

HERITAGE TO HONOR

Learning the “Way of the Lord”

Five-year-old Timmy comes running through the door. “Granny Lois, Granny Lois, where are you??!?” The best part of Timmy’s day is about to begin as ‘Granny Lois’ gathers him up for a talk. Her talks are the best! She tells about the olden days and a man named Abraham. Stories containing a giant and a boy king. A ginormous fish that swallows a man! And Noah’s humongous boat that saved his family. Timmy also loves to hear about the God Who can do anything yet He loves little boys like him. Oh, how Timmy loves Granny Lois’ stories!

In Old Testament times education began in the home and parents were the first teachers. God expressed his expectation to Abraham in Genesis 18:19: “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD...” The “way of the Lord” refers to knowing the will of God and

obeying it as revealed. It was first and foremost a spiritual heritage. The people of Israel were to pass along to the next generation their values, traditions, and culture, and most importantly, their strong belief in the Almighty God.

Several years after Abraham, Moses instructed the people how to teach their children.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Learning about God was to flow naturally from day-to-day activities.

A mentoring relationship was the focus of Jewish home schooling. The children learned by repetition as they observed their parents’ lives, conversed

frequently about God and holy living, and repeatedly heard the recounting of the Bible’s historical dramas.

In the New Testament, (where we find Lois and Eunice), religious educational practices continued to follow that of the Old Testament. The family remained the primary source of education.

Undoubtedly, ‘Granny Lois’ own mother was diligent in sharing the stories and truths of the Old Testament Scriptures, as evidenced by Lois’ active participation in Timothy’s life. Lois had consistently trained her own daughter, Eunice, in the “way of the Lord” and together they had instilled an active faith in Timothy. “From childhood you (Timothy) have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

APPLICATION:

Find several Old Testament Scriptures confirming the admonition that parents are to teach the younger ones. What evidence is there that Jacob and Esau knew the “way of the Lord”? Explain how Joseph lived the “way of the Lord.”

Teaching the “Way of the Lord”

Paul met Lois and Eunice when he traveled through Lystra on one of his missionary journeys. These Jewish ladies had married Greek men. The husbands had no role in the Biblical account so we assume they were dead. Maybe this was when ‘Granny Lois’ moved in with Eunice or lived nearby. They exemplified an intergenerational family raising a little boy together.

Both women were committed to teaching Timothy the truth of God. So well learned was he, that Paul mentions these two women in his second letter to Timothy. “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well” (2 Timothy 1:5).

Children learn from what you live. Maybe this was their motto. Lystra was a pagan town and, outside his home, Timothy was surrounded by a world of sin. Lois and Eunice had a divine and sacred duty to hand down their spiritual heritage, heeding the Old Testament teaching: “...we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done”

(Psalm 78:4). They intentionally lived holy and blameless lives before Timothy. God had said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5). As young girls, Eunice and Lois had learned this command from their mothers. Now they were sharing these important words with Timothy.

“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house” (Deut. 6:7a). ‘Granny Lois’ wove these words into her talks with her grandson. At each meal, Eunice prayed these words as she asked God to bless their food. “And when thou walkest by the way...” (Deut. 6:7c). On their walks, Creation’s wonders impressed God’s power on this little boy. “And when thou liest down and when thou risest up” (Deut. 6:7d). As Timothy went to sleep, these women prayed God’s words over him and each morning he was greeted with a praise from the Psalms. “In the same way, let your light shine before others...” (Matt. 5:16) ESV. They lived what they loved and their spiritual example impacted Timothy eternally.

APPLICATION:

What biblical accounts exemplify parents teaching children? Find Abraham's example in Genesis 22. What was Noah's lesson to his sons in Genesis 6-8? List some others.

Passing Along the "Way of the Lord"

Paul saw in Timothy's life the beautiful reality of the faithful teaching of "the way of the Lord" in Timothy's home. The spiritual heritage that Lois and Eunice passed on to Timothy was built on "God-breathed" Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16). They believed what Jesus said—man shall live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4b). And because they lived what they loved, "out of the abundance of the heart," their mouths spoke (Matt 12:34). With God's help, Timothy was their great success, as evidenced by Paul's words: "...I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord..." (1 Cor. 4:17) and "...Timothy, my own son in the faith..." (1 Timothy 1:2).

As women, mothers, and grandmothers, we also have a heritage to honor. Our sacred duty is to share with others,

what we know and what we live, specifically with our own tribe.

Our living example is the primary channel of training. Our children are constantly watching, so let us live a life of righteousness before them. I witnessed my own parents reading the Bible and praying. They were faithful, committed tithers and generous givers to God's work. Attending church was non-negotiable. Their spiritual habits impacted my life and became my spiritual heritage.

Teach through prayer. Teach your young peeps that praying is simply talking to God and sharing with Him, then pray with them. Pray for them. Pray for yourself as you interact with them.

Present Jesus in an appealing way. Verbally give God credit when appropriate. Talk about your experiences with God. Share a prayer request when

God answered in an unusual way.

Give biblically-focused gifts—Christian fiction, Christian artwork for bedrooms, an age-appropriate devotional book, etc. For my yearly Bible reading, I buy a Bible with room for notes. All year long, I mark it, write notes about what Scripture is saying, and personalize it for my next graduating grandchild.

Our own Randall House offers specifically designed curriculum from Deuteronomy 6. Their website describes it: “D6 EveryDay Curriculum aligns small group environments at church so the entire family (elementary-adult) is studying the same theme at the same time. The cool thing is, it doesn’t stop at the church worship experi-

ence. This one-of-a-kind discipleship curriculum goes beyond the small group experience and helps parents and grandparents reconnect with kids and teens through the use of devotional study guides, “Splink,” “Parent Pages,” and other take-home resources that help equip the home.

D6 EveryDay brings a higher level of Bible engagement, laying a foundation of ‘why’ and ‘how.’ Deuteronomy 6:4-7, Psalm 78:6, and Ephesians 4—6 remind us of the power of church and home working together for all generations. Ministry to the next generation involves intentional effort from the current generation; D6 EveryDay makes that mission a lot easier.”

APPLICATION:

Do you use the D6 EveryDay curriculum? Share how its lessons have affected your family. Give other examples of how to pass along our spiritual heritage.

When Do We Pass Along Our Spiritual Heritage?

Remember the words of Moses in Deut. 6:7, "...talk of them when thou sittest in thine house..." Sitting around the dinner table, our family has intentional conversations meant to draw out the thoughts and ideas of the younger ones. "What did you do after that boy pushed you down...what should you have done?" "So, your best friend dumped you...how will you respond?" "Tell me about your Sunday School lesson." As a family, share a Bible story, and ask your child to apply it to his life. Promote questions and discussions that give opportunity for exploring spiritual truths.

Moses also said, "...when thou walkest by the way..." Walking is a trendy activity these days. Walk with your little people and explore the wonders of God's creation. Use a magnifying glass to examine nature's minutiae.

"When thou liest down..." Bedtime is the perfect time to speak spiritual truths into your littles' lives. Tell a Bible story or read verses from an age-appropriate Bible, then discuss it. For your teenagers, encourage them to read their Bibles and to ask questions. Always pray with your children before they go to sleep.

"When thou risest up..." Mornings can easily become the worst part of a child's day, so determine to 'live' the spiritual truths by greeting your clan with joy and affection. Pray before meals, asking God to bless them as they meet the day. Driving to school, share verses to form positive attitudes: "Do everything with love" (1 Cor. 16:14) NIV. "...Be ye kind one to another..." (Eph. 4:32a). "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13) ESV.

Every day experiences will become part of our legacy as we pass along our spiritual heritage. What are practical ways to connect with our children/grandchildren, thus opening the door for sharing spiritual truths? Speaking from my own experiences with my grandchildren, here are some suggestions:

1) Spend time with them. We attend movies and local theater productions, go to the park or paint a project at home, or simply watch a Disney movie cuddling on the couch.

2) Send surprise packages to your out-of-town kiddos. This is a big favorite. I shopped at Dollar Tree.

3) Write them a note and put a piece of gum inside or a \$1 bill. I send Starbucks gift cards to my four college-aged grands.

4) Take them on a date, singly. Bond with each child one-on-one.

There are numerous ways to impact children and grandchildren. Be creative and implement ideas fitting your own spiritual story as together we obey God's command: "...train up a child in the way he should go..." (Prov. 22:6).

The best way to establish a connection is interaction and relating to our children/grandchildren. Our living example is the primary means of teaching them "the ways of the Lord." Lois and Eunice were intentional in their teaching to Timothy and their contributions were life-changing. They had no idea their half-Jew, half-Greek, fatherless, little boy would one day be a co-worker of the legendary Apostle Paul. Lois and Eunice were ordinary women, in an ordinary situation, and in an ordinary way, they faithfully discipled an extraordinary servant of God. May we strive to leave a legacy as positive and as powerful as the one left by Lois and Eunice.

APPLICATION:

Read the song lyrics of "Find Us Faithful" by Jon Mohr. What story is your life writing? What will your children and grands say about you after you are gone? What kind of legacy are you leaving? Give practical examples of how you are honoring your heritage by passing it to the next generations.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Dari Goodfellow lives in Gilbert, Arizona, where she and her husband share a home with their daughters' family, including four grandchildren. She is happily privileged to love and connect with them on a daily basis.