

2 Timothy 3:14-17

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

There's a radical, new kind of parent in town. Even Merriam Webster's dictionary says so. Back in 2011, the term "helicopter parents" landed in the updated dictionary. And why? Because a new breed of parents has entered the world - parents who hover too much. I read a story about that recently. Nicole Williams thought she had found the perfect candidate for the job. Then a phone call came from mom. Not hers mind you. The mom of the potential employee. And the mom grilled her. Nicole said, "She wanted to know everything from where [the job candidate] would be sitting to a review of her responsibilities." It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what Williams did next. "I withdrew the offer," she said.¹

Helicopter parents hover because they love their kids. They're just struggling with how to best do that. That's where 2 Timothy can help us. It helps us wrestle with what a leader looks like in the Christian home. That's the theme we're going to be looking at in our third and final week of a sermon series answering the question, "Who am I?" In week one, we said, "I am a child of God." In week two, we said, "I am a disciple of Christ." In our final week, we're going to take a look at one of the most important roles we have in life. The role we play at home and what we are to do in that role.

Paul begins to get at that role when he says, "**But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures...**" (v. 14, 15) First of all, notice what the goal is in the home. You want to get all the members of the household to a point where you can say, "Continue in what you have learned from the Holy Scriptures," and they know exactly what you're talking about. Contrary to the Rascal Flatts song that says, "My wish for you is that this life becomes all that you want it to," Paul points out that it is the ultimate wish of Christian families that everyone hold to what they've learned from the Scriptures.

Sometimes this happens despite what happens in our homes and sometimes it happens through what happens in our homes. Timothy experienced it both ways. A

¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/02/living/cnn-parents-helicopter-parenting-job-search/index.html>

short biography of Timothy in Acts 16:1 tells us the way things were for him. “He (Paul) came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek.” If you read that carefully, you noticed something wonderfully present and something else horribly absent. Wonderfully present was a believing mother. Horribly absent was a believing father. It just says his father was a Greek. Why? Timothy’s father was a spiritually dead-beat dad, who practiced vicious spiritual neglect of his child.

And then there was Eunice and Lois, Timothy’s mother and grandmother. They are enshrined on the pages of 2 Timothy. It’s not saying too much to say that now for the rest of history these women will go down as sincere believers who passed on their sincere faith to Timothy. These women are such a big deal that they land within the first five verses of the letter. Paul basically says, “Hello. I’m here to tell you about Jesus. Now let me remind you about Lois and Eunice.” And why did Paul do this? From cradle to adult their home was a place of outsized spiritual growth for Timothy. And so now for the rest of history God wants us to be thinking about that fact. I mean really thinking about it.

So let’s do it. Ask yourself this question: Are you your home’s Eunice? Think about that while I tell you about a blog I recently read called *Issues in Lutheran Education*. The blog reported on a number of interviews. One interview with a dad went like this: “I see myself as being in charge of logistics - getting my kids to school or Sunday school. I believe in letting the experts teach and the parents be facilitators.” The interviewer pressed on this time asking the larger group, “So what prevents you from being the expert?” A mother of a five-year-old answered, “It’s not that I don’t have the knowledge. This is the church’s organized thing - the formal process... you take your children to Sunday school, enroll them in a Christian school; later you send them to pastor’s confirmation class. They learn that this is where you go to get the knowledge you will need for the rest of your life.”

If you think that this is just a Lutheran issue think again. Barna did a poll back in 2010 that discovered, “Many, if not most, Christian parents no longer function as the primary faith-nurturers of their own children. Fewer than one out of every five Christians parents believe they are doing a good job raising their children morally and spiritually.” Do you see what this is pointing out? It’s pointing out that there is less Eunice in us than we’d like to believe. In fact, I’d go so far as to say this: it’s only taken me one year to realize that my parenting has enough holes, weaknesses, and inadequacies that if heaven had a health and human services department, there would be an angelic social worker checking in on me and threatening to haul my little one off to the foster home of Lois and Eunice. And if this is the state of Christian parenting today, what does that suggest about how wives and husbands are doing in leading each other to the gospel?

If you have guilt over failures as a leader in the home, you’re not alone. I’m convinced there are no other roles on earth besides the ones in the home that come with so much actual and potential guilt. Aaron Cooper, a clinical psychologist at The

Family Institute at Northwestern University, talked about that. In fact, he said that's one of the reasons why helicopter parenting happens. Parents try to deal with their feelings of guilt for "short changing" their children by obsessing and interfering and hovering where they shouldn't. God's solution for that kind of baggage is altogether different. It's the gospel. In the gospel, he comes to us and he tells us that despite what we deserve God is not going to replace us as spiritual leader in our homes. He is here to redeem us as spiritual leaders in our homes.

Check out what Paul says, "**(the Scriptures) are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**" (v. 15) Notice the job of the Scriptures. God doesn't use the Scriptures to say, "If you don't shape up I'm going to send your kids off to Eunice's foster home." God uses the Scriptures to make you wise about your salvation from parenting sins and other leadership failures. Think about the grand story the Scriptures tell you. It's not about your neglect and failures. It's a story of God's neglect of his child for us. He allowed his child to be abused. He let evil people have their way with his Son. He turned away. He refused to intervene. He left him to suffer. He left him to hang. He left him to die. Yes, it was that dramatic. And why? To redeem us as leaders in our homes. To make us to perfect and holy before God in these very important roles. In fact, Jesus has cleaned us up so well that as far as God is concerned we should be the ones teaching Eunice how to parent and off leading marriage seminars. That's exactly how forgiven and blameless Jesus has made you before the God of heaven.

We desperately need to hear that time and again. Martin Luther once said that the gospel is a rare guest in our consciences. He's right. It's always easier to remember our failures than it is to remember Jesus' great victory. No more! We're not going to be people who say, "I have these feelings of guilt. I must compensate by helicopter parenting," or whatever strategy we come up with. We're people who are going to say, "I am a redeemed and holy leader in my home. That's how God views me in Christ and so that's how I will view myself." That's true for husbands who lead their families and wives who minister to their husbands. It's true for moms who parent their kids and for kids who follow their parents. Say it after me. "I am redeemed and holy leader in my home."

And, yes, I admit it. I am trying with all my might to just pound these gospel truths and I'm asking the Holy Spirit to bring them home to us. And I'm doing that because finally it's the gospel that will bring real change to our homes. Let's be honest. Christian men know to lead their wives and kids in prayer. Christian parents know God wants their families taking weekly time in his house. And Christian families know that there are great, short, and timely devotions they can gather around every day in the home. It's not an issue of knowledge. It's an issue with motivation. We need to be set on fire to lead in our homes. There's only one fire starter I know of. The gospel. So hear the guilt deadening, peace giving, leadership-giving gospel, "You are a redeemed and holy leader in your home."

Don't wait a day more. Start tonight in your family home. Elliana was born just over a year ago now. We blinked and she started crawling. We'll blink again she'll be talking. We'll blink again she'll be in school. It bugs my wife and I - in a good way. We tell each other that we wanted a baby for so long and we don't have one anymore. We've got a toddler on our hands. Time in the home is so precious and so fleeting. Why am I telling you this? We are people who believe that eternity hangs in the balance *for the people we love so deeply*. And so we're going to be leaders who give to our followers the only thing that can save them for time and eternity: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you my favorite part of my day as a dad. I sit my little girl down on my lap and we read a Bible story together. We don't miss. Not ever. Unless I'm not there when she goes to bed. In that case, Melanie does it. And then we pray together as a family. But my favorite part is when I tell her what it all means. It's the last thing she hears before she cuddles up with her blanket. I put the sign of the cross on head and on her heart to remind her of her baptism and I tell her, "Elliana, you are a redeemed child of Christ." And every time I tell her that, I'm amazed that is true not only for her, but for my entire family. Sometimes a guy has to stop at moments like that and grab his breath. There I am *in my house* exercising the highest privilege on earth and God is right before my eyes using that message to save my child and my wife - people I love so deeply. Yes, it is that awe-inspiring and that important. In fact, it was so important to our Father that he spent the life of his Son to redeem us to do it. Amen.