

Becoming A Woman of Influence

By Mark Jarvinen

Last Sunday I preached the first of several messages on the theme: **“Leaving a Godly Legacy,”** noting that a Godly legacy begins with a living faith in Jesus Christ. In today’s message, our thoughts turn toward home as we consider the topic, **“*Becoming a Woman of Influence.*”** Guys, don’t tune out on this, thinking that it doesn’t pertain to you. Without a doubt, husbands have the responsibility and the privilege to help their wives reach their full potential. Besides, the next message will focus more specifically on what it means to be a Godly man. And for the single men and women who are here today, I know you’re out there and have tried to keep you in mind in crafting this message.

As we begin, let me remind all of you, regardless of your marital status, that in Jesus Christ our status with God is secure. **II Corinthians 5:17** offers these reassuring words:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Verse 19 goes on to say that ***“... God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them”***

God made the first move toward us in sending His Son to this world to be our Savior. Faith in Jesus makes us new people from the inside out, our sins no longer counting against us in the eyes of a holy and

righteous God. That said, God has entrusted us with a responsibility to spread the message of God's reconciling love to the world as his ambassadors. Paul writes in **II Corinthians 5:20** –

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

An ambassador is a representative of a higher authority. As Christians, therefore, we represent Christ. In other words, it matters what we say and do, since those who observe us and interact with us are forming an opinion about whom we represent based on how we live. This launches us into our discussion of legacy. Ambassadors most often represent their higher authority in far-away lands, but that is not to say that representing Christ in our homes isn't equally as valid or important.

Getting back to our theme of ***“Becoming a Woman of Influence,”*** I want to consider the biblical character **Eunice** today – the mother of Paul's protégé in ministry, Timothy. Let's look at **II Timothy 1:5** – Paul addressing Timothy with these words –

“I have been 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.”

My curiosity is drawn to this character, **Eunice**, because although her mother, Lois, was a woman of faith, and according to Paul, so was Eunice, there is a question mark in her background.

Acts 16:1 tells us –

“He (Paul) came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother (Eunice) was a Jewess

and a believer, but whose father was a Greek” (apparently a Gentile who was neither a convert to Judaism nor a believer in Christ).

What’s the story behind this unlikely union? Had Eunice, raised by a Christian mother, undergone a period of rebellion earlier in her life, which resulted in an ill-advised marriage? Scripture doesn’t provide an answer, but suffice it to say, as an “unequally yoked” wife in that culture, Eunice, no doubt, had obstacles to overcome, and Timothy, a believer, and probably a teenager at the time of Paul’s visit, had been positively influenced by his mother’s legacy. No doubt, God’s grace had proven sufficient for Eunice through the years and, as we follow Timothy’s life in ministry, we see that his mother’s influence was apparently foundational. The good news here for us is that although a stable, two-parent family in which husband and wife love each other is an ideal climate for raising children, for women whose situations are less than ideal, all is not lost. Leaving a Godly, Christ-centered legacy is still possible. What does Scripture say about becoming a woman of influence?

I. A WOMAN OF INFLUENCE SUBMITS.

Speaking first to all women, Paul’s teaching is clear. In **Galatians 3:28**, Paul stands the cultural norm of his time on its head by saying – ***“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*** In other words, because we are ***‘in Christ’*** and enjoy a common relationship to him, racial, national, social, and sexual distinctions are irrelevant in this

new community of faith. All Christians share the same worth in God's eyes.

That said, according to the **Genesis 2** creation account, God made male and female equal, but he also made them different, i.e. to complement each other, or fill in each other's gaps. Turning now to the marriage relationship, herein lies the delicate dance undertaken by husbands and wives, i.e. affirming their equality in Christ, while allowing their distinctiveness as male and female to flourish for the benefit of both their marriage and their family. In **Ephesians 5:21**, Paul counsels the Christian community at large to ***“submit to one another (put the needs of others ahead of your own) out of reverence for Christ.”*** Then, in v. **22** he admonishes wives to ***“submit to your husbands as to the Lord”***, and in v. **25** he exhorts ***“husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her....”*** That sounds like mutual submission at it's best.

In an ideal world, when a wife submits to her husband, putting his needs ahead of her own; and when a husband loves his wife, putting her needs ahead of his own; everyone lives happily ever after. But married life is usually not that simple. I wonder how difficult it was for Eunice to put the needs of her non-Jewish, unsaved husband ahead of her own – to believe that her husband was God's gift to her and that under his care and protection her life as a woman and as a mother would flourish. That may have been asking a lot from Eunice, but I'm reminded of Peter's teaching in **I Peter 3:1** –

“Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,”

Submission sounds pejorative in our 21st century American culture. It conjures up images of succumbing to slavery, or bowing before a dictator, or obeying a military commander. Yet, biblically, submission for a wife really means that she’s ultimately trusting God to take care of her and that God will somehow work through her husband, with all his imperfections, to bring that to pass. Eunice, in spite of her probable marital hardships, left a Godly legacy for young Timothy through her submission, reminding us that with God, all things are possible.

II. A WOMAN OF INFLUENCE PRAYS.

As Paul wrote Timothy, he said in **II Timothy 1:5** –

“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice”

Lois and Eunice were women of ***“sincere faith,”*** according to the text. I wonder what that sincere faith looked like? I dare say this mother – daughter duo must have been women of prayer. Prayer goes hand in hand with faith. If a person doesn’t have faith, he or she won’t be praying. If someone is walking by faith, that person will recognize his or her need for God more and more and will pray more and more. According to my wife, my mother-in-law was a woman of prayer. On more than one occasion she was seen kneeling by her bedside late at night – probably interceding for her daughter who had passed her curfew. ☺ My Dad has shared openly that the prayers

first of his own mother, and later his wife, (my Mom) were instrumental in his coming to faith at the age of 28. I think it's fair to say that anyone wanting to leave their kids a Godly legacy will be a person of prayer.

The Scriptures are filled with exhortations to pray. For example:

Philippians 4:6 – “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”

Colossians 4:2 – “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”

1 Thessalonians 5:17 – “Pray continually.”

Pastor Garth Hanson says this about the importance of prayer in establishing a legacy in the Christian community at large:

“Christian community without prayer is not possible. It’s like trying to cook a gourmet meal without the necessary ingredients; or fix a car without the necessary tools — it is not possible. Prayer not only gives us the necessary resources to be the community God wants us to be and accomplish the tasks God wants us to do; prayer also changes our impossible situations into possible ones. More importantly, however, prayer changes us. Prayer works on our negative, doubting, critical, apathetic sinful attitudes and behaviors. It transforms such harmful attitudes and behaviors into a joyful, loving, caring Christian community.” (Sermon Central).

III. A WOMAN OF INFLUENCE LOVES.

Eunice loved her son Timothy enough to influence him for Christ, thereby passing on a legacy of faith. In the community of faith at large, mature women were highly regarded for the influence they

passed on to other women. Paul admonishes his co-worker, **Titus**, to instruct various groups in the church on the island of Crete. In **Titus 2:3**, Paul says to Titus: ***“Likewise, teach the older women ... to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children,”*** In other words, it’s important for younger wives and mothers to be loving toward their husbands and children in the establishment of Christian homes, just as they were shown this love.

How is love best demonstrated? In **Romans 5:8**, we read- ***“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”***

Love means sacrifice. Throughout scripture, there are some telling portraits of sacrificial love for children on the part of their mothers. **Moses’ mother cared so much for him** that she broke the law of Egypt requiring that newborn Hebrew babies were to be killed. She placed him in a water-proof basket in the Nile River to keep him safe. Discovered by Pharaoh’s daughter, Moses’ mother volunteered to be Moses’ nurse and used the opportunity to teach him the faith of Israel. **How about the two women fighting for custody of a newborn child in the presence of King Solomon?** One was the real mother of the child, the other a poser. When Solomon suggested the baby be cut in half since they couldn’t agree, the real mother gave up her claim so that the baby’s life could be spared – a mother’s sacrifice. **God loved us so He sacrificed. Love means that we will sacrifice.** We show our love and leave a legacy by sacrificing for those we love. This legacy will last not just during our own lifetime,

but into your children's lifetime just like it did with Eunice's son, Timothy, and even beyond.

CONCLUSION

Four scholars were arguing over Bible translations. One said he preferred the King James Version because of the beauty and eloquence expressed in the King's English. Another said he favored the American Standard Translation because of its literalness and faithfulness to the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. A third liked the Living Bible because of its relevance to contemporary readers. But the fourth scholar bested them all by saying, "***I absolutely love my mother's translation.***" The other three chuckled at his comment, but he went on to say, "***My mother translated each page of the Bible into life and it's the most convincing translation I ever saw.***" (Swindoll, Family Life, 1988, pg 72).

Moms, don't be discouraged. Becoming a woman of influence is not an overnight process. There may be days when you wonder why you married your husband and sometimes you don't even like your kids, let alone feel love for them. Trust God that he has given you the right man for your life. Pray for your children. Love them sacrificially in the same way Christ loves you. Over the course of time, **Proverbs 31:28-30** will become more and more true in your life ***"Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."*** A-men.