, by being in the Book.

We can't give what we don't possess. If our kids rarely see us connecting with God through His Word, they won't catch it for themselves.

If they don't see us changing through our growing understanding of and obedience to the Word, they won't be motivated to be in the Word for themselves.

If they see us committed to everything else; sports, work, the computer, TV and other activities, but the Bible is seldom seen read in the home, guess what the kids will understand about what is the most important thing in their family?

Our kids should be able to see evidence of our love for God's Word.

I strongly encourage you to begin reading the Bible to your children even when they're very young and let them see you reading the Bible often.

B. Leading our children to faith in Christ.

“...from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (3:15).

Salvation is built on truth revealed in Scripture.

Children need to know more than “*Jesus wants to be your friend, so you need to invite Him into your heart*” or “*do you want to be with mommy and daddy in heaven or with bad people in hell*”.

Seriously? I wonder what their choice will be....

The reality is...

- They need to know what God's Word reveals about the condition of our hearts, that we are rebellious and disobedient toward God.
- They need to know not only that God is loving, but also that He is holy and just and we will all have to answer for our actions one day.
- They need to know what Christ did on the cross, dying as our substitute.
- They need to understand that God forgives our sin because of His kindness, apart from our good works.

As you read the Bible to your kids and encourage them to read...

- They will learn about people who turned from their sin to God and experienced His freedom from bondage.
- They will hear of others who made choices against God and their lives were ruined.
- They will hear stories of children whose parents who loved God, but the children did not follow God, and of others whose parents were ungodly, but the children chose to follow the Lord.
- They will learn that each person is accountable before God.

So a crucial task for godly parents is to pray for and use the Scriptures to lead each of their children to faith in Christ.

We also learn from Lois and Eunice how to...

C. Training our children how to live by God's Word.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

It is useful for-

- Teaching us the ways of God, how God wants us to live.
- Rebuking, which means, it convinces us of our wrongs.
- Correcting us by showing us how to get right with God and others.
- Training us in righteousness, showing us how to keep on the path of obedience and blessing.

Scripture is not given to satisfy our curiosity or to give us interesting stories.

It is given to be useful for how we live, to correct us and keep us on God's journey of holiness.

Our kids should see us applying Scripture and we should teach them how to apply it to the things they face as they grow in maturity.

If we use God's Word to lead our children to saving faith and to train them in God's ways, it follows that...

3. Parents will have great influence on their children.

Who knows what lifelong influence Lois and Eunice had on Timothy? He was discipled through his relationship with Paul, but the foundation of his faith was laid by his mother and grandmother who loved the Lord.

The future of our kids is shaped in the home through godly parents who share the Word of God with them.

Because Pastor Steer is gone this week, I felt obliged to quote Charles Spurgeon as he reflects on his mother's commitment to the Word in his life.

Spurgeon states: "Never could it be possible for any man to estimate what he owes to a godly mother. Certainly I have not the powers of speech with which to set forth my valuation of the choice blessing which the Lord bestowed on me in making me the son of one who prayed for me, and prayed with me.

How can I ever forget her tearful eye when she warned me to escape from the wrath to come?... How can I ever forget when she bowed her knee, and with her arms about my neck, prayed, 'Oh, that my son might live before Thee!'"

I understand what he is saying perfectly.

You see, I had a godly grandmother and mother and father who loved the Lord as well.

There was a season in my life where I turned my back on the training of my youth and I ran away from God.

I was consumed by the pleasures and distractions of this life and paid little attention to the God who created and loved me. I was in the midst of a human tragedy, that is, wasting what God had designed for his glory and my good, but I didn't realize it.

However, during this time in my life my grandma Hannah prayed for me daily. Every time she saw me she told me how much she loved me and most importantly, how much God loved me and how he desired to do great things through me.

She prayed for me throughout each day and made contact with me. She encouraged me with the Word of God. She was not going to let years of God's promises slip through my fingers.

I can still hear her saying to me... "Danny, God told me in my prayers that he is going to do great things through you. **Now, you stop** this nonsense and come back to the one who loves you."

Over 27 years ago, I took her advice, repented of my sin and came back to God. And the promises in which she shared from the Word of God with me as a child have held true in my life.

I can still remember almost thirteen years ago, when I was licensed as a Minister of the Gospel, this little five foot, 93 year old woman came walking down the aisle at our old church after the service pointing her cane at me, brushing aside by Pastor Steer and stating with the loudest voice she could muster – “See Danny, my God keeps his promises!!!”

I thank God for grandparents and parents who trust in God’s word and are committed to sharing it with their children and others.

But, what if that is not how your story is told? Maybe today, you feel like a failure as a parent, grandparent.

You may be wondering if there is any hope for the lost days and lost opportunities. You may be wondering, where do I go from here, how can I start again?

I have good news for you... God always honors a repentant heart.

In the words of a grandmother who taught me from my infancy - .

“You stop this nonsense and come back to the one who loves you.”

Turn back to Him.

Confess your failures.

Begin to obey Him right where you're at.

Even if your children are grown, God will honor your repentance.

Go to them and ask their forgiveness for failing to be an example of Jesus Christ or for failing to train them in God's ways.

God can use you as He used Lois, a grandmother or Eunice a mother in Timothy's life.

Commit to walk with God in genuine faith, not the phony kind. Be real, honest and authentic faith.

Use His Word to lead your children and grandchildren to the same genuine faith and to train them in God's ways.

You never know what your step of obedience will lead to.

My grandma Hannah was the oldest daughter in a family with 11 children. She had to quit school after 6th grade to take care of her siblings.

She would never be able to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with a crowd this size, but because of her genuine faith, her dedication to her child and grandchildren, she has a grandson who brings the hope of Christ to thousands of people every year.

But, let me also challenge you that there are those children, youth and young adults who may not have a parent or grandparent and need a Paul in their lives.

A teacher in our congregation sent me an e-mail this week. It reads:
“Many of our students do not have a reliable, supportive adult in their lives to give them direction and encouragement. It must be hard for these students to observe their classmates with parents that

volunteer and attend school events like Dads and Donuts or Moms and Muffins.

These opportunities and events are vital to our students and our school, but they are reminders for many students that they lack the same kind of support. I can only hope that they don't feel that they are unworthy of this kind of attention.

A mentor could make such a difference in the lives of students and whole families. Mentors could help in so many ways: participate in school events with children, take students to the book fair and allow them to purchase a book, listen to students read, help with school projects, take students to parks, zoos, etc., introduce a sport or hobby...We have a unique opportunity to be God's hands and feet to serve children and families from all over the world right here in Rochester.

One of our youth pastors received an e-mail from a mother pleading for her teenage son:

My son needs an adult male to guide him in his school work and respect for me. I'm not perfect either, I know that. I thank you so much for doing much of that but someone that could spend some

extra one-on-one time with him would maybe help him see the importance of his school work (specifically, studying & getting assignments in). Also, it would just be good for him and my son is fun to be with too. And I could cook some meals for that person, do their errands, etc. etc. in exchange for time spent with my son.

My friends, God has provided a platform and opportunity in our homes, church, schools and neighborhoods to share the Best of Books.

We are commanded to preach the Word and to be prepared at all times to share with great patience and careful instruction.

If you have any interest in being a mentor to an elementary age child, a teenage boy or girl or a newly married couple, who need people to share with them, Would you please write the word “mentor” on the back of your welcome card and we’ll walk this journey with you.

We’re just starting this process and you can help us along the way.

You know, there is no reason that almost 2000 years from this writing, two simple women named Lois and Eunice are celebrated in the Best of Books except for the fact that they shared the Word of God with the son of an unbelieving father and he played a significant role in changing the world for Jesus Christ.

My friends, when your life is over and people look back years from now, what influence and legacy will you have left because **you** **shared the Best of Books.**