

### ‘The Impact Of Godly Parents’ (5)

A man in Scotland calls his son in London the day before Christmas Eve and says, ‘I hate to ruin your day, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are divorcing; forty-five years of misery is enough.’ ‘Dad, what are you talking about?’ the son screams. ‘We can’t stand the sight of each other any longer’ the father says. ‘We’re sick of each other and I’m sick of talking about this, so you call your sister in Leeds and tell her.’

Frantically, the son calls his sister, who explodes on the phone. ‘No way they’re getting divorced!’ she shouts, ‘I’ll take care of this!’ She calls Scotland immediately, and screams at her father ‘You are NOT getting divorced. Don’t do a single thing until I get there. I’m calling my brother back, and we’ll both be there tomorrow. Until then, don’t do a thing, DO YOU HEAR ME?’ and hangs up. The old man hangs up his phone and turns to his wife. ‘Sorted! They’re coming for Christmas and they’re paying their own way.’

We’re coming to the end of our sermon series on ‘**the family**’, and today we’re going to finish the series by trying to understand the impact of godly parents. I want to share two sermons with you today, but you’ll be glad to hear I won’t be speaking twice as long.

I want to begin by sharing some thoughts with all the fathers among us and then later I’ll share some thoughts with all our mothers. And so, whether you’re a married couple, a single father or mother, a stepfather or stepmother, I’m sure God’s Word will have something to say to you today.

Now you may not have had the best experience of a father in your life, but your heavenly Father is the prime example of what a father should be like. And our goal, as His children, is to reflect our Father’s image in our lives. And the goal for every human father is to reflect God’s image in our children’s lives.

Fathers, if we want our kids to know what God is like, then we must show them through our lives, our speech and our conduct. In other words, the way we conduct ourselves as fathers is a reflection of the way God portrays Himself to us.

**Colossians 3:21** ‘Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.’ Paul says one of the goals in being a good father is to raise our children without discouraging them. That word ‘**discouraged**’ carries with it the idea of losing heart, being spiritless.

I mentioned earlier that some of you may not have had a good experience when it comes to fathers. Maybe all you’ve heard all your life are words like, ‘Oh, you’re good for nothing, you’ll never achieve much in life, you’re a waste of space.’

Now let me ask you, **what kind of impact will those words have on your children?** Hearing those kinds of words, over and over, can have a deeply negative effect in your child’s life. Those kinds of words are deeply discouraging, especially to a child.

And Paul says, fathers, I want you to practice the opposite, when it comes to raising your kids. He says, fathers, you need to install hope in your child’s life. You need to show them what it means to be happy, confident and courageous. In today’s society children are being raised to put their hope in their looks, wealth, popularity. But that’s not the kind of hope Paul has in mind, he’s speaking about giving our children hope in God, not things. Fathers, don’t discourage your children but give them hope in God.

And when we speak about showing our children what happiness is all about, that doesn’t mean we give into their every demand, and give them everything they want. No! The kind of happiness we’re speaking about is the happiness which can only come from knowing God.

The kind of happiness that **Romans 5:3-4** says, ‘rejoices through suffering and produces endurance and character and hope’. It’s the kind of happiness which agrees with the psalmist in **Psalm 4:7-8** ‘Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound. In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.’ Fathers don’t discourage your children but fill them with joy in God by helping them to hope in God.

Now I don’t believe there’s anything wrong with instilling self-confidence in a child, but there comes a point when they can easily become too self-confident in themselves. As father’s it’s important to help them be confident but what’s more important is instilling in them, how to be more God-confident with their lives.

And if anyone knows about being too self-confident it was the apostle Paul. Listen to what he says about himself in **2 Corinthians 1:9** ‘We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.’

Fathers, don’t discourage your children but fill them with hope in God and show them how they can be happy in God. Teach them to have confidence in God and encourage them to be courageous enough to attempt great things for the glory of God.

Paul not only says, ‘**don’t discourage your children**’ but he also says in **Colossians 3:21** ‘**Fathers, do not embitter your children.**’ **Ephesians 6:4** ‘**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.**’ That word ‘**embitter**’ or ‘**exasperate**’ carries with it the idea of over exercising your authority.

Remember Paul has just said in **Colossians 3:20** ‘**Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.**’ When we put these two sentences together, it’s clear that God has given parents tremendous authority and responsibility. But Paul’s warning here for fathers is that they shouldn’t misuse that God-given authority. You see it’s possible that a father could treat their kids in such a way that the kids end up being broken in spirit and become hopelessly discouraged.

Now when I was being raised, there was only one authority in our home and that was my dad. He was the one who set the rules, he was the one who dished out the punishment. And if I said anything out of turn or did anything wrong, then I would know about it very quickly. Now don’t get me wrong, I believe that discipline is good for a child, but there are times when you can overdo it.

On a personal level, for me, growing up was all about obeying the rules and regulations. There was never any talk about love, there was never any hugs and kisses, it was all about obedience. That’s why many people struggle with calling God Father, they see God as an unloving Father who does nothing but give out rules and regulations and demands obedience. Father’s we need to get the balance right, otherwise we’ll end up really discouraging our children.

**And what is the correct balance? Ephesians 6:4** ‘**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.**’ Fathers instead is discouraging your children, train them and instruct them in God’s Word. Let me say it again, our goal, as His children, is to reflect our Father’s image in our lives. And the goal for every human father is reflect God’s image in our children’s lives. If you practice double standards in your home, your kids will grow up believing God has double standards. If you practice sin in your home, they will believe that God isn’t all that bothered about sin.

**Proverbs 22:6** ‘**Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.**’ Solomon says children who learn righteous living in the home will have a standard to which they’re able to return if they wander into a life of sin. Ask yourself, if you don’t teach them about God and His ways, **who will?** If you don’t show them what God is like by the way you treat them, **who will?**

You see, if living right for God isn’t important to you, then you can be sure it won’t be important to your children. If praying isn’t important to you, then prayer won’t be important to them. If attending worship and Bible studies isn’t important to you, then it won’t be important to your children. Fathers, we must teach God’s Word to our children and we must show them an example of what it means to live as Christians.

You see, God the Father wants all His children to have hope, He wants all His children to be happy. He wants all His children to put our confidence in Him and He wants all His children to be courageous enough to try new things for His glory. If our heavenly Father wants all these things for His children, **don’t we as fathers want our children to have the same?**

You see, fathers have a special responsibility for the moral life of the family. So, I want to encourage all you fathers to take that responsibility seriously. Teach them God’s Word, show them in your life what it means to live by that Word because that will have a huge impact in their lives. I want to encourage you to be the kind of father who gives hope, happiness, confidence and courage to your children.

And who knows, whether they become Christians or not, they'll always have your example to fall back on. If they ever stop to wonder what our heavenly Father looks like, they can always look back on how you raised them.

Now let's go ahead and share some thoughts on the impact of being a godly mother. I don't know of a more special group of people who have a huge impact on a child's life than mothers. It's such a shame in our modern society that more and more women are being encouraged to seek fulfilment in their career rather than raising their kids. Now I understand that mums need to work to help make ends meet, but if you were to ask most children, they would tell us that they would be happier if mum was home more often.

I want us to look at the impact and influence a godly mother and grandmother can have in their children's and grandchildren's lives. I want to begin by looking at a well-known young man named Timothy. **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.'

The first thing we learn concerning Timothy's mother and grandmother is that they were women of sincere faith. Their faith was so sincere Paul says to Timothy, '**I see it in you**'. Now here's the interesting part of Timothy's mother and grandmother, we don't know when these women became Christians.

But what we do know is what Luke tells us in **Acts 16:1** 'Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.' Now it's possible that Lois had been converted in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and had come home to tell her daughter. It's also possible that both women were devout Jews who responded to Paul's preaching when he visited Lystra. All we know about Timothy's father, is that he apparently was a Greek unbeliever. Why a godly woman of faith like Eunice would marry a pagan man, no one knows.

Now mums, you may not be married to a believer, you may be married to someone who isn't interested in Christ, but there's good news. Eunice's story is in the Bible to give hope to women in mixed marriages. If her son, Timothy, could grow up to follow the Lord as he did, then God can do the same for your children, even if your husband isn't a believer.

Yes, God intends for the father to take the lead in the spiritual training of the children, but mothers, you can still have a great impact even in situations where the father is opposed to God. But for you to be able to influence your children, you must have a sincere faith.

You see, when you're driving to worship and your arguing with your husband, don't believe for one second that your kids don't notice. You can't argue in the car one moment and then go into worship all smiles and pretend everything is alright, your kids notice these things. That's being a hypocrite, it's not genuine sincere faith and kids can tell if you're faking your faith. If your teaching a lady's class and your encouraging everyone to read their Bible more and pray with their families more. Let me tell you, your kids will be the first to notice if you're practicing what you're preaching.

Sincere faith means that you sincerely live what you believe. Sincere faith means that you walk spend time with your kids, reading the Bible and praying together. Sincere faith means that you show your kids that you're not perfect but always trying to please the Lord. Sincere faith means that you develop godly character qualities and attitudes of submission, thankfulness, and joy in the Lord.

And let me tell you mums, demonstrating that kind of faith will have a huge impact in your kid's lives. Timothy's father wasn't the man to instil that kind of faith in his son's life, but his mother and grandmother did just that. Timothy could see the Lord in them, and it attracted him to the Lord.

And one of the main ways to instil that faith in your children is by training them in God's Word. **2 Timothy 3:14** 'But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it.'

This tells us that Timothy was clearly influenced by God's Word. Timothy was looking at his mother's and grandmother's lives and comparing the way they lived with the Scriptures. And overtime he became convinced that the Scriptures were reliable and true.

Mums, you should never underestimate the power of God's Word to save. Teach them from a young age, help them to read, study and obey the book for themselves, but you need to be doing this yourself. You see, you can't pass on knowledge, wisdom and understanding unless you possess it in the first place.

If your kids rarely see you seeking God through His Word, then they won't either. If your kids don't see you changing and growing in your understanding of God's Word, then they won't get motivated to change and grow themselves. If watching EastEnders or the X-factor is more important to you than studying God's Word with them, then your kids will follow the same example. In other words, your kids should be able to see evidence of your love for God's Word.

**There was a little boy who went to Sunday school for the first time and his mother said, 'What was it like? Who was your teacher?' The little boy said, 'I don't know, I think it must have been Jesus' grandmother because that's all she talked about.'** Mums, what will your kids remember about you when they get older? What did mum talk about all the time?

Godly mothers will not only train their children in God's Word, but they will also use God's Word to lead them to saving faith in Jesus. **2 Timothy 3:15 'From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.'**

Children need to know more than just Jesus loves them and wants to be their friend. When they get to a certain age, they need to know what God's Word says about the condition of their hearts. They need to understand why Christ came in the first place and died on that cross. They need to understand that they can't earn God's forgiveness but simply receive it. They need to know that, that they are sinners in need of salvation.

Godly mothers will not only train their children in God's Word and use God's Word to lead them to saving faith in Jesus. But they will also train their children how to live by God's Word. **2 Peter 1:3-4 'His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.'** Mums, you don't have to go outside of God's Word to teach your children how to live. Peter tells us that God's Word is all we need to live a life which pleases God.

**2 Timothy 3:16 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.'** Paul tells Timothy that God's Word is useful in so many areas, it's all you need to teach your children about God and how to live their lives for God.

The point is simply this, if your kids see you applying God's Word to your life, then they will apply it to their lives. If they see the Lord living in you, they will want the Lord living in them. And so, mums, the way you live your Christian life, can have a huge impact in your child's life. Not only for the here and now when they are young, but especially when they are older.

We don't know what the lifelong impact Lois and Eunice had on young Timothy. Yes, he was raised in the Scriptures, yes, he became a Christian and a close friend of Paul. But we mustn't lose sight of the fact that the foundation of his faith was laid by his godly mother and grandmother.

Now mums, there's something important I want you to understand. Just because you raise your child in the Scriptures, just because you showed them what saving faith looks like, just because you've demonstrated to them how a Christian lives. This is no guarantee that they will grow up to become Christians or stay faithful all their lives.

Now I say this because mum's especially feel like they've failed if their kids don't become Christians or fall away. But mums, you're not a failure, not once in the Scriptures does it say you're responsible for your children becoming Christians or remaining faithful. If God holds you accountable for anything, it's raising your child up in His ways. But becoming a Christian is their choice, remaining faithful is their choice. And so, fathers, mothers, single parents or stepparents, please know that you can have a huge impact not only in your home but in your child's life.

The world is in desperate need of an example of what a godly family looks like. The world needs to see Christian wives bringing glory to God by submitting to their husbands. The world needs to see Christian husbands sacrificially loving their wives as Christ loved the church.

The world needs to see Christian children not only obeying their parents but honouring them too. The world needs to see Christian fathers giving hope, happiness, confidence and courage to their children. The world needs to see Christian mothers giving their children the best possible start to life by installing a faith in Christ in them which will lead to their salvation.