

Today is Mother's Day; a day in which we honor our mothers, but in reality, we should honor them each and every day, because where would we be without them. We celebrate this day by giving our mothers flowers, cards, gifts, taking them out to dinner, breakfast in bed, and many other ways. Let me share with you again this year, my favorite Mother's Day card of all times.

It was one of those big cards written in a little child's printing; like the handwriting of a first grader. On the front was a little boy with a ball cap and untied sneakers. He was pulling a red wagon with toys all over the place. He had a little cut on his face and there were smudges all over the card. The card read: "Mom, I remember that little prayer you used to say for me every day when I was growing up." When you opened the card, there was the prayer: "God help you if you ever do that again." Of course, none of you ever said that prayer, right!

One of my favorite TV shows used to be NCIS until the lead actor Mark Harmon quit. Since then, I have not watched the show; it just isn't the same anymore. For those of you who are not familiar with this show, NCIS stands for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service. The team conducts criminal investigations involving the US Navy and Marines Corps. Mark Harmon played the team leader who was an ex-marine gunny sergeant named Jethro Gibbs. Now he was my favorite character for many reasons, one of which is that my grandmother was a Gibbs. In the early years of the show, the other characters included Tony the senior agent, Ziva a former Israeli massad officer, Duckie who performed the autopsies, Abby the forensic expert, and Timothy McGee who was the computer whiz and a graduate of MIT and Harvard.

When he first joined the team, Timothy was called the probie. Now a probie is a newbie at his job. No matter how long he or she works at their job, or how good they are at their job, the senior workers will always call them a probie. The probie always follows the orders of the senior workers; in Tim's case – Gibbs and Tony. The goal of a probie is to become a full-time agent. When you stop and really think about it, we as Christians are all probies. Our goal is, or should be, to become more like Jesus Christ and to grow in our faith.

This morning, I want us to look at a Biblical probie who also just happened to be named Timothy. Tim the probie was new to the Christian faith and to the ministry, and the Apostle Paul as the senior agent took him under his wings, and in his letters in 1 and 2 Timothy attempted to show him the ropes.

Timothy was a native of Lystra in the province of Galatia, a Roman colony. His mother was a Jew and his father was Greek, meaning that he came from both a Jewish and Gentile background. It has been suggested that on his first missionary trip, Paul stayed at Timothy's house when Tim was very young. It is likely that Timothy became a Christian on Paul's second mission trip there. Later Timothy would travel with Paul as one of his assistants. Timothy

became a man that Paul could trust and was Paul's representative to the churches that Paul had established, carrying messages of guidance and advice from Paul to these churches. Toward the end of his life, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus to lead the church there.

Let's look at some of this advice that the Apostle Paul sent Tim the probie in Second Timothy, the first chapter, verses 3-7.

Read 2 Timothy 1:3-7

Probies always follow the lead of the senior, more experienced person. In this passage did you see who was influencing Timothy's spiritual life; why he became a Christian? Our text listed three people – his grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice, and of course, Paul himself. In the same way, each one of us is here this morning because someone took us under their wings as probies and told us about Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds Timothy of his heritage, a heritage that he should be proud of. Paul tells him that he is thankful for Timothy's sincere faith that first lived in his grandmother Lois and then in his mother Eunice and now lives in him. Timothy is basically a third generation Christian; he is the product of at least two generations of faithful believers who shared who they were and what they believed with this young man. His faith, like that of his mother and grandmother, was sincere, true, and visible to all. Although salvation cannot be inherited from believing parents, it definitely can be passed on by how parents live out their daily lives and serve God. Did you hear that? Just because we are Christians, it does not mean that our children and grandchildren have a guaranteed ticket to heaven. We need to live in such a way as to witness to them and others each and every day of our life.

One afternoon during a revival, the pastor and an evangelist were visiting prospects. As they drove up to a lovely brick home, the pastor said: "In this home, the mother is a Christian but is not an active church member. The father is not a Christian and never attends church. Their 17-year-old son is not a Christian but does attend our services." As they arrived in the driveway, the son was coming out the front door to get into his car. He explained that his parents were away and that he was in a hurry for an appointment. As they invited him to that night's service, he said: "You know preacher, I sure wished that my mother was more faithful to the church. I think if she really meant business with her faith, it wouldn't be very long before Dad and I both would go all the way with God." There was only one person in that home with faith, but hers was not worth passing on. Is our faith worth passing on?

Unfortunately, the faith of many people today in our churches and communities is not worth passing on. Oh, at one time, they had professed their faith in Jesus Christ and even joined the church. And perhaps for a brief time they were active and faithful. But then, over time, other things became a priority in their lives, and they started neglecting the Lord and drifted away.

That's one of the problems in our society today, more parents are concerned about their children's baseball and soccer games, and their own recreation than teaching their children about God. Only one of these is eternal and only one of these is true, and that is God. Think where our world is heading when we are teaching our children and grandchildren to put their hope and faith in things and people rather than God! I'm afraid that the American family situation can be summed up in a bumper sticker I once saw: "My family is a freak show, without a tent!"

Thank God it was not this way with Paul. He went to Lystra and preached the gospel. God opened the heart of two women named Lois and Eunice, and they believed, and accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They then passed their faith on to Timothy, who later became a co-worker in the ministry with Paul. As our text this morning implies, their faith was worth passing on.

A little four-year-old boy named Johnny appeared one day at the door of his father's study with a little baby chick in his hands. The father looked at him and said: "John, take that chicken right back to its mother." "It has no mother," Johnny replied. "Then take it back to its father right now." But Johnny protested: "It has no father either; it has nothing but an old electric light." An incubator or electric lamp can serve the needs of a baby chicken. It will hatch the egg and preserve the chick until it is old enough to face life, but that is all that it can do. In the same way, parents can provide warm beds, nutritious meals, and adequate clothing, but still fail to nurture what is truly important in a child's life, and that is a genuine faith and personal relationship with the Lord.

I have shared with you before that I would not be here today except for my mother and the faith that she passed on to me. She gave me love, a good education, a solid work ethic, but the greatest gift that she ever gave me was her faith. She not only shared her faith with me and my brothers, but she demonstrated her faith each and every day by how she lived. Nothing kept her out of church on Sunday or even during the week. She loved the Lord and His church. She read her Bible every day and was always in prayer for her family and others.

So where did you get your faith? Was it your mother, your father, a grandparent, a relative, a neighbor or a friend? But the more important question for you and me this morning as mothers, fathers, grandparents, friends, and neighbors is – are we passing our faith on to our loved ones and friends? Someone once said that Christianity is always one generation from extinction. And believe me the devil is always trying to accelerate this. Our faith is a precious gift passed down to us; it is not to be hoarded and taken to the grave with us, but to be shared and passed on. I pray each and every day that Judy and I are passing our faith on to our children and grandchildren.

In our text for this morning, Paul says that he constantly remembers Timothy in his prayers day and night. In life or anything, prayer is powerful and essential. Randy Travis has a wonderful song entitled "When Mama Prays." In this song, the mother is a devoted Christian who is always in church while her husband and son are not. The husband even boldly claimed that he would never set foot in that church, but mama prayed, and on one Easter morning, he walked right down the center aisle and sat down on the first row with his wife.

In the next verse, Randy sings that one night the son came home real late after drinking and running around. As he sneaks into the house, he hears his mother in the living room on her knees talking with Jesus. He knew right then and there that his wandering days were over; because when mama prays good things happen. And believe me that is definitely true; because when mama and daddy pray, things happen. James tells us in his letter that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Never underestimate the power of prayer, especially when it comes to the faith and well-being of your children and grandchildren.

But prayer is not enough; we must also pass our faith on by the example we set for our children, grandchildren, and those around us. A college student came home during spring break feeling somewhat skeptical about religion. When he got home, he noticed that his mother looked tired and worried. So, he asked her what he could do to help her. She asked him if he would take the meal that she had prepared for a man who was dying of tuberculosis. She also suggested that he take a Bible with him since she didn't know if the man was a Christian. The son asked her what he should read to the man and she suggested the third chapter of the Gospel of John. After spending half of the afternoon with the dying man, the son told his mother that the man had accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Then he added that he had also given his heart to Jesus. His mother set the example and planted the seed, and because of her efforts two men were saved that day! She had passed her faith on.

When Patrick Henry lay dying, he called his children to his bed side and said: "I am about to leave you all my earthly possessions. However, there is also one more thing which I would like to leave you, namely, the Christian faith. If I could leave you that and nothing else, you would be rich indeed. If I could leave you everything else and not that, you would be poor indeed."

Many of us have some family heirloom that has been passed down to us from generation to generation. For example, I have my grandfather's watch which he gave my father and my father gave me, and someday one of my sons will pass it on to one of my grandchildren. In today's world many people often think about what they will inherit from the estates of loved ones. Can you think of a greater gift to pass on to your children, grandchildren, and friends than a strong faith in God and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

Paul the old veteran understood the importance of passing his faith on to Timothy, his young protie. He recognized that generations of the faithful always have had and always will have a hand in forming the next generation of faithful followers. As parents and grandparents, we can be either a barrier or a bridge between our children and grandchildren and God. If Paul could speak to us today, he might say: "What legacy are you passing on to tomorrow's children?" I hope and pray that someday, someone will write as Paul did in our text and say that they are thankful for their faith which they received from us. As our closing hymn states: "I'll shout it from the mountaintop; I want the world to know; the Lord of love has come to me, I want to pass it on." Pass it on; it will be your greatest gift to others. Happy Mother's Day!