

Prayer: In this season of merriment and mirth, we remember those for whom this time of year is difficult: for those who have lost loved ones in the last year, for those who are undergoing serious medical issues, for those who suffer from seasonal depression, for those who cannot be with their families, for military personnel serving overseas, and for all others who struggle during the holidays. God of Hope, draw near to us.

ADVENT IN PLAIN SIGHT - TEARS

Mothers are unique in their ability to influence each generation. In 2 Timothy 1:1-7, Paul memorializes a single critical trait that believing moms must prioritize. A mother's sincere faith is a powerful inducement for her children to persevere.

The church is a great equalizer for people of all genders, races, ages, and stages of life. This passage names two specific women, Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother of Timothy. We can make a broad application today: Paul paints a picture of biblical womanhood whether one is a mother or not.

The great influence of mothers is not measured by performance-based perfection. Sincere faith is the result of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through habitual private prayer and study of the Word. This faith is manifested in spiritual success and failure. A faith-filled woman longs to live in obedience to God's Word with dispositions reflecting the fruit of the Spirit. Faith is equally sincere in sorrowful and repentant acknowledgement of sin. There is no greater legacy that a mother can leave her children, a legacy that encourages their inner character.

At the time Paul wrote this letter, Timothy was at risk to flag in his loyalty to Paul, the gospel, and his own calling. Timothy was tearful, timid, and taxed! Paul calls on Timothy's mom and grandma to minister to young Timothy in this critical time in his life.

Sincere faith made Timothy spiritually attractive. 2 Timothy 1:4 shows the depth of the bond between Timothy and Paul. Paul was in prison awaiting the trial which would lead to his execution. Timothy's sensitivity and love for Paul was apparent upon their previous departure from one another. Timothy was moved to tears, and Paul now longed for Timothy to come to him. Timothy's coming to Paul would make him "filled with joy."

What enabled Timothy to be a source of joy for a man who was about ready to give his life for the cause of Jesus Christ? What moved Timothy to so miss a godly, spiritual man? It was Timothy's sincere faith, which was first found in his mother and grandmother. Timothy was directed to have the right heroes! His spiritual discernment made him a blessing to leaders and spiritually attractive.

Many mothers worry about how their own failures will influence their children. The greatest gift a mother can give her family is not perfect parenting or a perfect life, but the model of a rich relationship with Jesus. The daily disciplines that cultivate sincerity in your faith are what makes a godly woman so attractive and sought after, and this is what will make her children and grandchildren the same.

Sincere faith gave Timothy a frame of reference to overcome his timidity. Christian mothers never want their children to languish long in questioning the assurance of their salvation. Paul's reassurance in 2 Timothy 1:5 is given because, like many, Timothy was questioning his own faith. He had many options for faith in his context. The Greek culture of his father loved to hear new things (Acts 17:21). Timothy was also experiencing suffering for his faith and witnessing Paul's suffering. His temptation was to be timid and perhaps ashamed of his own faith at times (2 Timothy 1:8).

Paul references Timothy's mother and grandmother to encourage him. Their sincere faith was undeniable, and Paul was as convinced of Timothy's faith as he was of theirs.

A mother's sincere faith can lend great stability to her children's spiritual lives. The opposite of sincerity is hypocrisy, and this is the greatest enemy to Christian motherhood. Whatever million things a mother does for her family, she must always remember to quickly address sin and keep a consistent habit of Bible reading and prayer.

Sincere faith encouraged Timothy to persevere when taxed.

Paul grounds his exhortation to persevere in Timothy's spiritual heritage. The phrase "for this reason" in 2 Timothy 1:6 refers to the sincere faith of Lois and Eunice. Amazingly, these women's faith influenced Timothy's past faith, present growth, and future perseverance. Their example pushed Timothy to keep using his spiritual gift when he felt like quitting.

When mothers are worried about the future of their children, the best thing they can do is pursue their personal walk with God. The powerful witness of a woman filled with the Spirit, steeped in God's Word and prayer, who is humble and quick to seek forgiveness is a great influence in the spiritual lives of her children.

Mothers can leave many good legacies: being a great cook or homemaker, or always having time and all the answers. However, there is only one trait that ministers to the inner heart in a time of personal crisis. When the real matters of life hang in the balance -- spiritual attractiveness, assurance of salvation, and perseverance -- a mother's sincere faith is a powerful inducement for perseverance. To the glory of God. Amen.