

**CHURCH IMPROVEMENT: BUILDING A CHURCH
THAT HONORS GOD AND LOVES PEOPLE BY
TEACHING AND LIVING TRUTH THAT
TRANSFORMS CHILDREN AND TEENS
2 Timothy 1:4-5 & 3:10-17**

Please review this week's catechism question.

Did you introduce yourself to anyone you previously did not know after this past Sunday's worship service?

INTRODUCTION

A. Do you think there is any connection between the character and conduct of children and how parents raise their children? Why or why not?

B. How would you put these verses together: Prov. 22:6, 19:18, 13:24 with Prov. 15:5, 20?

Usually, when children are the recipients of good and godly parenting they are good and godly. Therefore, parents who do not engage in good and godly parenting contribute to the eternal destruction of their children. However, some children are fools and despise their good and godly parents, thus bringing eternal harm to themselves.

C. What do we find out about Timothy from the following passages?

➤ 1 Corinthians 4:14-17, Phil. 2:19-22, 1 Thess. 3:1-5, 1 Timothy 1:2: *Timothy is Paul's fellow worker. He is like a son to Paul and he loves him very much. He is so valuable to Paul and to his work of spreading the gospel that when Paul received word of all the trouble that was going on in the church in Corinth, he sent Timothy to remind the Corinthians of the gospel and the way of life that Paul had taught them. Similarly, when there was difficulty in Thessalonica, he sent young Timothy as his representative. Then again, when Paul is in prison and writes to the church in Philippi he tells them that he is going to send to them Timothy. In*

this passage he makes a remarkable claim about him. Timothy, unlike everyone else that Paul knows, is interested in what interests Jesus and that is the well-being of his church. Timothy is living for the glory of Christ in the joy of Christ's church, just like Paul.

➤ 1 Timothy 4:12 & 2 Timothy 2:22: *Timothy is yet a young man (probably late twenties to mid-thirties) when Paul writes these two letters to him. He is the main teacher, apostolic representative to the church of Ephesus and yet he is a young man. He has spent over a decade with Paul, which must mean that he was quite young when Paul first brought him along as recorded in Acts 16.*

➤ Acts 16:1-3 with 14:8-23: *Timothy is the son of a non-believing Greek man and a devout Jewish mother who, when she heard the gospel of Christ, became a Christian. He grew up in the Greek city and culture of Lystra, which is in the southeast corner of modern Turkey. He evidently did not participate in the public worship of God as a Jew as evidenced by the fact that he was not circumcised. Most likely, as is often the case when unbelievers are married to believers, especially when the believer is the wife, his un-believing father did not permit attendance at synagogue or participation in the overt and public observances of Jewish life. His mother and probably he became Christians when Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra. They witnessed or at least heard about the healing of the crippled man and the subsequent attempt of the pagan crowd to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas as though they were Hermes and Zeus come to earth. They witnessed or at least heard about Paul's stoning and being left for dead and of his getting up and going on to Derbe to preach the gospel.*

What is remarkable about this young man is that even though he was raised in a home where faith was not embraced by his father, which often leads to children, especially sons, not embracing faith, this young man had a reputation within the church in his home town of Lystra and of the neighboring town of Iconium as being a young man who was full of faith and able to teach the gospel. He was well known to the Christians in these two towns and was recommended to Paul as someone who would make a good

companion and worker for the gospel on Paul's apostolic team. Most likely he is in his late teens or early twenties when he joins Paul on his missionary journey. He spent the next 10-15 years of his life accompanying Paul in his travels and ministry and sufferings throughout the countries bordering the northern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

What I want us to see in our study are the human factors that led to Timothy becoming, by his late teen years, a young man whom was viewed by his church as ready for missionary service and who, in spite of a timid personality, remained faithful to Christ over a lifetime. We know that ultimately the reason that Timothy became a man of faith and persevered is the grace of God. However, we have recorded for us in the NT and especially in Paul's second letter to Timothy the human factors, the means of grace that were instrumental in Timothy becoming the man he became. In seeing these human factors we will be seeing the ordinary means that God uses to save the children of the church.

STUDY

1. According to Exodus 34:15-16, Deuteronomy 7:3-4, Joshua 23:12-13, 1 Kings 11:1-2, what is God's estimation of Eunice's marriage to a Greek (non-Jewish) man?

We are not told how it happened, but while a young woman, Eunice married a non-Jewish, pagan Greek man. Was this a young, illicit romance or the result of a man from the dominant culture forcing a minority woman to bow to his demand to become his wife or perhaps the arrangement of two sets of parents seeking some advantage for themselves? We do not know. What we do know is that this marriage was a violation of God's command in the OT where on scores of occasions the people of Israel are commanded to not intermarry with non-Jewish people as their spouses will lead them into idolatry. Eunice ought not to have married her Greek husband.

2. What do we find out about Eunice from 2 Timothy 1:4-5 & 3:14-15?

She and her mother were true Jewish believers in Yahweh. They were not merely law-abiding Jews but they had a true faith in the promise of God to send his Messiah to save his people, just like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, Zechariah and Elizabeth. When Eunice heard the gospel she recognized that Jesus of Nazereth was the long awaited Messiah and her Savior. She got this faith from her mother, Lois, and the implication is that Timothy got this faith from his mother. His mother made sure that he learned the Hebrew Scriptures, even though she was married to a non-Jew.

3. What should we learn from Eunice's unsanctioned marriage, her sincere faith, her faithful instruction of Timothy and Timothy's becoming a teenager and then a man full of faith and useful in the work of the gospel?

Eunice did not let her entry into an unsanctioned marriage turn her away from God or cause her to despair that she might belong to God and love and serve him. She lived in repentance and by faith in the midst of the circumstances she found herself, regardless of how she got there. She trusted the God who revealed himself through the Jewish prophets in the Scriptures. She loved him and raised her son to love him, even though she had entered an illicit marriage. Eunice did not have an easy life. As many of you know, being married to someone who does not share your love for Christ has its own measure of pain. What I am telling you is the amazing grace of God. He works in the lives of all kinds of sinners and there is no condition you can get yourself into where he cannot forgive you and then use you, in spite of sinful choices you've made in the past that have ongoing consequences in the present. While Eunice could not fully participate in synagogue and practice her faith out of deference to her husband, she made sure that she taught her son the truth of God as given in the OT. We don't know how she did it, but she made sure that Timothy, who spoke Greek, learned to read Hebrew. She told him the stories and explained to him the law and filled him with the same hope that filled her heart, one day God would visit his people and send his Messiah to rescue them.

4. How does Paul describe the OT Scriptures in v. 15? What does this mean?

While it is the OT that Timothy was taught, it was these Scriptures that made him “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” In other words, Eunice didn’t teach the Bible to Timothy so he could win at Bible trivia or in order to perform some religious duty. She taught him the Bible so that the Messiah would save him. It was due to her faith-filled instruction that when Timothy heard the gospel, along with his mother, he believed what Paul said, that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the OT. God graciously enabled Eunice and Timothy to see that the Christ promised in the pages of the OT was this Jesus of Nazareth who suffered and died and rose again. They saw that Jesus Christ and his saving grace is the topic of this book that they knew so well because they had studied it daily for so long.

5. What should we learn from the example of Eunice and Timothy?

When you do not teach the Bible to your children in your home you are working for their damnation, not their salvation. God may save them in spite of you, but he will not save them through you. Teaching the Bible to your children does not guarantee that God will graciously save them but you can know with certainty that God will not save them apart from a knowledge of Christ and his salvation that is only found in the Bible. For the sake of our children we are to make our homes centers of biblical and theological education. We are to work so that our children, “from infancy know the sacred writings that are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus.” Read the Bible, use the catechism, memorize the Bible, tell the stories around the dinner table, ask your children questions and encourage them to ask you questions. If your spouse won’t help, do it anyways, as Eunice did with Timothy.

Children in the church, by God’s grace, become faithful Christian adults through parents and grandparents who intentionally teach them the Bible.

6. What must Timothy’s experience have been like from the time Paul left Lystra at the end of Acts 13 until he returned in Acts 16:1 (Probably 3-7 year time span) to find young Timothy coming highly recommended to join the apostolic church planting team?

It seems that Timothy had gotten involved, as a teenager, in the full life of his church. He had developed a reputation as a godly young man who was gifted in teaching the gospel from the OT Scriptures. Why was he able to do this? Because his grandmother and mother had taught him the Scriptures from infancy and so when he heard the good news that Jesus was the Messiah, he immediately began to make the connections and was able to teach with clarity. The thing that I want to emphasize here is that Timothy, as a young man, was accepted into the life of the church. He was a full participant and was respected for his insight and knowledge of the Scriptures. He was not segregated into a youth ghetto and treated as if he was in some special category, not child but not adult. The brothers who recommended him were most likely the elders of these churches. Timothy had significant relationships with other mature believers in his local church.

7. According to 2 Timothy 3:10-11, what else did Timothy experience that helped make him the man he became?

The word translated “know” in v. 10 is not the usual word for know. It technically means, “know by experience” or “closely pay attention to.” In other words, Timothy knows all this stuff about Paul because of his close relationship with Paul and his careful attention to Paul’s message and life. Timothy has become the man he has become because of his close relationship with Paul as a young man. Paul wants Timothy to imitate him and Timothy knows what it means to imitate Paul because of his long and close association with him.

Notice that what Paul emphasizes about their common experience is Timothy’s knowledge of the persecution he suffered when planting the churches in Timothy’s home state. He reminds Timothy of how the Lord rescued him out of all these sufferings. He wants Timothy to recall what he witnessed as a teenager, Paul being stoned, left for dead but then rising up and continuing to preach the gospel. Then Paul tells Timothy that he can expect to experience what he witnessed firsthand in his life, persecution and the Lord rescuing him out of it. He also reminds him that false teachers are not going to go away. He will always have enemies. What is apparent is this: Timothy has grown up in his faith from his association with Paul in the midst of real life. He didn’t go away to seminary to prepare for this job. He

lived with Paul and lived what Paul lived and now, when Paul is not with him, Paul only needs to remind him of what life was like and Timothy immediately knows what is expected. He is able to simply remind Timothy of how the Lord worked in his life so that Timothy can gather strength from how God helped Paul endure suffering and false teachers.

8. Who has had the most influence on you spiritually and how did this happen?

9. What are the barriers you see to adults and teens in our church developing significant relationships?

10. What are some things we as a church might do to promote and encourage more significant relationships between adults and teens? What is one thing you could do?

Children in the church, by God's grace, become faithful Christian adults through real life relationships with faithful Christian adults.

11. What does Paul tell us about the Scriptures in vv. 17-18?

God is the source of all the Scriptures. He has "breathed" them out. All the Scriptures are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. When the Bible has its way in a person's life that person then becomes adequate and equipped for doing good in the world.

12. What does it mean that the Bible, teaches, rebukes, corrects and trains? What "work" do each of these words describe?

This book, which God himself has breathed out, is useful to teach us the truth about ourselves, about God, and about the only way to be saved from sin, death and hell. Without the Bible we cannot know God, nor the truth about ourselves. God, who is invisible, has revealed himself to us on the pages of this book. As God teaches us the truth through this book he also rebukes us for the false ideas we have about ourselves, about God and about reality. But the Bible

doesn't only teach us the truth it also trains us in how to live a righteous life. Actually it corrects us for the wrong ways we live and then trains us in how to live a righteous life. The Bible is continually showing me how I think and behave wrong and then telling me the truth I must believe and the righteousness that I am to live.

13. What must be true about Christians if this is what the Bible does? What should our experience be like when we come to church or go to a Bible study or read the Bible?

To be a Christian necessarily means that I admit that I am wrong on a regular basis as I grow in my knowledge of God's word. Being a Christian is being a person who regularly must confess the many ways we have disobeyed God. We are continually confronted by God in his word with the wrong ways we live and talk and think and then shown the right way to live. You ought to regularly walk away from Sunday morning having discovered new ways you were thinking wrong and living wrong and also new ways to think right and live right. If you never leave church without being confronted with your thinking or living, either you're not listening or the Bible isn't being taught there. Christians daily are confronted with the need to change our minds and to change our lives. As the word of God has its teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness effect upon us we grow up, we become men and women who know how to live faithful and productive lives in God's world.

14. What are some ways you have experienced the Bible teaching, rebuking, correcting and training you in righteousness?

Children in the church, by God's grace, become faithful Christian adults through a church that depends upon God's word to create mature Christians.