

faith you are passing on to your children? Do they see in us a faith that is open to God's work? Do they witness a faith that is living and growing? Do they see a faith where we are unashamed, love others and make good choices?

The old book by Robert Fulgham proclaims all I needed I learned in Kindergarten listed these lessons:

These are the things I learned (in Kindergarten):

1. Share everything.
2. Play fair.
3. Don't hit people.
4. Put things back where you found them.
5. CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS.
6. Don't take things that aren't yours.
7. Say you're SORRY when you HURT somebody.
8. Wash your hands before you eat.
9. Flush.
10. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.
11. Live a balanced life - learn some and drink some and draw some and paint some and sing and dance and play and work everyday some.
12. Take a nap every afternoon.
13. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.
14. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.
15. Goldfish and hamster and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup - they all die. So do we.
16. And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned - the biggest word of all - LOOK."

That is all true, but here is a more important lesson for us all to learn and that is to have a faith that is sincere.



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Lessons Learned

2 Timothy 1:1-8



What lessons have you learned from your mother?

Jennifer Jones a producer at CBN recently wrote these words. The evolution of the daughter/mother relationship is funny to me. You spend the first 10 years utterly dependent on her; the next 10 thinking she's an idiot, and it's not until you turn 25 that you suddenly realize the shocking truth...

"My mother was right."

It's hard to admit but looking back, I see every bit of advice, every knowing glance, and every gently worded "suggestion" was for my benefit. She knew all the pitfalls and landmines that I'd face long before I left my crib, and when she spoke, she spoke with wisdom from past experience.

My mother is way smarter than I ever gave her credit for. So, I think it's time to give honor where honor is due. The following are life lessons I learned from my mother: I am special. I have worth that far outweighs how I look, how smart I am, or what the scale reads.

- * Don't be so busy working for God that you miss His instruction.
- * One of the first things you learn as a baby is how to find your balance. It's a lesson you'll need throughout your life.
- * Don't be in such a rush to grow up. It's nothing but bills and taxes.
- * It's better to be single and lonely rather than married and miserable. There is no hell like being trapped in a bad marriage.
- * You can lie to everyone else, but always tell yourself the truth.
- * Drink more water.
- * Sometimes people don't want to argue. They just want you to

- * acknowledge their hurt.
- * Take life one day at a time... One minute at a time when necessary.
- * Pick your battles. Ask yourself, "Is this the mountain I'm willing to die on?"
- * Be mindful of the seasons of your life. Know when to move forward, let go, or stay put.
- * Finding true love starts with loving yourself.
- * Nobody can make you do something or feel a certain way without your permission.
- * A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips.
- * When God is silent that means He's working. Trust Him.
- * Relax. Some things come with age.
- * Don't use so much salt.
- * Don't focus on your looks and forget about your character. After all, pretty is as pretty does.
- * Never turn down a mint.
- * Life's not fair, and it's not supposed to be.
- * When you lose someone, you're going to feel angry, depressed, bitter, and lonely. It's perfectly normal. Take your time and grieve.
- * Bloom where you're planted.
- * Eat your vegetables.
- * When it comes to romantic relationships, it's hard to love someone you don't like. There is something to be said for having a spark.
- * Your father never hit you. Thus, don't ever let another man think he can.
- * Most of the time, bad relationships don't just happen. Learn to see the red flags.
- * Don't unpack all of your emotional baggage in the first month of any relationship. Wait before you invest.
- * Not everything is the way that it

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- ✿ appears. Ask God to open your eyes.
- ✿ People are watching you. You're a role model, whether you like it or not.
- ✿ You can do anything you set your mind to. Anything.
- ✿ If you love it, let it kill you (translation: choose your vices wisely).
- ✿ You teach people how to treat you.
- ✿ Do what you have to do. Life is short.
- ✿ Be the best you that you can be.

And last but certainly not least... always, always send thank you cards.

This year is the first year for me without my mom. It does make you want to look back on what your mom or our parents taught us. What lessons have been learned? When I read this passage from 2 Timothy, we find the faith of a grandmother and mother that has been passed on to a son that became one of the great pastors of early Christianity. When we look at the words of Paul to the young pastor Timothy, we find evidence of a lessons learned by the young Timothy that were a direct result of his mother's influence.

Paul describes this faith with a very interesting word. The word Paul uses to describe the faith of Timothy is sincere or authentic. Paul writes that he is convinced or persuaded that Timothy's faith is sincere and that this faith first lived in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. This word sincere is an interesting word. It means authentic or genuine. It is the real deal. The faith that is possessed by all three generations in this family is one that is real and has made a difference in their lives.

I would suggest today, if we had any lesson to teach our children or grandchildren and if there was any lesson we need to learn as children or grandchildren... it would be how to have and authentic, genuine and sincere faith. Let's explore some of the characteristics of this sincere faith.

I would suggest that a sincere faith is an open faith. That is this type of faith is open to the work of God in one's life. Who are Lois and Eunice? We first meet them in the book of Acts Chapter 16 on Paul and Silas trip to Lystra where this family lived. We can assume that on Paul's first trip to this city, these three were converted to Christianity and by the time Paul returns Timothy has become quite and young leader in the church. Here is what we know about these two women.

They lived among Greeks who worshipped other gods. There is an indication that they were married to Greek men who either left them or died. Both Eunice and Timothy are Greek names and indicate the influence of the culture and the father of the child. In Acts 16 we are told that Eunice was a Jewess, but Timothy's father was a Greek. We do not have any other record of Timothy's father. All we can say for sure is that Timothy's main influence was from his grandmother and mother and it was their faith that was passed on to Timothy.

Lois and Eunice would have been Jewish women who were living their faith in a marriage that did not support their faith, but probably tolerated it. They were living in a culture where they were the minority. Yet, their influence was powerful. They would have been Jewish women meaning they worshipped God and like others were looking for the Messiah. When they heard of Jesus they believed and placed their faith in the message of the Christ. They believed that Jesus was the promised one.

In so many ways, they had a faith that was open to the work of God in their lives. They not only had such a faith, but that was the faith they passed on to Timothy. So much so that when Paul and Silas came to town, Timothy was open to going on the mission journey with Paul and Silas, and we are told that Timothy, although a believer, had not been circumcised as a Jewish boy since his father was a Greek. So Paul had him circumcised just to make sure the Jewish people they would be ministering too would accept him. Here is Timothy who is open to God's work in his life and God's plan for his life. We are told he first sees this in his grandmother and mother.

A sincere faith is a faith that is open to God's work. It is a faith that is aware that God is at work and God continues to work. The question we are faced with is whether we are willing to be open to God's work in our lives. Are we willing to listen to instruction? Are we willing to take steps of faith and go to into situation and relationships that are new and strange? Are we willing to do what we have not done before? Are we willing to believe that God has something for us beyond what we have already experienced?

Rick Warren mentions in one of his devotions:

If you want to hear God speak, you must first cultivate an open mind. You have to be willing, ready, and eager to hear from Him so you can receive what He has to say. Sometimes we don't give God a chance to talk.

Our minds are made up, our hearts are hardened, and we're unwilling to listen. We have the hardened soil of a closed mind.

What can cause us to have a closed mind? There are three mental blocks:

1. **Pride.** *We decide we don't need God's help because we can handle things on our own. We don't pray because our pride says we can take care of the problem.*
2. **Fear.** *We're afraid of what God might say to us. What if he asks us to do something we don't want to do?*
3. **Bitterness.** *When we hold on to a hurt and choose not to forgive, our hearts grow hard. We become defensive and resistant to God's love, his Word, and his voice.*

Pray to God and say, "Lord, I admit I tried to figure it out on my own. It didn't work, so I'm going to listen to you." That's the first step.

A sincere faith is a living and growing faith.

Notice that Paul says this faith first lived in these two women and now lives in Timothy. This is a faith that is not stale but alive. Not only alive but is growing. If you notice Paul's words, he tells the young Timothy to fan to a flame that which he is received.

The word picture Paul gives us is that of starting a small fire and then blowing on the flame or fanning the small flame into a fire. It is to take the steps to see our faith grow and flourish. Now we have to ask a hard question. Is my faith growing? Can I look back over my life and say honestly that my faith in Jesus is stronger today than it was years ago? Can I say that I know more of the Bible? Can I say that I have a deeper love for God and for others? A sincere faith is a living faith that is growing.

Finally a sincere faith has these three qualities. It is unashamed, practices love and self-disciplined.

Scholars suggest that Paul is actually describing the qualities that Timothy needed as a pastor. That he would need power that would make him bold. He would need love as a way to forgive and respond to those who were his critics. He would need self-

discipline. The word there actually means a wise head.

A faith that is genuine is first of all one that is expressed and confessed. It is expressed in love and it is one that causes one to make right decisions.

What lessons did Timothy learn? He learned to be open to God's work. He learned that faith should grow and mature. He learned that it should be expressed in love and wise choices.

Today is the first mother's day after my mom's passing.

I am going through today what many of you have gone through before. It is on days like this we are reminded about those we love and for me a faith that was passed on. I never knew my grandfather who was a Baptist preacher. He died before I was born, but I knew my grandmother. A grandmother who prayed so much that there was a worn place by a well where she would knell to pray. My father died when I was 17 and although he led me to Christ, I lived more years without him that with him. I knew of his

faith, but I watched my Mom's faith all these years. A faith that was strong even though she was widowed at only 45. She never doubted God's love for her, even though my father was gone. She had lost her job right after my father passed. She had bills to pay and two boys to raise. I cannot imagine the stress she must have felt, but I never knew it. She just found another job and went to work and trusted God. She lived an example of prayer. When a drunk driver struck Tyler in that horrible accident, my Mom told me she woke up in the night with Tyler on her mind. She simply spent the next few moments in prayer not knowing why she was thinking of him. Her natural inclination was prayer. Her faith grew over the years as she learned to trust God more and more. Even after her mind was diminished in her later years, she could remember all the words of those old hymns. She would sing farther along will know all about it. Farther along will understand why. Cheer up my brother live in the sunshine. We'll understand it all by and by.

I am a recipient of a sincere faith. What about you? As you think of the faith of your mother or father has passed to you, can you say in your life you have a sincere faith? Let me ask you parents, is that the

A SINCERE FAITH IS A FAITH THAT IS OPEN TO GOD'S WORK. IT IS A FAITH THAT IS AWARE THAT GOD IS AT WORK AND GOD CONTINUES TO WORK. THE QUESTION WE ARE FACED WITH IS WHETHER WE ARE WILLING TO BE OPEN TO GOD'S WORK IN OUR LIVES.