

## Lois & Eunice

2021-08-08

2Tim. 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, 4 greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, 5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. 6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

### The implications of dates and ages

The passage we just read was written in AD 65. That was 15 years after Paul conscripted Timothy in Acts 16. So the question is, "How old was Timothy?" Many believe that he was in his mid-forties when Paul wrote 1 & 2 Timothy to him. I believe that he was 39 - almost 40 when 1 Timothy was written. Obviously those two positions come from two different assumptions - both of which may be wrong. But let me explain why most people who have examined all the facts are convinced that Timothy was somewhere between 39 and 45 years old when 1 and 2 Timothy were written.

Some believe that he was ordained to the ministry in Acts 16, and based on Numbers 4, 1 Chronicles 23:3 (1 Chron. 23:3; cf. Numb. 4:3,23,30,39,43,47; etc.) they state the he would therefore have been at least thirty years old - if not older.  $30 + 15 = 45$ . So that's where they get that.

But there are several reasons that make it at least possible that Timothy was as young as 25 in Acts 16. I'll just give you two of the reasons for believing this: First, Numbers 8:24 allowed apprentices to the office of eldership to begin training and actual involvement in ministry (such as preaching) at age 25. Timothy could have been older than that, but probably not younger. At age 25 they couldn't be ordained, but they could begin ministering as they were learning the ropes. And for the first five years, that's exactly what Timothy did. Timothy was mainly working with Paul's team and learning the ropes of ministry. He acted as an apprentice. I believe it was *later* that presbytery laid hands on him and ordained him. So it is equally possible that in Acts 16, Timothy was being conscripted as an apprentice for ministry.

Second, 1 Timothy 4:12 (written earlier in the same year as 2 Timothy) says, "Let no one despise your youth." Commentators generally believe that the Greek word for "youth" probably would not be used beyond age 40. As one commentary stated, "The word ... (νεότης, *neotēs*) could be used to indicate any age up to forty."<sup>1</sup> Well, if he started elder-

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<sup>1</sup> C. Michael Moss, *1, 2 Timothy & Titus, The College Press NIV Commentary* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994), 1 Ti 4:12.

apprenticeship at the minimum age of 25 in Acts 16, that would make him almost 40 when 1 Timothy was written (and 40 when 2 Timothy was written), and at the time of 1 Timothy he would still fit the word νεότης.

But others still strongly argue that Timothy was in his mid-forties at the writing of 1 Timothy. But for the sake of the argument, let's assume the youngest age possible. Anything older proves our point even more.

If Timothy was 40 in AD 65, and was 25 in AD 50, then he was born two years before Jesus began his ministry. Yet 2 Timothy 3:15 says that he was being instructed in the Scriptures from infancy by a believing mother. This makes Eunice an Old Covenant believer who had been looking forward to the Messiah. And since the faith dwelt *first* in Eunice's mother, Lois, that means that Lois was an Old Covenant believer *before* Eunice. Lois trusted the Old Testament's message long before Christ entered the ministry - likely before Eunice was born and if he was indeed older (as some suppose) maybe even before Christ was born. And I will save the practical implications of this for later.

## Family background

### Timothy's mother = Eunice; maternal grandmother = Lois (2 Tim. 1:3-7)

But first, let's introduce you to the family. The most famous family member was obviously Timothy. 2 Timothy 1:5 says that his mother's name was Eunice. Acts 16 tells us that she was a Jewish believer. And Timothy's maternal grandmother was Lois. She too was a believer. And everyone agrees that she too would have been a Jewish believer.

### Eunice and her mother, Lois, were Old Covenant believers before the Gospel came to this region; indeed, before Jesus began His ministry (Acts 16:1-5; 2 Tim. 1:5)

How far back did this faith go? When you compare Acts 16 with 2 Timothy 1 it becomes clear that Eunice was a strong believer before Timothy was born - and since we hold to a later date for his birth, he was born in approximately AD 25. It becomes probable, but less sure, that Lois was a believer before Eunice was born. And all three of them are said by 2 Timothy 1:5 to have a genuine faith. In fact, Paul admired their faith. Their faith was remarkable enough that it filled Paul with joy. The remembrance of that earlier vibrant faith filled him with joy. But that faith did not come out of the blue. It was a faith that Paul says was passed on from Timothy's mother, Eunice, and from Timothy's grandmother, Lois. There was a covenantal passing on of the *same* faith - which means that both Lois and Eunice had a strong faith in God as well.

Just as a side-note, it also shows that true Old Testament religion is essentially the same faith as New Testament religion. And several commentators have said that this is a necessary deduction from 2 Timothy 1:5.

## The faith of both women was a genuine faith that impacted all they did (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5)

The next thing we see in these two women is that they had a faith that impacted all that they did. This is a very important point to note in why covenant succession happened. There are two Greek words in verse 5 that indicate this. 2 Timothy 1:5 says, “when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.”

The word for “genuine faith” means non-hypocritical faith. There was nothing pretend about the faith of any of the three of them. There are some people who pretend to be believers, but this was not them. What you saw outwardly was what was present inwardly. And commentators point out that it was an ongoing faith that characterized their lives. Their lives illustrated that they were living by faith.

The second Greek word is ἐνοικέω, the word that is translated as “dwelt in.” There was a faith that dwelt in all three of them. That Greek word is a rare word only used by Paul in the New Testament, and it too emphasizes that this faith was an active faith that took up residence in them. One Greek expert translates it this way: “To house in you continually.” The idea is that their faith didn’t just make an occasional appearance, but was a full-time, year-round resident. It impacted everything that they did. They were sold-out believers. Lois and Eunice were Old Covenant believers initially, but they were sold out to God.

## Timothy’s dad was an unbeliever

But this brings up a major major problem. It almost seems like a contradiction to some. If Eunice and Lois were believers who approached everything in life through the eyes of faith, how on earth could Eunice get married to an unbeliever?!

## Two glaring failures (Acts 16:1-3)

Turn to Acts 16. This passage gives two glaring failures in this home. Acts 16, beginning to read at verse 1.

Acts 16:1 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

The two glaring failures are that she married an unbeliever and she failed to apply the Old Testament sign of the covenant to Timothy. Timothy was not circumcised. Acts 16 says that Paul had him circumcised as an adult. Yet Scripture is clear that if even *one* spouse was a believer, the child was supposed to be set apart to God by circumcision. That was the sign of the covenant. Genesis 17 is quite clear that the child is cut off from the covenant if the sign of the covenant is not applied, so how on earth did covenant succession happen?

The other failure was being unequally yoked. We know that the father was an unbeliever from two words that Luke uses here: the words “but” and “Greek.” She was a believer, *but* his father was a Greek. Being a Greek is contrasted with being a believer. The word “Greek” is used for an unbelieving pagan. So how can we reconcile this with the previous data points, which clearly show that Eunice lived out her faith from the time that Timothy was born and before?

And the problem is even worse. Many commentators believe that the Jewish grandmother, Lois, was also unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. They conclude this from four Scriptural facts. First, Paul *only* singles out the two women as having faith in Timothy’s previous generations (2 Tim. 1:5). That would be extremely unusual if the fathers were believers. Second, Paul states that Timothy was immersed in the Old Testament Scriptures from the time he was in the womb, which means that Eunice believed in God *before* Timothy was born (2 Timothy 3:15). But third, 2 Timothy 1:5 says that Lois was a believer first. Which, fourth means that Lois was a believer when Eunice got married to an unbeliever. How could a believing couple allow their daughter to marry a pagan? Jews were forbidden from marrying unbelievers. So are Christians. So commentators believe that Lois too was married to an unbeliever.

### How can this be reconciled with the previous point on genuine faith?

So how do I reconcile this with the previous point? I’m not sure. True believers do sometimes marry unbelievers. We saw last week that the patriarch, Jacob, did. It doesn’t make it right, but people of faith can still do bad things. But it may be that both marriages were arranged and neither Lois nor Eunice had a choice about the matter. It could be that she was deceived like Jacob was. Or there could be another reason. We simply don’t know. I think there is a reason God keeps us from knowing why. I believe it more easily enables *all* unequally yoked believers to be challenged by them, inspired by them, and given hope by them. So if you have friends who are mega discouraged because they are unequally yoked and they have finally woken up to how bad that situation is, Lois and Eunice may be of encouragement to them.

With no Christian father or grandfather, it would have been *very* difficult for Lois to pass on the faith to Eunice and for Eunice to pass on the faith to Timothy. The statistics are definitely *against* that happening. Many studies have demonstrated that the statistics are against this. Yet, despite statistics, these two women prove that God’s grace can perform covenant succession even when husbands are not sold out to God - *if certain things are in place*. And we’ll get to those certain things a little later.

### A word to dads

But what are the statistics that would have been against them? They vary slightly, but let me read from one study reported in Discipleship Journal. It says,

When the father is an active believer, there is about a seventy-five percent likelihood that the children will also become active believers. But if only the mother is a believer, this likelihood is dramatically reduced to fifteen percent.<sup>2</sup>

The study had a pretty low standard for what constituted an active believer. It was basically an average evangelical who went to church, provided for the family, and tried to be nice mom or dad. I think with our worldview and covenant theology, the statistics are closer to 95% and some studies show even higher. But they were looking at average Christian homes with a good dad.

Well, I want to spend a bit of time talking to you fathers because it is not enough to be a “good dad.” A 75% statistic is not good enough. This Greek dad appeared to be a good father. He provided for the family. He must have been fairly easy-going. One commentator pointed out, “he must have been fairly open-minded because he did not hinder his wife and mother-in-law from instructing Timothy in the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>3</sup> Though he didn’t believe any of that stuff himself, he must have been OK with mom and grandma teaching Timothy what he thought was a good morality. The only thing he seems to have put his foot down against was circumcision. And given the disgust that the Greeks had over circumcision in that day, it is understandable. So commentators assume that this was not a failure on the part of Eunice, but was a prohibition on the part of the dad.

So Timothy was in the position of a God-fearer. He followed the Jewish religion, but without the sign of the covenant. We can thank God that his dad was one of the more broad-minded Greeks who tolerated a lot in the home. But bringing home the bacon is not enough. Playing with the kids occasionally and reading stories is not enough. Any pagan dad can do that, and my prayer is that every dad here will aspire to be a much better dad than Timothy’s good dad was. Let me read you an article in which Erma Bombeck remembers her good dad - a father who could be like many a dad today. She said,

When I was a kid, a father was like the light in a refrigerator. Every house had one, but nobody knew what either of them did once the door was shut. [What a metaphor! She goes on.] My dad left the house every morning and always seemed glad to see everyone at night. He opened the jar of pickles when nobody else could. He was the only one in the house who wasn’t afraid to go to the basement by himself. He cut himself shaving, but no one kissed it or got excited about it. It was understood whenever it rained, he got the car and brought it around to the door. When anyone was sick, he got the prescription filled. He set mousetraps, cut back the roses so the thorns wouldn’t clip you when you came to the front door. When I got a bike, he ran alongside me for at least a thousand miles until I got the hang of it. I was afraid of everyone else’s father, but not my own. Once I made him tea. It was only sugar water, but he sat on a small chair and said it was delicious. Whenever I played house, the mother doll had a lot to do. I never knew what to do with the daddy doll, so I had him say, “I’m going off to work now,” and threw him under the bed. When I was nine years old, my father didn’t get up one morning and go to work. He went to the hospital and died the next day. I went to my room and felt under my bed for the daddy doll. When I found

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<sup>2</sup> Keith Meyering, *Discipleship Journal*, issue #49, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> John Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles: An Expository Commentary, The John Phillips Commentary Series* (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), 2 Ti 1:5b.

him, I dusted him off and put him on my bed. He never did anything – I didn't know his leaving would hurt so much. I still don't know why.<sup>4</sup>

What that father did was being a good dad in the eyes of many Americans. But that's not a Biblical dad. A Biblical dad has an active faith that gets actively involved in leading his family, washing his family with the water of the Word, instructing and guiding his family, and commanding them in the way of the Lord. When he is gone out the door to work, the family continues to follow his lead and mom says, "This is what dad would want us to do. Let's do it." The stamp of a Biblical dad's loving guidance is seen throughout the week.

Timothy's dad was an Emra Bombeck kind of good dad. He didn't have an active part in the faith of Timothy, but he no doubt did a few fun things with him, and no doubt provided well. But when the door closed as he went off to work, he was like that doll tossed under the bed and forgotten. The only leadership he had were on the big things - like politics, and whether Timothy could get circumcised or not.

If you are like Timothy's dad, you put a tremendous burden upon your wife that God did not intend to be there. Such women are at a huge disadvantage. Of course, it is never too late to change. Though this sermon will show how women married to good dads can still pass on the faith as Lois and Eunice did, it is much better if the dads are actively involved. 95% sounds much better than 15%. And Lois and Eunice would be within the 15% category. So dads, have an active faith; be more than a good dad.

**They grew up in Lystra (Acts 16:1) - a town where there were no synagogues. Note that Jews from Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra and stirred up the Gentile mobs (Acts 14:19); there were few if any Jews to stir up.**

But what made things even more complicated for Lois and Eunice was that Timothy had no male Christian role models until Acts 13 or 14. There was no church to help out a Eunice or Lois and encourage them. How do I come to that conclusion? Well, both history and archeology confirms that Lystra had no synagogue that they could attend to strengthen their faith. The mobs that welcomed Paul and Barnabas and tried to worship them as Zeus and Appolos were the same mobs that stoned Paul in Acts 14. They were pagans. There was no known Jewish population in Lystra. It wasn't until Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and spread lies about them to the Gentiles that the *Gentiles* were turned against Paul.

So the nearest synagogue was in Iconium - 21 miles away as the crow flies, but a lot more since you had to traverse wiggly mountain paths to get there. The next nearest synagogue was in Antioch, 80 miles as the crow flies, and also through the mountains. Eunice was no doubt allowed to occasionally go to synagogue in Iconium, 21 miles away, but that would be an inconvenient trip by foot. And even then, Timothy would have had to have sat

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<sup>4</sup> Erma Bombeck <https://primewomen.com/i-remember-papa/>

separated from the rest of the Jews during their worship. But there is some evidence that Timothy traveled to attend synagogue before he became a Christian.

Why am I painting all of this background? Because I want you to have a picture of how difficult things were for these two women. It makes their actions of faith stand out the stronger. We have Eunices and Timothy's spread out in small towns all over America with no church (except for an apostate liberal church), and I wish there was some way we could accommodate those poor forlorn and isolated Christians via distance membership. They need our encouragement. It's a conundrum that I would love for us elders in the CPC to puzzle through.

**Eunice raised a son, Timothy, to be a faithful believer with a godly testimony to all (Acts 16:1-3) and from birth named him "One Who Fears God" (Timothy).**

But back to the painting: The easy-going nature of the dad can also be seen by Timothy's name. It's obvious that Eunice named him, not the dad, because his name means, "One Who Fears God," not exactly something that would have come immediately to the dad's mind. But the dad seems to be OK with Eunice naming his son.

And that Timothy had a good reputation that lived up to his name can be seen in Acts 16:2 where it says years later that "He was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium." Timothy had already been involved in serving in both places by AD 50.

## **Their relation to Paul**

But let's look next at their relationship to Paul.

**They were already Old Covenant believers in God long before meeting Paul (see previous point & 2 Tim. 3:15)**

As we have seen they were already Old Covenant believers long before meeting Paul.

**They may well have embraced Jesus as the Messiah when on a visit to nearby Iconium (Acts 14), or even earlier at Antioch (Acts 13), since Timothy seems to have witnessed (or in some way "carefully followed") Paul persecutions in both places (2 Tim. 3:10-12)**

I believe that Timothy became a Christian disciple by at least Acts 14, when Paul ministered the Gospel for some time in Iconium, and possibly as early as Paul's ministry in Antioch in Acts 13. The reason I have come to this conclusion is because 2 Timothy 3:10-12 speaks of all the things that Timothy carefully followed in Paul's life. He had become an admirer of Paul and had been following his journeys and had been greatly influenced by him before Paul even knew about him very well. And that verse says that he carefully followed what



had happened to Paul from his time in Antioch. Well, that would be Acts 13. Timothy must have traveled to Antioch and Iconium to get in on some of that teaching. It says,

2Tim. 3:10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra — what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

The word for “carefully followed” is παρακολουθέω, and refers to something more than an academic interest in Paul. The dictionary defines the term this way: “to be closely associated w. someone viewed as an authority figure, follow, ...to be attendant upon, follow, accompany, attend... to conform to someone’s belief or practice by paying special attention, follow faithfully, follow as a rule,” etc. (BDAG). That word indicates to me that Timothy had begun to follow Paul’s teaching in Antioch (that’s Acts 13), and when he left there, in Iconium, and then in Lystra. He had already been a disciple for quite some time.

### **They quickly became part of the Christian church Lystra when Paul first preached there (Acts 14) and may have been one of those “disciples” who cared for Paul after he had been stoned (Acts 14:19-20)**

This means that they quickly became part of the first Christian church that Paul established in Lystra before he was stoned there, and may well have been one of the disciples who bound up his wounds after he was stoned.

### **Paul apparently had a close relationship with both Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5)**

We don’t know how long Paul was in Lystra, but 2 Timothy 1:5 indicates he had to have been there long enough to have developed a close relationship with both Lois and Eunice. Paul recalls the genuine faith that was in Lois, Eunice, and in Timothy. That statement of fondness that brought joy to his heart shows a somewhat close relationship that had developed with both.

### **Their son, Timothy was called to the ministry at some point after he was 25 (Acts 16:1-5)**

Then their son, Timothy was called into ministry at somewhere between age 25 and 30 in Acts 16. What a joy this would have been for two Old Covenant saints who had looked forward to the coming of the Messiah for so long, and then had discovered that he had already come, and then to see their son serving their Messiah as an ambassador. All the hard labors of motherhood had paid off.



## So how do you have covenant succession when married to an unbeliever (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-17)

So given all the disadvantages that Lois and Eunice had, how were they able to pass on the faith so successfully? That's what I want to spend the rest of the sermon on. If we can imitate them on these things, it will hugely increase *our* covenant succession. Obviously God is sovereign, but these are things that God loves to use to that end.

### Don't focus on what you don't have (Acts 16:1-3)

First, they didn't focus on what they didn't have. They didn't have the support of their husbands. Sure, the husbands didn't resist the faith too much, but neither were they supportive. They didn't have a good local church. For most of Timothy's younger years they didn't have a good male Christian role model for their son. They didn't have much fellowship with fellow-believers until Paul came along.

But if you focus too much on what you don't have, it can make you bitter, and bitterness is incompatible with faith. Maybe they made a bad decision in getting married. We don't know. But if that was the case, like Paul they had to learn to forget the regrets of the past and start to make a difference now. Paul had plenty of regrets, but listen to what he said in Philippians 3:13-16.

...one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

He calls all of us to do the same thing. Don't stew about your disadvantages. Do what you can by faith. Forget about your mistakes in the past and press on for the future.

### Make your faith real to everyday living (2 Tim. 1:5)

Second, make your faith real to everyday living. As we talked about earlier, the two words in 2 Timothy 1:5 show that this faith pulsed through their lives continually. As one person translated the word *ἐνοικέω*, "To house in you continually." Robert Yarbrough states,

In Paul, *enoikeō* describes divine, dynamic, and transforming presence. The faith of Timothy's maternal forebears was not passive, merely external, or pro forma but deep and alive. "Lived in" (NIV) is accurate though perhaps a little bland. No wonder Timothy's appropriation of this faith (not shared, it seems, by his father; Acts 16:1,3) resulted in a fidelity and fervor that Paul found matched by few if any even among his distinguished coworkers (Phil 2:20).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 353.

That last verse he referenced says, “For I have no one like-minded...” There wasn’t anybody that measured up to Timothy. So all three of them had a vibrant, dynamic, and ever-resident faith.

In our sermon on Peter’s mother-in-law, we looked at ways in which your faith can become stamped onto everything you do in your home. One of those ways was super-simple - having regular times of praise and thanks to God for answered prayers. These regular thanksgivings make the reality of God’s miraculous work in our lives a regular part of living. Faith that is only Sunday-go-to-meeting-faith will not grab our children, but a daily lived out faith that sees the reality of God in our lives and sees answers to prayer not only has the potential of reaching our children, but 1 Corinthians 7 says that it has the potential of reaching our unsaved spouse.

## Read and explain the Scriptures to your children from the womb (2 Tim. 3:15a)

If you flip over to 2 Timothy 3, I see the rest of the keys to their success in covenant succession listed there. And we will start with 2 Timothy 3:15. It says, “and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures.” The dictionary definition of βρέφος says that the usual meaning for this term is “a child that is still unborn, fetus,” (BDAG), though it can also occasionally refer to a baby that has just been born. But let’s focus on the predominant meaning of this term. How could an unborn child or fetus know the Holy Scriptures? Paul says that Timothy *did* know them when he was a fetus. And the word “know” is οἶδα. It’s a strong word for knowledge. Here’s how the dictionary defines οἶδα: it says, “to have information about, know...be intimately acquainted with or stand in a close relation to, know...to grasp the meaning of someth., understand, recognize, come to know, experience.” (BDAG) How on earth is this possible for a fetus? Doesn’t Scripture say that unborn children and newborn children don’t know certain things? Yes it does - at least for *that* stage in the baby’s development. They don’t know their right hand from their left hand. But there are other Scriptures that say that a fetus knows a lot. How do we reconcile those Scriptures? They seem like opposites.

This is only a theory, but it is a theory supported by quite a few Scriptures. And I share my theory with you with a bit of fear and trepidation, but it’s the only explanation that makes sense to me. I believe that in the first weeks in a fetus’ life before the brain even exists, the mind of the newly created spirit of the child can think clearly without the limits of the physical brain. The process in which a brain develops does not even start until around week 5, but it isn’t until week 6 or 7 that the neural tube closes and the brain separates into three parts. But it’s still not much of a brain at that point. Once the brain is formed, it seems to act as a step-down transformer that *limits* the mind’s ability to think. When a baby dies and goes to heaven, it’s spirit is no longer limited by the brain and even if it didn’t learn to talk yet on earth, it can instantly communicate freely in heaven. A newly created mind is not a tabula rasa. Adam and Eve instantly had language because their brains were formed to perfectly match their just created spirit’s mind’s ability. So when God creates a spirit it has huge capabilities.

But let's trace a few Scriptures that hint at this idea that from day one infants have some knowledge. Romans 1-2 says that the work of God's law is written on the heart. Psalm 58:3 and other Scriptures say that babies sin against God's law in the womb. How can that be if they don't know the law? There are many Scriptures like 2 Timothy 3:15 that seem to indicate that fetuses can know God's Word. And Scripture is crystal clear that mind and brain *are indeed* different. The mind normally thinks through the brain, but if there is no brain, it does not mean that the mind does not think.

If this is true, then during those early weeks when the mind of the child's spirit is unfettered by the brain, the spirit of the fetus can understand voices, learn music, know language, and be able to put an active trust in God. And there are even scientific studies of fetuses that seem to verify this. That newly created spirit can also rebel against God's law that it hears. For example, Isaiah 48:8 says, "you ... were a transgressor from the womb." The word for transgressor (pasha פָּשָׁע) is an active word that shows rebellion against God's law. This is not just sin nature; this is an action of conscious sin. How could a fetus in the womb transgress or rebel against God's law if it didn't know God's law? Psalm 22:9-10 says that David trusted God and totally cast himself upon God in His mother's womb and on through to early babyhood when he was on his mother's breast. Faith is trust in God's Word. Where did he get God's Word while he was in his mother's womb? I think he got it the same way Timothy did - David's mother and father were reading the Scripture while he was in his mother's womb. He heard the word while she attended church, and while the benediction was being given, and in other ways was exposed to the Holy Scriptures. That's Psalm 22:9-10. Job 10:10-12 seems to indicate that Job's spirit (the self-conscious "I" and "me") was conscious while his father's sperm was still in the womb. That's day one. This is one of several verses proving that the spirit was created at the same time as fertilization. Luke 1:44 speaks of John the Baptist's joy in the womb at meeting the Messiah. Obviously that was prophetic, but the prophetic was understood by the baby's mind in some way. Joy is a rational concept. Now these are all simply hints of how it could happen, but we can take 2 Timothy 3:15 by faith and believe that children in the womb *can* know the Holy Scriptures. It's enough for me that God says it.

What difference does that viewpoint make? Well, those verses spurred Kathy and me to make sure that there was never a day that our children did not hear the Scriptures read to them - yes even in the womb, and Scripture sung, and Scripture discussed. The Holy Scriptures were an atmosphere in which our children swam. When you have that kind of an atmosphere, there are no guarantees of results, but children cannot help but be powerfully impacted. They see the reality of God and of God's worldview rather than seeing the hypocrisy of living one way on Sunday and another way during the week. Immerse your born and unborn children in the Holy Scriptures.

## Have confidence that those Scriptures can produce faith & salvation (2 Tim. 3:15b)

Next, have confidence that those Scriptures can produce faith and salvation. 2 Timothy 3:15 goes on to say, "the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." That verse continues the theme of the Scriptures that

Timothy had been brought up on. When they trusted those Scriptures, God honored that faith.

For those who think that the faith of others cannot impact our own salvation, I like to point to the story of Peter's roof being broken up and the paralytic being lowered by his friends into the living room where Jesus was preaching in Mark 2. We looked at that when we looked at Peter's mother-in-law. Verse 5 says, "When Jesus saw *their* faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.'" There was a direct connection between the faith of his friends and the salvation and forgiveness of sins of the paralytic. And in the same way, there is a direct connection between the faith of the parents in the power of Scripture to change and transform, and the salvation of our children. Trust God's Word and you will use it constantly.

### **Treat the Scriptures as the ultimate authority (2 Tim. 3:16a)**

The next thing I see in 2 Timothy 3 is in the first part of verse 16. It says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Lois and Eunice believed that. They treated the Scripture as *the* ultimate authority. It was a higher authority than their husbands. And it regulated their lives. It was God's thoughts communicated through prophets to our minds. If our kids do not see Scripture as *our* highest authority, don't expect it to be *their* highest authority.

### **Apply doctrine from the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16b)**

Then the verse says, "and is profitable for doctrine." Doctrine is the substance of what faith is founded on. The phrase, "the faith" with a "the" can refer to the beliefs that God's people trusted or to the inward trust itself. You can't really divide between the objective faith and the subjective faith in an absolute way. So teach and apply doctrine constantly. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. The two are knit together. And the more practical your doctrine is, the more practical your faith will be.

Many parents don't get the practical ramifications of doctrine, but doctrine isn't applied until you can see its' practical outworking. The doctrine of the Trinity and the inter-Trinitarian relationships is rooted in transformational passages related to humility, mutual care, leadership, delegation, and so many other practical issues that we looked at in my series on the Trinity. The doctrine of depravity has huge implications for our families. I have a paper that applies that doctrine to how we should understand discipline, psychology, science, philosophy, education, politics, art, religion, apologetics and many other areas of life. You can be misled in those areas if you don't have the doctrine of total depravity as one of your presuppositions. We must learn how to apply doctrine.

### **Apply reproof from the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16c)**

The next key in verse 16 is "for reproof." Disciplining our children should always be accompanied by Scriptural reproof. The children need to see the discipline in a Godward direction, not simply a parental direction. We do after all want our children to put their faith in God, not us. We want their consciences to be gripped by God, not by what others think. So reproof should be backed up by Scripture. This passage says the Bible is sufficient

for *all* reproof. That was one of things that Bruce Ray's book, *Withhold Not Correction* was so strong on - teaching parents how to make reproofs biblical reproofs. Those are going to be more transformational reproofs.

### **Apply correction from the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16d)**

The next key word is "for correction." If we just tell our children, "Do it because I told you to," that's not enough. Obviously they do need to obey our instructions, but more and more our correction needs to come from the Scripture or their faith will not be in the Scripture. It will be in us, and we will let them down. Scripture will not let them down.

### **Apply instruction in righteousness from the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16e)**

The next key is "for instruction in righteousness." This is showing the "put ons" or the positive ways in which our children should go. When you teach them to think, manage time, manage money, manage chores, do it through the grid of Scripture. Biblical economic principles apply to those things, as do the doctrines of self-government, service, etc. Pam Forster's book, *Instruction in Righteousness*, while it has its limits and has some things you may not agree with, is full of Scriptural teachings related to every sin and every righteous habit we want to instill in our children.

### **Be convinced that the Word can make your children complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17)**

The last key is in verse 17: "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." If it is clear to our children that we really believe that, and we go to the Scripture for everything, they too will begin to try to mine the Scriptures for themselves. And if we let them know that we are constantly making new discoveries, they will realize that we don't know everything. And it's OK to tell your kids that you don't know. But you will try to find out by studying the Scripture or finding answers from others who have studied the Scripture.

### **Four final applications**

But let me end with four more brief applications.

If the Holy Scriptures that were being used by Eunice were being used from the time Timothy was an infant, they were the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament hadn't been written yet. Yet Paul says that those Old Testament Scriptures he knew from childhood are *themselves* sufficient for faith, for salvation, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and to make the man of God complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. Yes, we praise God for the New Testament, but Paul has high praise for the Old Testament. Luke says that Paul was able to prove everything he taught from the Old Testament. Don't neglect the Old Testament. The New Testament is a supplement, not a replacement. Without the Old Testament you don't have blueprints for all of life.

Second, though God can perform covenant succession through our moms, you dads play a vital role in making sure that it happens in a clean and healthy way. Many books on Timothy have pointed out that Timothy's fears and insecurities likely arose because of the lack of a Christian male role model in his life. Though God used Paul to help him overcome those things, it is better if we can provide the healthy environment our children need from an early age. This is especially important in our day of gender confusion. Try to make the time to be more than a good dad. Statistics show a huge payoff.

Third, take advantage of some of the role models in the church just like Timothy did. Have kids enter apprenticeships in Christian businesses. Where there is an absent father, the church can be a rich place for alternative male role models to influence and guide.

And finally, let's all of us pray for the key role that moms and dads play in this church. It's hard to be more than a good mom and a good dad. It's really hard. It takes a lot of study, and sacrifice, and prayer, and time. Let's pray that our moms and dads strive to be men and women of faith, of whom it could be said that an unhyprocritical dymanic faith was housed in them continually. Amen.