

**“Eunice’s Son”
Mother’s Day
May 13, 2018
2 Timothy 1:3-8a**

Last week I started off with a line from a poem. I’m going to give you the second line this morning. It’s a poem by William Ross Wallace, it was written in 1865 right at the end of the Civil War. It’s a poem praising motherhood as the preeminent force for change in the world. And the line is this:

Blessings on the hand of women!
Fathers, sons, and daughters cry.
And the sacred song is mingled
With the worship in the sky.
Mingles where no tempest darkens.
Rainbows evermore are hurled.
For the hand that rocks the cradle,
Is the hand that rules the world.

Yes, today is Mother’s Day, and it is important, as I mentioned in my prayer, to recognize not just mothers, but mothers of all stripes: adoptive mothers, foster mothers, grandmothers, step mothers, sisters or aunts who have been a mother figure in the lives of children who didn’t have one (or a proper one), people who did step up. We want to recognize every single one of them, and I want to wish you all a very blessed and happy Mother’s Day.

As I mentioned last week, a mother’s influence – good or bad – has far-reaching consequences. You do not know – I do not know – what is going to become of these beautiful children that you just saw here this morning watching me with a teabag. We don’t know. The potential is limitless. Mothers can choose to be like Herodias – who we talked about last week – and teach their daughters to use their body to get what they want, and to most importantly hold grudges and settle scores; or, a mother can choose to be like Eunice, who we’re going to talk about this morning.

Eunice was a Jewish believer who married a Greek husband, which means first and foremost, in this day and age, it was more of a patrician atmosphere. Fathers were the king of their households, and women were second-class in many instances. So, when she came into the marriage as a believer to a non-believer, chances were more than likely that her faith would get quashed; but Eunice didn’t allow that. She stood firm in her faith, and she shared it. So, she was a Jewish believer who married a Greek man. Lois, we don’t know if Lois was Eunice’s mother or Eunice’s mother-in-law, the Bible does not specify; but Eunice’s son, who we’re going to talk about, was a young man by the name of Timothy, which means “to honor God.”

Timothy grew up under the influence of both Eunice, his mom, and Lois, his grandmother.



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/316096467588856585/>

Timothy became a Christian because of their influence and their teaching, and Paul's preaching of the message on his first missionary journey. That's where Timothy really heard a delivery of the Good News from an apostle who knew Christ. Timothy was a young man, but he was well spoken of by the believers at Lystra, Iconium. He eventually became Paul's assistant and companion. He later traveled with Paul into Europe. When Paul decided to go back to Athens, he left Silas and Timothy behind at Berea to start a church there, so Timothy was a church planter. They both eventually joined Paul for his three-year ministry in Corinth. Timothy was also with Paul in Ephesus on his third and final journey, and Paul sends him alone ahead into Macedonia to preach the gospel to found churches. Timothy, believe it or not, was probably not much older than his late teens, early 20s when he first met Paul, but he was an important part in Paul's ministry. Think of someone you know – a young man, 18, 19, 20, 21 – running around planting churches, preaching the gospel. What kind of person does that need to be? What kind of preparation does that person need to have?

Even though he was young, he had already distinguished himself as faithful, and the elders in his church noticed him. Paul, in our reading this morning, gives credit of that to specific people. 2 Timothy 1, verses 3-8:

Timothy, Paul writes, I thank God for you – the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again. I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So never, Timothy, never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. ¹

Now, there's no way that Lois could have known that as a mother, her influence on her daughter Eunice would continue from Eunice to her grandson Timothy. We just don't know what God can do in the lives of each individual. We don't know what God is going to do with these children that we just saw here this morning. A mother's influence has far-reaching consequences. I'm going to give you three examples.

Mary Ball was the only child of Joseph Ball and his second wife.

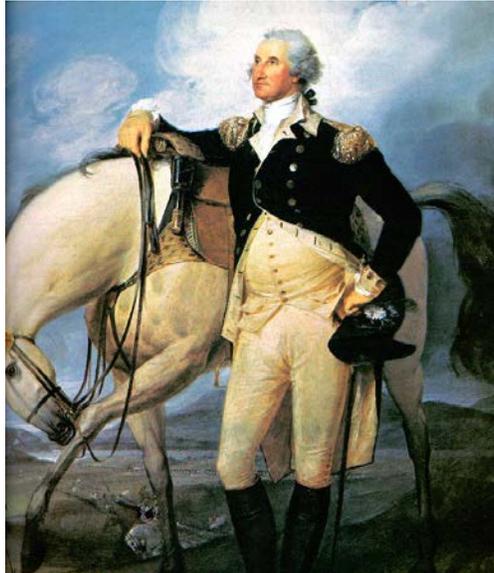


MARY, THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON.
From the original painting by Charles Willson Peale, in England. By special permission of the owners.
Source: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/mary-ball-washington-granger.html>

Unfortunately, Joseph died when Mary was just three years old. Her mother as well, passed away when she was just twelve. So, here is Mary, not even a teenage yet, not even going into those years that we all remember so well that are so challenging for a young person, and she's an orphan. Well, per her mother's will, Mary was placed under the guardianship of her uncle, a lawyer by the name of George Eskridge. Ten years later she accepts a marriage proposal, and she's married at age 22 to a man named Augustin. They had six children. Unfortunately, twelve years into that marriage, Augustin also dies. Now, unlike the convention of the day – most of the time people did not stay single for very long; men looked for a wife, wives looked for a husband – Mary did not do that. She did not remarry. Instead, she decided to take charge and manage her family's 276-acre

¹ 2 Timothy 1:3-8a

estate until her eldest son came of age. She wanted to make sure that what she had accumulated would be passed down to her son, not get mixed up with some other husband or other husband's family. So, that's what she did. She was an avid gardener. She frequently spent time in prayer, they say, perched on her favorite high rock within her garden. She'd just sit there and be in prayer. She poured into her children, now a widower. She used not only the Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer; there was another historic text at the time called *Contemplations Moral and Devine* by Sir Matthew Hale. She knew it was her job to help form her children, and that's what she did. Mary Ball Washington lived to see her son George command the continental army to independence, and be inaugurated as the first president of the United States in 1789.



Source: <https://adaged.blogspot.com/2011/05/washington-and-advertising.html>

She never lost a special place, a place of honor, in her son's heart. Records show that until her death, General Washington would address his correspondence to her "My Revered Mother," or "Honored Madam." Can you imagine that, getting – well, you wouldn't get letters, we don't do that anymore – but getting texts or an email from your children and have it say, "My Revered Mother?" "Honored Madam?" I know my mother's now saying, "Yeah! What the heck!"

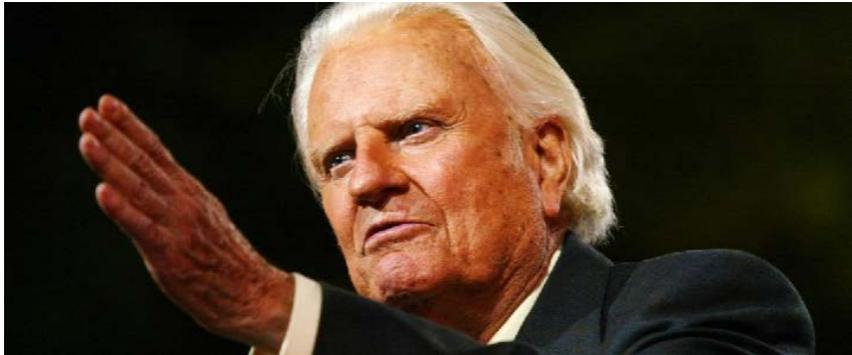
A mother's influence has far-reaching consequences. She didn't know that she was raising the first president of the United States of America.

Ninety-three years after George Washington died, Morrow Coffey was born in 1892.



Source: <http://www.charlottemagazine.com/Billy-Graham-From-Here-to-Heaven/>

She married a local dairy farmer in 1916 and they had four children. Her eldest son once said they didn't have much growing up during the depression, but what they did have back then was family solidarity. "We really cared about each other," he said. "We liked to do things together. Jesus' word picture of a hen gathering her brood under her wing fits my mother. She saw to it that we gathered together regularly, not just around the dinner table or in front of the radio to listen to our favorite broadcasts. She gathered us around herself and my father to listen to Bible stories, to join in family prayers, and to share a sense of the presence of God." She poured into her children. Morrow died on August 14, 1981 at the age of 89. Speaking at a Mother's Day event in 2003, her eldest son, the Reverend Billy Graham said, "She and my father didn't have much education, but my mother was a woman of God. she always had devotions with us, she always prayed with us, she always loved us and did so many things as I look back on it now."



Source: <https://jimdalysfocusonthefamily.com/remembers-reverend-billy-graham/>

"She and my father, when I was in Bible school," Dr. Graham said, "would go upstairs to a room and kneel down every single morning at 10:00 and pray for their son in Bible school." I don't have to share with you the difference that Billy Graham made in this world.

A mother's influence has far-reaching consequences. Did she know that she was raising the Reverend Billy Graham?

One more: Alberta Williams was born on September 13, 1904. She graduated high school and then went on to what is now Hampton University, earning a teaching certificate in 1924. That was not common. Women seeking higher education in 1924 was not something that was done a lot. But she did it, and she graduated and became a teacher. Unfortunately, she was only able to teach for two years because on Thanksgiving Day in 1926 she got married, and back then married female teachers were not allowed, so she had to quit. But she was blessed with three children: Christine, Michael, and Alfred. Alberta was also a talented musician. She was actually the church organist at her church, and she worked hard to instill in her children a sense of self-respect and self-worth. It stuck, particularly with her middle child Michael, who by this time had changed his name to Martin, and who we know as Martin Luther King, Jr.



Source: <https://mindcontrolblackassassins.com/tag/mrs-alberta-king/>

Sadly, she lived to see her son assassinated on April 4, 1968. What a lot of people don't know is Alberta herself was shot and killed on June 30, 1974 when she was 69. Marcus Wayne Chenault, a 23 year old man from Ohio shot her with two pistols as she sat behind the church organ at the Ebenezer Baptist Church.



Source: <https://dillsnappcogitation.wordpress.com/2010/08/20/the-1974-assassination-of-martin-luther-kings-mother/>

Chenault said he shot her because “all Christians are my enemies.” He said he had decided that black pastors were a menace to black people. He also said that his original target was Martin Luther King, Sr., but he decided to shoot her instead because she was so close to him. Chenault was sentenced to death originally, but was later re-sentenced to life in prison, partially because of the result of the King family's opposition to the death penalty. That's not what Alberta would have wanted. In a college essay, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote this: “She was behind the scenes setting forth those motherly cares, the lack of which leaves a missing link in life.”

None of these women, none of these mothers knew who their children would grow up to be. It's just proof, evidence, that a mother's influence has far-reaching consequences.

Lois and Eunice are an example of that. I mean, how many people have personal testimonies that you have heard that start something like, “My mother,” or “My grandmother made sure I went to church every Sunday. She took me to Sunday School. She shared with me. She prayed with me every single day.” Paul recognized the life-changing contributions that these two women made, and in this day and age, when women were rarely mentioned by name, Paul honors Lois and Eunice and their impact in preparing his young protégé, who he called “my true son in the faith;” who later joined him on his travels, and eventually became the pastor of the church at Ephesus.

It just cannot be denied, my friends. Ladies, whether you are a mother or have plans to be a mother someday, you have a choice. You can choose to be Herodias, or you can choose to be Eunice. You can raise a Salome, or a Timothy. The story of Lois and Eunice should remind all Christian women, and all Christian mothers and grandmothers and aunts and sisters and extended family and church family, that your godly influence has an eternal impact on the lives – on the futures – of children.

Church family. I want to pause here for a second because most of us, or a lot of us, do not live within the confines of this city of Hartford. This is a difficult place to raise a family, is it not? And a lot of the children you saw up here this morning don't come necessarily from the same family backgrounds that you do. Many of them from broken homes, many of them with single moms trying to do double duty, many of them whose fathers just walked away from all their responsibility and left. It's hard, and this is where we have an opportunity. We can step up. We can be that mother figure, that father figure, that aunt, that uncle, that mee-maw. We can be that godly influence in the lives of these children that come here. We can truly be their South Church family. Look, I know that sometimes children can be annoying. I understand, I had three! They're in their 30s now and they can still be annoying! But we have an opportunity, especially here in this place, in this city. This is not

Wethersfield. This is not Avon. This is a hard-scrabble place to raise a family, and these kids – these mothers – can use us. So, I encourage us all, starting with next Saturday. Show up at a park, how hard is that? Get to know their names so that when you walk in here on Sunday morning you can say, “Hi, _____.”

Look, you guys all know (because they hear me complain about it constantly) that I am not yet a grandfather. Have I said that before? I desperately want to be, but you know, there are also some women who desperately wanted to be moms, and for whatever reason they were unable to. So, you can lament about not being a mom or not being a dad, just as I can lament about not being a grandpa; or, I can take this opportunity sitting right in front of me, and I can be a mother, I can be a father, I can be a grandfather, to these precious children. We don't know which one of them is going to be the next Timothy. Lois influenced Eunice; Eunice influenced Timothy; Timothy is still influencing the world. Every single time we open the Bible and read from 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, Timothy is still doing his job. Because of Eunice. Because of Lois. Which one of them is going to be the next Timothy? Which one of them is going to be the next George Washington? Which one of them is going to be the next Billy Graham? Which one of them is going to be the next Martin Luther King, Jr.? I don't know, but they could have been sitting here, right here this morning. So, let's take a cue from Lois and Eunice, and Mary Ball Washington, and Morrow Graham, and Alberta King, and let's share our godly influence with these kids. It will matter. It will matter a lot. If you don't believe me, when you get to heaven, just ask Eunice's son, or George Washington, or Billy Graham, or Martin Luther King, Jr. They'll tell you it mattered a lot. God bless all of you mothers and mother figures. You are amazing.