

KEEPERS OF THE SPRINGS

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A young father was trying to explain the concept of marriage to his four-year-old daughter. He got out their wedding album, thinking visual images would help, and explained the entire wedding service to her. When he was finished, he asked if she had any questions. She pointed to a picture of the wedding party and asked, "Daddy, is that when mommy came to work for us?"

A teacher gave her class of second graders a lesson on the magnet and what it does. The next day in a written test, she included this question: My full name has six letters. The first one is M. I pick up things. What am I? When the test papers were turned in, the teacher was astonished to find that almost 50 percent of the students answered the question with the word Mother.

When we are young, we need an example of sincere faith. Too often parents say that they want their children to make up their own minds about religion. They usually say that because they have not made up their own minds about what they believe. So, in essence, they are making disciples of their own belief system. Their children are going to believe like them unless somewhere along the line there is an intervention.

In everything that you've needed to know, somewhere along the line a mom probably taught you. Let's revisit some of those lessons:

My mother taught me logic: "If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can't go to the store with me," as well as, "If everyone else jumped off a cliff would you do it too?"

My mother taught me medicine: "If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they're going to freeze that way."

My mother taught me to think ahead: "If you don't pass your spelling test, you'll never get a good job!"

My mother taught me to meet a challenge: "What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you. Don't talk back to me!"

My mother taught me humor: "When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me."

My mother taught me how to become an adult: "If you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up."

My mother taught me about genetics: "You are just like your father!"

My mother taught me about my roots: “Do you think you were born in a barn?”

My mother taught me about the wisdom of age: “When you get to be my age, you will understand,” or, “I will explain it all when you get older.”

My mother taught me about anticipation: “Just wait until your father gets home.”

My mother taught me about receiving: “You are going to get it when I get you home.”

And my mother taught me, justice: “One day you will have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you. Then you’ll see what it’s like! I can’t wait!”

Timothy the son, Eunice the mother, and Lois the grandmother represent the strongest spiritual trio stemming from the maternal line of any family group in the New Testament. The sublime faith of the mother and grandmother seems to have prepared the son for that greatest of all compliments, which Paul later bestowed when he called him “my dearly beloved son” (2 Tim. 1:2).

Only because of the early training that he had received from his mother and grandmother could Timothy earn this fond term from the childless and wifeless Paul. He loved Timothy as if he were his own son and spoke of him always with genuine pride.

Only one verse in the Bible gives us an inescapable clue to the character of Timothy’s mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. Paul himself, writing that verse in his second epistle to his apostle Timothy, says, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5).

Here is our complete Bible biography of these two women, who stand triumphantly alongside other great women of the New Testament. Their immortality comes entirely through their son and grandson, who was associated with Paul during a longer period than that of his other companions and was with him in both his outward labors and his intimate thoughts.

It seems evident from this that the grandmother lived with the daughter, and that the two godly women had the forming of the child’s character, which must have been most attractive, for Paul ever spoke of him in terms of the warmest affection. When alone in prison, it was Timothy that he longed to see; and when he wished to comfort the Philippian brethren in their affliction, he promised to send Timothy,

saying: "I have no man likeminded [so dear unto me] who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things that are Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel." Phil. 2:19-22.

Paul sent Timothy on the most delicate missions and put him over his most important congregations. Eunice and Lois had prepared him for such responsibilities. Their home was at Lystra, a city in the Roman province of Galatia. Timothy's father was a Greek, while his mother was a Jewess. We do not even have the father's name. Probably he had died during his son's infancy.

No doubt his mother, like the young widow today, had to go forth and earn her living outside her home. Maybe she gleaned as did Ruth. Maybe she wove tents as did Priscilla. Maybe she worked in a dye and textile business, such as Lydia owned. This is supposition, of course. But the conspicuous part that the grandmother played is an indication the mother had to be away from home a great deal. In fact, the word "grandmother" appears in the Bible but once, and that is in connection with Lois. We can be sure she was a believing woman, as are most consecrated grandmothers.

Eunice and Lois seem to step right from the pages of the Bible and tell us that nothing is more important in a mother's life than the early training of her child. No record is given of the conversion to the faith of this mother and grandmother, but such records are not necessary. The imperishable record of their son and grandson is sufficient.

Peter Marshall, Chaplain of the United States Congress told a story known as the "Keeper of the Spring." This story is about a man who lived in the forest high above an Austrian village that was located on the eastern slopes of the Alps. This man was hired by the town council to clear away the rubbish from the pools of water up in the mountains that fed the spring that flowed through their town. With faithful regularity, the keeper of the spring moved among the hills removing leaves and branches and silt that would contaminate the fresh flow of water. The town became a popular attraction for vacationers who were attracted to its beautiful clear spring.

Years passed and one evening the town council met for its semi-annual meeting. As they looked over the budget, one man began to question the salary being paid to the obscure keeper of the spring. He questioned why they kept the old man year after year. The council members decided the old man's services were no longer needed.

For several weeks nothing changed. By early fall, the trees began to shed their leaves. Small branches snapped off and fell into the pools, hindering the flow of water. One afternoon someone noticed a slight yellowish-brown tint to the water. Within a few weeks, a slimy film covered sections of the water along the banks and a foul odor was soon detected. Tourists to the little town soon left and many of the residents became sick.

Quickly the embarrassed council called a special meeting. Realizing their error, they hired back the keeper of the spring. Within a few weeks the spring cleared and the little town returned to a normal life.

Women and mothers are keepers of the springs. It was my mother who read me the scriptures. My mother taught me how to pray. And my mother who made sure I did. It was my mother who enrolled me in Sabbath School as a baby. All through my life, she consistently applied both the gospel and at times the flat palm of her hand to my life, each where they would do the most good.

Just suppose Timothy had not had the home training that he received up until the age of fifteen years, when Paul converted him in Lystra in about A. D. 45. On his second visit to Lystra, just after his separation from Barnabas, the hand of providence seemed to lead him to Timothy. Though Paul had lost a brother in Barnabas, he had gained a son in Timothy.

The young Timothy now left his mother and grandmother and went forth with Paul and Silas to preach the gospel. We can imagine the sadness that this mother and grandmother experienced as they bade their beloved Timothy goodbye. But like Hannah of old, when she left her young Samuel in the House of the Lord at Shiloh, they could relinquish their earthly affection for Timothy and say also, "I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord" (1 Sam. 1:28).

We can be sure that Eunice and Lois knew well such stories from the Old Testament, then called the Books of Law and the Prophets, and that they had steeped Timothy in a knowledge of all the great judges, such as Samuel, and the most loved prophets, such as Jeremiah, and also the wisdom in Psalms and Proverbs.

You can almost hear them repeating some of them, such as "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Or "She that bare thee shall rejoice" (Prov. 23:25). Another might have been, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths" (Prov. 4:11).

Eunice and Lois had sent forth their son Timothy, a man of eminent unselfishness, one who had the capacity for generous devotion, one who was warmhearted and loyal, one with charm and gentleness, one who had tenderness and patience, and one who was willing to sacrifice himself without reservation to the cause of Christ. These were qualities such as only a consecrated mother and grandmother could bestow upon a son.

Faithfulness was a characteristic of Timothy. Not once did he disappoint the expectations of those who reposed confidence in him. Weak though he was in body, he shrank from no labor, however hard it might be, and was not appalled by any persecution. Prisons had no terror for him, any more than for Paul. He did not engage in the work of the Gospel ministry with the expectation of an easy time, for he fully knew Paul's manner of life, and the persecutions and afflictions that came to him at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra. 2 Tim. 3:10, 11. Timothy lived at Lystra, and knew all about the stoning of Paul, where he was dragged out of the city and left for dead. Indeed, he was doubtless an eyewitness of the affair, and was among the disciples who stood around Paul's bruised and battered body; and it was shortly after this occurrence that Paul chose him to accompany him in his journeyings and labors. So he had no illusions concerning the life of a Gospel minister, but took hold of the work in the same spirit that Paul did, who at the outset was shown how great things he must suffer for the name of Christ.

Now some may think that all this has nothing to do with the question of education; but it has a great deal to do with it; for true education consists in the development of a strong and steadfast character, and not merely in the accumulation of a lot of facts from text-books. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; . . . and have not love, I am nothing." We would by no means depreciate the acquiring of as vast a store of knowledge of things as possible; but one may have the history of the world and the discoveries of science at his tongue's end, and still not be truly wise. Timothy, however, was indeed a wise young man, for he knew how to conduct himself properly with all classes of people, and under all circumstances.

And Paul knew better than any other that the religious faith of Lois and Eunice had been handed down to Timothy in overflowing

measure. Paul best expresses this when he says, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). What more lasting memorial could a great apostle bestow indirectly upon a mother and grandmother.

Also Paul wrote to Timothy, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Tim. 3:14). These inspiring words have instilled in Christians everywhere a desire to delve more deeply into the character of Eunice and Lois.

We know that the young man was indebted to his mother and grandmother for the education that fitted him to be the trusted friend and helper of the chief of the apostles; but what were the books that he studied? Here is the answer: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:14, 15. It was not a narrow education that Timothy had. He was by no means "a man of one book," for he had a whole library of books at his command, and he had mastered their contents. It must not be forgotten that the Holy Scriptures are not one single book, but a collection of books, comprehending everything necessary to make a man of God "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

That is the highest degree one can attain to. Few appreciate it, and most people scoff at it, thinking that to be wise only to salvation is to be out-of-touch; but a minute's honest consideration of the subject will suffice to make it clear that it is not possible to have any higher degree of wisdom in this world than to attain to salvation, and that whoever misses that degree is a fool.

A colporter gave a Bible to a man in a remote village. When it was given to him, the man hugged it close and expressed great appreciation for the precious gift of God's Word that the missionary had given him. But when the missionary saw him a few days later he noticed, much to his dismay, that the Bible looked like it was already falling apart, and that many of its pages were missing. The missionary asked him, "What happened? What did you do to your Bible? When I gave it to you I thought you considered it to be a treasured possession." The man replied. "Indeed, it is a very precious possession. It is the finest gift I have ever received. It is so precious

that when I returned to my village I very carefully chose a page and tore it out and gave it to my mother. Then I tore out another page and gave it to my father. And I tore out another page and gave it to my wife. Finally, I gave a page of God's Word to everybody who lives in my village." The message of God's Word was so wonderful to him that he wanted to share it with everyone he knew!

In the first place, "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" For "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The wisdom of the world, and of the princes of the world, comes to nought (1 Cor. 2:6); "for the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God." 1 Cor. 3:19.

Can you not see how this is? There is a story that illustrates it. A scholar was a passenger on a river steamer, and fell into conversation with one of the dock hands, whom he proceeded to interrogate as to his attainments.

"Do you understand astronomy?" said the Professor.

"No," replied the sailor.

"Then one quarter of your life is gone," said the learned man.

"Have you studied trigonometry?" he continued.

"Never heard tell of it," answered the other.

"Then another quarter of your life is gone," said the wise man.

"Do you know anything of chemistry?" was the next question.

"Not a thing," was the reply.

"Then another quarter of your life is gone."

The learned man was about to put another question, when the sailor, hastily pulling off his jacket, asked him, "Sir, can you swim?"

"No," said he.

"Then," said the unlearned man, "the whole of your life is gone, for the boat has struck a rock, and is going to the bottom."

If a man has all the wisdom of the schools, but has not learned the beginning of wisdom, which is the fear of the Lord, it is evident that when the Day of Judgment has passed, the man who could just spell out, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief" and who accepted it, has infinitely more knowledge than he, for the wise man's wisdom has perished with him.

Then take that same poor Christian after he has been twenty years, yea, only one year, in heaven, in the company of the Lord and the angels, learning at the fountain of wisdom and knowledge, and who

can doubt that his culture and learning, even with the world's scholars as judges, would be far superior to that of a man who was counted a philosopher a short time at a good school, with the best minds of earth, will do wonders for an unlettered man; think then of the change that a few year's residence in the world to come will have on those who attain to it, where there are no drawbacks whatever. And after centuries of progress, they will be but at the beginning of their course. So it is evident, from this view of the case, that to be wise unto salvation contains the germ of all wisdom and knowledge.

Let the Bible be his first reading book, for nowhere can he find purer speech nor more varied literature; but always connect the printed page with the wide expanse around him. Teach him that the Bible contains all truth, so that everything must be tested by it; and let it be as natural to him as his breath, to believe implicitly, without a thought of questioning or hesitancy, every truth that he finds in it. In a word, teach him to recognize truth, wherever he sees it, and he is ready for whatever life may have in store for him.

Before a child is ten years old he may know many facts of science, and though his range will be comparatively limited, he will, if rightly instructed, know *the truth* about all things. All this he should learn at home from his parents; and if his parents have the "unfeigned faith" that Timothy's mother and grandmother had, they can teach him more than he could possibly learn at any school. God never designed that a child should ever have any other teachers than his parents, until his character and judgment are fully formed and he is capable of deciding upon whatever comes before him. Let the home be the school, the parents the teachers, and the Bible and all nature be the text books, and the child will know things that are hidden from the wise and prudent of earth, and his wisdom will be that which will endure throughout the ages of eternity.

In Paul's epistles to Timothy there are passages which seem to list the qualities of Timothy himself, for example, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:11). These seemed to be the qualities trained in him by his mother and grandmother.

They had taught him not only these things but also a right sense of values, and he could understand with Paul, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10).

These words of Paul seem to flow like a clear spring of water as he reminded Timothy of his charge. Paul's words fell on an understanding heart, for at a young age Timothy had been grounded in upright living by his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois.

"Family Living" is living out the truths of genuine righteousness by faith. It is not what we must do in order to have happy homes. The Bible emphasis is on things that we must believe in order to have happy homes, because it is what we believe that transforms us in character from being the ornery, self-centered people that we are by nature into people in whom self has been crucified with Christ and He is permitted to live out His life within us (Gal. 2:20). Self-centered people are bound to have friction at home; the real, ultimate, powerful change in family relationships comes through the pure truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is what Ellen White described as "the third angel's message in verity." Through this means actual, dynamic love is created within cold hearts.

The twin principles of corporate solidarity and *agape*, supremely revealed at the cross, form the basis for all family unity. The key to all family unity, whether it be in the home front, the local church, or committees resides in the truth that the Son of God became part of the human race and took our human nature upon His divine nature. The incarnation is the basis for the biblical principle of corporate solidarity. The Son of God in coming in flesh, our flesh, became the new head of the human race, the second Adam.

Through the body of Jesus Christ on the cross all humanity has been reconciled to God and to one another (Eph. 2:11-16, Col. 1:21-23). In a similar manner on the same basis of corporate solidarity we can say that "through the body of Jesus Christ on the cross all humanity has been justified and acquitted" (Rom. 3:24; 4:5, 25; 5:10; 5:18). It is upon this principle of corporate solidarity we say that God chose, predestined, elected, and adopted all mankind in Christ.

The Son of God became us by coming "in the likeness of sinful flesh" and when He died on the cross, from a corporate point of view, the whole race of men died in Him. Only when we catch a glimpse of that *agape* of Christ in condescending to step down from the royalty of heaven and to become one of us and die our second death at Calvary—only when that indescribable love penetrates our very soul, our mind, and heart will unity in the family begin to prevail.

When the love of Christ begins to constrain us, we will acknowledge, even in situations where we believe we were not necessarily at fault,

that “I was wrong, I take responsibility for difficulties that have arisen here.” The goodness of God will lead us to both personal and corporate repentance. The love of Christ will cause us to esteem the other person better than our self. The love of Christ will compel us not to criticize the other party and justify our self. The love of Christ dwelling within the heart will constrain us not to bring a reviling accusation upon our brother.

When this evidence begins to appear in our lives we will know the meaning of justification by faith because we will have peace with God having been justified by faith. Then the following saying will be brought to pass:

“What is justification by faith?—It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself. When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. When they begin to praise and exalt God all the day long, then by beholding they are becoming changed into the same image. What is regeneration?—It is revealing to man what is his own real nature, that in himself he is worthless” *Special Testimonies*, Series A, No. 9, p. 62; Nov. 22, 1896.

A little boy forgot his lines in a Sabbath school presentation. His mother was in the front row to prompt him. She gestured and formed the words silently with her lips, but it did not help. Her son’s memory was blank. Finally, she leaned forward and whispered the cue, “I am the light of the world.” The child beamed and with great feeling and a loud clear voice said, “My mother is the light of the world.”