

Faith Lessons from Mom

2 Timothy 1:5 & 3:14-15

May 13, 2018

Before reading this sermon, it would be worth your time to watch the video, "World's Toughest Job" which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HB3xM93rXbY>

Being a mom is a tough job. It's not for wimps! Google defines wimp = "a weak and cowardly or unadventurous person." When I think of the moms I know and the mother figures in my life who've made an impact, they are quite the opposite of a wimp. They are strong, they are brave, and they are certainly adventurous - whether they want to be or not! Today, we're going to take a look at some of the faith lessons that the mother figures in our lives have taught us.

Please open your Bible to 2 Timothy. As Paul prays for his dear brother in the Lord, Timothy, he is reminded of the godly women who influenced him. Timothy's sincere faith in Jesus Christ was a faith that was handed down from his grandmother and his mother. Many of us can relate to this in some way ourselves. There are various moms, grandmas, aunts, and other mother figures who've impacted our faith. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:5, "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." Later on, in this same letter, Paul goes on to say in 2 Timothy 3:14-15, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Paul urges Timothy to continue in the faith lessons that had been handed down to him.¹

Our focus today is not just the lessons but the godly faith behind those lessons. Specifically, things that we've learned about God from their examples and life choices. We're not just talking about trying hard to please our moms or make them proud. Rather, we're talking about understanding more about God and the sincere faith that He wants for each of our lives.

Rebecca was an 18-year-old young woman. She was beautiful, intelligent, full of life, with a whole range of opportunities ahead of her. She was attending college and working at a local restaurant. She met a man named David. He was handsome and fun to be with. They enjoyed each other's company so much that they began dating. One thing led to another and their relationship progressed to physical intimacy. Partway through the relationship Rebecca found out that David was married but going through a divorce. A short while after that, Rebecca then discovered that she was pregnant. She broke the news to David. But David had some news of his own. He had decided not to divorce his wife after all. He told Rebecca that he now planned to stay with his wife but that he was willing to pay for an abortion.

Rebecca was faced with a tough decision. Was she ready to be a single mom? Ready to be an unwed mother? Could she go through with an abortion? What should she do? Well... she decided she would keep her child despite all the difficulties. This all happened back in 1970. When her parents first found out about her pregnancy they were pretty upset and didn't want to help her but later on they came around and decided to let her stay at home for a while. David paid some hospital bills, bought a crib, and then signed away all of his rights to the child. When her child was born, he had pneumonia and was put in an incubator for the first three days of his life. He wasn't eating and couldn't keep any food down. The doctors were quickly becoming concerned. Rebecca had still not even been allowed to hold her child. Finally, the doctor made a decision, "take this child to his mother." So they did and the child began eating and held down his first food. For the first four years, this little boy and his mother went through life together just the two of them. And, as you can imagine, the two of them ended up being very close to each other. After four years, Rebecca married a man named Ken. She and Ken are still married today after 43 years. They are my parents and this is my story. I was the little boy who Rebecca decided to keep. I got permission from my mom to share this

¹ Proverbs 1:8-9 commands us, "...do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck."

story. I share it because I think it illustrates some very good faith lessons; lessons I have learned from my mom. And lessons that I want to share with you today.

The first faith lesson is that...

1. Greater love requires selfless perseverance. My mom sacrificed a lot to keep me. She sacrificed her young figure as many women do when they choose to give birth. She sacrificed her fame. An abortion could have saved her the mockery from her friends and community and it could have protected her reputation. Being an unwed mother has never been great for someone's rep. She sacrificed her chance at fortune. Raising a child alone and not being able to finish college pretty much put a damper on ever being a rich woman. Working and caring for a newborn baby without any child support takes away many of the comforts one might expect living in America. Jesus tells His disciples in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." Every mom in this room has made sacrifices for her children. In various ways these moms have laid down their lives for their kids. It's part of the calling for motherhood. Being a mom is not just one heroic act, it is stick-to-itiveness, defined by dictionary.com as "dogged perseverance and resolute tenacity."

Many more women in this room will one day become moms, whether that be through childbirth or adoption or foster care, or whatever other way they may become a mother figure. Becoming a mom puts women in a situation that calls for selfless perseverance. Many people in this world may say that they love you, but once someone has laid down their life on your behalf you really feel sure of it. Once they have made a sacrifice for you, the evidence of true love is right there in front of you. Let's thank our moms and the mother figures here today for the sacrifices they've made on our behalf. Take some time today to show your appreciation for their sacrifices. One of the key faith lessons that I've learned from my mom is that Greater love requires selfless perseverance. This is a lesson that both men and women need to learn. Selfishness comes much more naturally to us than selflessness. So let's take this faith lesson to heart and ask God to make us into people of selfless perseverance.

A 2nd faith lesson is that...

2. Mistakes require honest repentance and taking responsibility. We learned together back in 1 John 1:9,10, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." My mom, Rebecca or Becky as most people call her, took responsibility for her decision. She was honest about her sin and she repented. The reason I asked my mom for permission to share the story about our rocky beginnings is that the Bible is clear that we should honor our father and mother. So, I really wanted to be sure that it was ok with her that I share such a personal story publicly. Her response to my request was immediate and sincere. She said that she didn't mind me telling her story, that she's never lied about her past, even though it certainly wasn't perfect and she knows she messed up.

This is another thing that I admire about my mom; she is honest about her mistakes. She made things right with God, and then she took responsibility and raised me as best as she could. I guess I haven't turned out all too bad. Being human, we all sin. It's important for us to remember that our moms are human. Most kids are convinced that their mom has eyes in the back of her head and that somehow, she's all knowing. But I assure you that moms are mere mortals. A few years back I met a guy who was selling t-shirts that said, "my wife is a ninja!" I asked him what this meant. He went on to talk about what an amazing woman she was, what a great mother his wife was. How she accomplished so much in one day that it just amazed him. The only explanation for this was that she must be a ninja! ...I bought the shirt.



Moms do have limits, and yet, God has called them to an amazing role in families and in our society. God works out his marvelous plan through simple human moms. You and I can't avoid every mistake in life. All of us are human. Perhaps one of the best lessons our mothers teach us is that it's ok to be human. We should strive for holiness but there will be times when all of us make mistakes. Any mother will tell you this and Scripture will back her up. Is there sin in your life that you've been denying or sweeping under the rug? Today would be a good day to repent of that sin and take

responsibility for your words and actions. Get right with God. It's ok to be human, but it's not okay to lie about your mistakes or to leave them undealt with. I urge you to learn and apply the 2nd faith lesson, "Mistakes require honest repentance and taking responsibility."

If you are a mom or a mother figure in someone's life, I urge you to live out a distinctive Christian life, that models for others what it means to know and love Christ.

If you are blessed to have a mom or some other mother figure in your life who has invested in you, I urge you to pay careful attention to those faith lessons. Live a godly life that echoes those faith lessons. You can tell the incredible women in your life "thank you" and you can give them a card and buy some nice flowers, which you should do. But, an even better way to show our appreciation, is to imitate their godly example in our daily lives. Growing up, it wasn't usually a problem for us kids to understand what mom expected. The challenge was actually putting her good advice into practice. Let's pray that God's Spirit will enable us to live out the faith lessons that our moms have taught us.

It's important that you...

3. Write down some faith lessons you've learned from the mother figures in your life. In part, as a tribute to the amazing godly women you know. But, more importantly, to pass along the heritage of faith, so that it isn't lost. Some of you were here back in 2006, when I shared these faith lessons in a previous sermon I preached. If you were, perhaps this sermon has felt like a bit of a repeat for you. Here's the thing about faith lessons though, they are worth repeating and thinking about again and again. Some of the women we most love and admire have already passed on. Record their legacy of faith. Post it on your Facebook or Instagram account today. What are the faith lessons you've learned from the mother figures in your life? Why not take some time right now, before you even finish reading this sermon and write down one or two of them right now?

I encourage you to share these faith lessons with other people today. I know I'd like to hear them. Perhaps there are others with whom you can share them today.

Let me close with a short email that I read a while back. It's between a mom and her daughter. The subject line is "What it means to be a Mom" We are sitting at lunch when my daughter casually mentions that she and her husband are thinking of "starting a family." "We're taking a survey," she says, half-joking. "Do you think I should have a baby?" "It will change your life." I say, carefully keeping my tone neutral. "I know," she says, "no more sleeping in on weekends, no more spontaneous vacations . . ." But that is not what I meant at all. I look at my daughter, trying to decide what to tell her. I want her to know what she will never learn in childbirth classes. I want to tell her that the physical wounds of child bearing will heal, but that becoming a mother will leave her with an emotional wound so raw that she will forever be vulnerable.

I consider warning her that she will never again read a newspaper without asking, "What if that had been my child?" I looked at her carefully manicured nails and stylish suit and think that no matter how sophisticated she is, becoming a mother will reduce her to the primitive level of a bear protecting her cub. That an urgent call of "Mom!" will cause her to drop a soufflé – or her best crystal without a moment's hesitation. I want my daughter to know that everyday decisions will no longer be routine. That a five-year-old boy's desire to go to the men's room rather than the women's at McDonald's will become a major dilemma. However decisive she may be at the office, she will second-guess herself constantly as a mother.

Looking at my attractive daughter, I want to assure her that eventually she will shed the pounds of pregnancy, but she will never feel the same about herself. That her life, now so important, will be of less value to her once she has a child. That she would give it up in a moment to save her offspring, but will also begin to hope for more years – not to accomplish her own dreams, but to watch her children accomplish theirs. I want her to know that a caesarian scar or shiny stretch marks will become badges of honor.

My daughter's relationship with her husband will change, but not in the way she thinks. I wish she could understand how much more you can love a man who is careful to powder the baby or who never hesitates to play with his child. I think she should know that she will fall in love with him again for reasons she would now find very unromantic.

I want to describe to my daughter the exhilaration of seeing your child learn to ride a bike. I want to capture for her, the belly laugh of a baby who is touching the soft fur of a dog or cat for the first time. I want her to taste the joy that is so real, it actually hurts. My daughter's quizzical look makes me realize that tears have formed in my eyes. "You'll never regret it," I finally say. Then I reach across the table, squeeze my daughter's hand and offer a silent prayer for her, and for me, and for all the mere mortal women who stumble their way into this most wonderful of callings. This blessed gift from God . . . that of being a mother.

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