

IT TAKES A CHURCH TO RAISE A TIMOTHY

An old African proverb says, {DPa}

"It takes a village to raise a child."

Meaning parents need the loving & practical support of a community,
and also meaning that a child thrives as it socialises and networks within a community.

There is a good dose of wisdom in that proverb.

But what **sort** of village is the crucial question.

Does that community support the parents' {DPb} beliefs & worldview, their boundaries & ethics in parenting, their 'end goal' of parenting?

If not, {DPc} It takes a village to **confuse** a child!

It's Mother's Day today . . .

and while we rejoice at the blessing of Mother's and their crucial role in raising the next generation – this morning I want to remind you it is not only Mums (and Dads) who have the blessing of raising a godly generation.

All of us – singles, couples, grandparents – we all have a role.

So, today, I'd like to do something different. I'd like us to "lift the lid" on Motherhood, to see a more **expansive horizon** that God has for it.

I want us to see that **biological** motherhood (while very special), falls under the larger category of **spiritual** motherhood – also very special to God.

Because *spiritual* motherhood & fatherhood (spiritual parenting) falls under the massive category of what God is really on about in the world: "**Discipleship**"

A Disciple is literally a "*Learner*", so functionally a "*Follower*" of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship is basically helping one another become more like Jesus, *live* more like Jesus.

Christ-likeness. That's what God is really on about in His world.

So Paul writes, {DPa}

*We proclaim Christ, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may **present everyone MATURE** in Christ.*

For this purpose I labour, striving according to His power" (Col 1:28-29)

Sometimes discipleship is peer-to-peer, mate-to-mate.

Often though, discipleship can be more spiritual 'parenting', a more experienced & seasoned believer mentoring newer or younger Christians.

This morning I want us to see that *spiritual parenting* is for the WHOLE church: {DPb}

Whether a spiritual *parent* or spiritual *child* – or *both*: parent to 1, child to another – {c} we're all to be involved in intentional relationships that mature one another in Christ.

How I'd like to us to see this is by considering **Timothy**.

Just one example of someone in Scripture who was **discipled by many**, to become **mature** in Christ and **used greatly** by God for the kingdom.

{DP} It takes a village to raise a child; but

It takes a church to raise a Timothy!

That's our Big Idea stated more briefly.

As we seek to spread the gospel, plant more churches, we need many more **Timothys** and **{DPb}** 'Tiffanys', boys & girls, men & women becoming mature followers of Jesus.

We're all to be involved in intentional relationships that mature one another in Christ.

- Singles – we need you to pour into Timothys & Tiffanys (or be poured into)
- Married without kids – we need you to pour into Timothys & Tiffanys (or be poured into)
- Biological Parents – we need you to pour into Timothys & Tiffanys (or be poured into)
- Grandparents – we all need your wisdom, too!

"It takes a church to raise a Timothy" because a local Church **IS** the community that *shapes & supports* Christian parents' **{DPc}** in their beliefs & worldview, their boundaries & ethics, their 'end goal' of parenting – **{DP}** which is for their children (biological or spiritual) to be:

- Saved & Secured for an eternity with Christ.
- Shaped & Matured into Christ-likeness now.

That joyful goal is precisely what the apostle John wrote about his spiritual children: **{DP}**

"I have no greater joy than this: to hear of my children walking in the truth." (3 John 4)

With that goal & groundwork laid, let's now consider Timothy: Who poured into his life? And how? . . . so that we can do the same here with many Timothys & Tiffanys.

We'll begin with 2 Timothy 3 and its immediate context, then pan back further to chapter 1, to consider the many who poured into Timothy and how. First we see . . . **{DPa}**

1] **SPIRITUAL/NON-BIOLOGICAL 'PARENTS'** [we'll close considering Biological Parents]

Paul writes some sobering news for Timothy – and for us (2 Tim 3:12-13) **{DPb}**

"All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Now for the contrast (3:14-15): **{DPc}**

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

We see Paul saying, Timothy, you're

- Saved & Secure for an eternity with Christ.

So **CONTINUE** being

- Shaped & Matured into Christ-likeness now

Who were Timothy's role models, his mentors of what Christ-likeness "looks like"?

Verses 10-11 reveal that Paul is one of those key people "**from whom**" Timothy has "learned the faith": **{DPd}**

"You have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings . . ."

Paul describes Timothy as "*my true child in the faith*" in his 1st letter to Timothy (1:2). Paul was one of Timothy's spiritual parents, likely his key "spiritual father", since Timothy's biological Dad was a non-Christian.

What primary “curriculum” did Paul use?...

The sacred writings/Scripture referenced in 3:15 precedes the very famous 3:16-17, **{DP}**
All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction & for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work

With all these verses back to back,
 now we see the Big Picture, the Main Features of How this spiritual parenting looks. . . **{DP}**

1. Mentoring in the **Word** of the Lord
2. Mentoring in the **Way** of the Lord

The same Scriptures Timothy knew that “made him wise to salvation”, **{DP}**
 were used by Paul to “**equip** Timothy for every good work”.

But it’s not just “classroom” stuff.

It’s Life on life stuff. The “with me” principle, the *Way* of the Lord. (vv.10-11) **{DP}**
 Paul shared meals with Timothy, took Timothy out sharing his faith; taught him to study the Bible, took him on mission trips. Showed him the way of the Lord.

Paul did the same with other spiritual children, like Titus & Luke and many more.

This kind of “spiritual parenting” is common in the Bible, with spiritual mothering, too.:
 ‘Older woman to younger woman’ mentoring, **{DPa}**

Older women are to be reverent . . . to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children” (Titus 2:3-4)

Being “married with kids” is **typical**, so training in such must be a priority.

But once your kids are raised, your job’s not done. We need your wisdom.

Those precious truths & lessons you learned – often at a high cost – need to be passed along to younger wives & mothers.

But there is **more** to spiritual mothering, not *only* “wife to wife/mother to mother”, but Christian to Christian, regardless of marital status or biological reproduction.

Consider **{Db}** **Priscilla**, the wife of Aquila.

Priscilla & Aquila were tent-makers, an **everyday** ‘John & Jane’.

We don’t even know if they had biological children – but they certainly made an impact in spiritual children.

They were Hebrew Christians, raised on Moses & the OT, who learned that Jesus, the promised Messiah, the Christ, had come as Saviour & Lord, fulfilling the OT promises.

Along comes a recent convert, another Hebrew Christian, **{DPc}**

“named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man . . . fervent in spirit, speaking & teaching about Jesus” (Acts 18:24-25)

Priscilla & Aquila had been down the same path of this new convert, bridging from Judaism into Christianity. They were older and wiser, understood the *newness* of the new covenant & the *uniqueness* of Jesus better than Apollos (exactly who Jesus was & how Jesus fulfilled everything). They were no longer hung up about obsolete laws from

the Old Covenant – like animal sacrifices, kosher food laws, circumcision, and other OT practices that tripped up newer Jewish converts to Christianity.

They taught Apollos especially about the main thing, the undeserved GRACE of God in Christ, not salvation not based self-righteousness/obeying the Mosaic law, but on Jesus obeying it & being our sacrifice, our substitute, the Righteous for unrighteous us.

So when Apollos preached Christ to Jews, afterwards Priscilla & Aquila 'sharpened' him:

{DP} verse 26,

Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

A sort of, "Come on over, son . . . Let's chat further about how special Jesus is and how amazing God's grace is – to send His own sinless Son to die for us rascals & rebels, and not just us, but all who repent & trust in Jesus as the Christ and Saviour of the world!

The result? Verse 27 **{DP}**

"Apollos greatly helped those who THROUGH GRACE had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ!"

Apollos was neither a 'wife' nor a 'mother,' but the *kingdom impact* of Priscilla's *spiritual mothering* of Apollos was massive! (as was Aquila's spiritual fathering).

Mentoring in the Word of the Lord

Mentoring in the Way of the Lord

That's the *biblical pattern* for spiritual parenting that matures believers into Christ-likeness for fruitful kingdom impact.

So let's ask our first obvious "application" question: **{DPa}**

Q: Who's your Timothy? Your Tiffany? or

Q: Who's your Paul? Your Priscilla?

I know what you're feeling!

You're feeling inadequate, saying, "I'm no Paul! I'm no Priscilla!"

Paul said something very similar when he asked, **{DPb}**

"Who is adequate/sufficient for this task?!"

What answer lifted his chin? **{DPc}**

"we are not sufficient in ourselves; our sufficiency is from God!" (2 Cor 2:16; 3:5)

Paul knew his inadequacies & even told Timothy **[DP]** "I am the chief of sinners!" (1 Tim 1:15)
So am I! And so are you!

Paul simply said **{DPe}**, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ." (1 Cor 11:1)

(not 'imitate my *quirks*,' and certainly not 'imitate' my sins.

Follow me *as I follow Jesus*).

So be real. Admit your sins. Just share & show the ways you DO follow Jesus.

Or, as a Timothy or Tiffany, seek out more mature Christians and ask if you can *follow them*.

I am really encouraged by the amount of Young Adults wanting peer-fellowship, sharpening each other & encouraging each other in the faith in our Friday *Young Adults Group*.

I am even MORE encouraged by the amount of Young Adults wanting MORE than peer-fellowship, who want older men and women to speak into their lives from their vantage point of life experience & their walking with Jesus in a long obedience in the same direction.

So a large amount of Young Adult have joined homegroups with seasoned saints, mature-aged believers, with the *express intention* of being around them for wisdom, advice, example.

And a good number of young adult men are coming along to our new Authentic Manhood nights, with the same intention. And young women have attended women's groups.

It's so encouraging to see this kind of *humility* in young adults (typically the 'know-it-all' age!)

Informal mentoring relationships are spinning off from these larger, formal gatherings. I see the familial 'holy hugs' on a Sunday, and hear about midweek chats over coffee, younger couples with older couples, young men with older men, young women with older women.

Some of our Pauls & Priscillas are at their **"mentoring max"**!
We need more – but what a *great problem* to have!

Women's ministries are currently strategizing for a mid-year launch of expanding training for more women's discipleship groups.

Are we seek to grow in depth and grow in breadth, spreading the Gospel, planting more Gospel-preaching churches . . . we need more Paul's and Priscilla to step up, to say,
*"I am not adequate, but any adequacy is from Christ in me.
Sure, follow me as I follow Jesus."*

Who's your Timothy or Tiffany? Who's your Paul or Priscilla? Prep for a few conversations!

The next obvious application question is: **{DPa} • What will you DO with them?**

Many Timothys & Tiffanys at GBC are not from Christian homes, and were not shown how to pray, how to have a quiet time, how to share your faith, how to lead family devotions, how to resolve conflict biblically, graciously.

Adult Sunday School "equips" in many of those ways, but *real-life modelling & practice* is what really establishes those holy habits.

So as far as the **"Way** of the Lord" goes . . . just "show them" what you do!

If it were a *MasterCard* commercial, it'd would go like this:

- Reading a book on how to pray/read Scripture/evangelise/counsel: **\$25**
- Watching someone decades into the faith praying/reading Scripture/sharing Christ, counselling:
\$Priceless!

The "with me" principle – not just telling me, but showing me – it's of *inestimable* value.

Some **TOOLS** to give you a 'kick-start' can be helpful and confidence building:

Since Paul's focus is on **Scripture** "*making us wise to salvation in Christ . . . being profitable to equip us for every good work*", I'll focus on a tool-combo that answers the Q: **{DPb}**
How are you getting Scripture into others/Others into Scripture?

● **One to One Bible reading**

One to One Bible Reading is a great way to learn to read Scripture.

David Helm has a book by that name **{DPa}**, a simple guide for every Christian (not just pastors!). It models various **methods** for simply reading the Bible with another, and different tips & key questions for effectively reading different bible genres (narrative, poetry, law, prophecy). It's excellent!

William Taylor's **{DPb}** *The Word: One to One* has the actual Bible text for your to work through, with key questions at a basic level, to train new Christians in reading God's word (and even to get non-Christians *engaging* with Scripture.)

Helm's book is the theory, the "how to"; Taylor's booklets are the "We're in it, doing it".
 A great 1-2 combo!

You don't have to be a "master" before you teach someone.

In life we often take away 1 "tip" sermon or conversion, 1 "skill" from a clinic.

And you can even learn together, iron sharpening iron. **{OFF}**

Wrapping up this section on Spiritual/Non-Biological Parenting, allow me 1 personal story.

Last year our daughter was trying to narrow down her university degree and which uni to attend. What skills are an interest & a "fit" for her, and could also be easily used to impact people for the kingdom.

With a possible career path being a *secondary teacher*, we had 3 school teachers – also members of GBC – over for a meal, to answer her questions. But they went well beyond answering questions. They shared their wisdom with her, about degree choices, priorities and a good perspective to have as a student, about making sure 1 of the 2 disciplines required for a secondary teacher is "employable" (English, Math, etc.), but especially that the second discipline is a passionate area of interest, so you enjoy what you do. Get that area built into your degree.

It was such a blessing to us (our daughter & us parents!) – a blessing that as parents *alone*, we could not have provided.

And on reflection . . . **none of those 3 teachers are "married with kids."**

We did not avoid asking married teachers over! We simply picked a few teachers we knew had connections in our daughter's life and ours. And they all just happened to be unmarried. **Spiritual aunties & uncles**. How we needed them!

This was a beautiful thing to us, and I hope fulfilling to them.

Finally, because nothing can replace of the influence of biological parents, and being Mother's Day – what an opportunity to consider Timothy's Mum, Eunice... **{DPa}**

2] BIOLOGICAL 'PARENTING' [for *Christian* parents, should still be *Spiritual* in content]

Children are a *gift* from God (Psa 127:3), and parents are *stewards* of that gift.

Sometimes you might think, "Only 'ideal' families can truly raise a godly seed. Only 2 loving, committed, believing parents – it's too late for me!" Not so!

For Eunice things were tougher than the "ideal", as we see in Acts 16:1 {DPb}
In a town called Lystra, Paul met disciple there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, BUT his father was a Greek.

Eunice was "unequally yoked", married to a non-Christian.

Since Eunice was of Jewish heritage but married an unconverted Gentile (against the law under Moses), most likely Eunice was a rebellious teen who at that stage may or may not have been a true worshipper . . . but at some point, she heard the good news of Jesus and repented. She became a "Jew for Jesus".

And she knew that young Timothy having a *Christ-rejecting* father was an obstacle for Timothy's eternal life and spiritual health.

And in a society where the '*faith of the father*' by default became the '*faith of the family*' . . . Eunice has to dig deep in a gentle courage, to nurture Timothy in the Lord.

We don't know the details of family dynamics and how Eunice pulled it off, but we know she did, as Paul reminds Timothy what we've already seen (2 Tim 3:15) {DPc}
"from CHILDHOOD you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

From his childhood, Eunice made a priority of getting the *Word into Timothy*, and encouraging Timothy to get *into the Word!*

It worked! If we pan back to the start of 2 Timothy, chapter 1 v 5, Paul writes, {DPd}
*"Timothy, I am reminded of your SINCERE FAITH, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am **sure**, dwells in you as well."*

She had help from **GRANDMA LOIS** – see how important that is, grandparents!
 Eunice would have been keen to tap into any people, any resource should could for help!

[It's **not too late** to join the **Parenting Course** in Adult Sunday, still 5 weeks left!
 Discussing tools {DP} for Family devotions, leading kids to Christ, Catechisms for young/old].

Eunice also nurtured Timothy in the Way of the Lord {DPa}
"continue in what you have learned & have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it
 This certainly included Mum!

The **Way** of the Lord is the harder part . . . moving beyond *Content* to **Character!**
 As people commonly say about parenting, more is "Caught" than "Taught".

Whatever our words, our kids see our ways (our priorities). Are they *God's*?

This is a truth that Deuteronomy 6 reminds **PARENTS**, {DPb}
"Love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul and strength.

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts."

That's the starting point, parents.

When it comes to passing on the faith: {DPc}

"You Cannot Give Away what you Don't Have" !

With that foundation, only then Deuteronomy 6 continues to the next step: **{DPd}**
Impress God's commands upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Eunice "HAD it"! So Timothy "CAUGHT" it. (no guarantees; but she made it 'catchable')
 • Do you "have it", Mums, Dads? Do you yourself love the Lord?
 • Are you from the heart, glorying in Christ, His salvation, and walking in His ways?

Mums (and Dads), this description requires our presence . . . "with me", Life on Life. All of us parents here to reassess how we are *making* our time with their kids count.

Let's the modern proverb true: "*The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world!*"
 And not let it become: "*The hand that codes the iPad rules the world.*"
 "*The hand that programs Netflix rules the world.*"

All that we know about Eunice, all that is recorded of her in Scripture is this:

She nurtured Timothy in the **Word** of the Lord and the **Way** of the Lord.

That he was • Saved & Secured for an eternity with Christ.

• Shaped & Matured into Christ-likeness now.

In the end, isn't everything else just "icing on the cake"?

Since it is God's design that motherly influence is MASSIVE, we close with a reminder that its massive *for better or for worse*. . . . Allow me 2 "Contrasting" Illustrations . . .

We've focused on 'for better' examples this morning, so I start with a sobering 'for worse':

I am a dual citizen. So technically Donald Trump is "my president".

With all the sabre-rattling going on with "my president" and the leader of North Korea, I looked into the history of modern Korea, and was surprised by its *Christian* history.

At the start of the 20th century, the northern region of then united Korea had almost no exposure to the West – with the exception of Christian missionaries who brought the Gospel. Surprisingly, Pyongyang, the capital of what is now North Korea, actually was a **stronghold** of Christianity in the first half of the 20th century!

If you watch the news, even for 1 day, you cannot help but know **{DPa}** Kim Jong-Un, the new North Korean dictator, a maniac who loves his weapons. He's the son of the former leader, the late **{DPb}** Kim Jong-Il, equally a maniac (so much so, he's been famously **{DPC}** mocked with a puppet!).

His father, **{DPd}** Kim Il-Sung was North Korea's FOUNDER. Catch this: Kim Il-Sung grew up in a "Christian" home – his grandfather was a **pastor!** His father a church **elder!** But in his own words, from the biographical interview **{DPa}**, "An Unconventional Firsthand Story", notice the decisive moment for Kim and his decision re. Jesus, **{DPb}**
*My mother went to church every Sunday and I went with her. When I asked her why she went there she said, **{DPC}** 'JUST TO RELAX.' After that, at church services, I observed that she was not listening in the service, but was dozing off and she wouldn't wake up until the last "amens".*

*We can see from this that religious believers may attend church **not** because there is a God who matters, but for reasons of personal preference and conscience.”*

In other words: for relaxation, to soothe one’s conscience & be seen “doing the right thing”. After that chat with Mum and observing her (and Dad, whatever he was doing/not doing), Kim Il-Sung walked away from Christianity.

“You Cannot Give Away what you Don’t Have” ! Kim Il-Sung concluded **{DPd}**

“I maintain that if one had to believe in a God, he should believe in the God of Korea.”

And Kim Il-Sung likewise decide to “use” religion for his personal reasons: **{DPe}** he made himself that God to be worshipped, not merely as **“Eternal President”** (as stated in the North Korean Constitution), but **{DPe}** “Eternal Sun of **Mankind**” !

A ***stronghold*** of Christianity in the first half of the 20th century, became the ***world’s most persecuted*** region for Christians from the 2nd half of the 20th century until today. A sobering *negative* example of the massive impact mums & dads!

Moving from the *persecuting* to the *persecuted* . . .

Let’s end with a **glorious** example, albeit a brief one, of a child rather than a mother. Let’s answer the Question, ***What sort of “village” raised Myriam?***

Myriam is a 10-year-old Iraqi Christian refugee, **{DPa}** living amidst Christian refugees, all squatters in tents, all driven out of their hometown (Qaraqush) by ISIS.

Myriam is being interviewed by an Iraqi Christian TV host **{DPb}**

Her trial-refined, battle-honed perspective about contentment, forgiveness and God’s grace in Jesus is astounding, giving pause to many *adult* Australians Christians.

Here we have a Tiffany in the making!

[As we watch this minute & a half video, realise that just as in English the **generic** word “**GOD**” can be used by Christians to describe the *true* God or used to describe *false* ‘gods’, likewise, in the Arabic language, the **generic** word for God is “allah” . . . which can be used to describe the *false* god of Mohammed, or used by Christians to describe the *true* God, the Triune God of the Bible, Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Myriam, like all Arabic speaking Christians, uses ‘allah’ describe the true God.

{CLIP}

Here we have a Tiffany in the making!

We don’t know who her biological parents are.

It seems they’ve done very well!

For all we know, one or both could have been martyred, like many in that village. What we know is that her local church community was ESSENTIAL to her Christ-likeness.

It takes a church to raise a Tiffany, and a Timothy.

Singles, marrieds, parents & grand-parents of GBC, together let’s mentor & be mentored in the Word of the Lord and the Way of the Lord.

PRAYER