

Title: M. O. M. S.
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Subject: Mothers
Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:14, 15

If you didn't go to Green Bay 2 1/2 weeks ago to be with 600,000 of your closest friends for the NFL Draft, you may have caught it on TV. Top players waited in "the green room" for their name to be called and then walked on stage to be congratulated by fans. When players were interviewed, the first person they thanked and gave credit to usually was their mom. Back in the green room the interviewer who interviewed the parents usually interviewed the mom first...even though dad was standing there. The importance of being a mom.

One of the difficult things about Mother's Day and other special days is the focus of the message. Sometimes I've used an acrostic for "mother" with traits or names of moms from the Bible for each letter. Other times I've used passages that share character traits and activities of moms. Sometimes I've opted to not have a special sermon but just continued the series we've been on.

We definitely want to honor moms and don't want to guilt trip them...or dads when their day comes. The lessons and insights in Scripture aren't just for the select audience of moms or dads but are for all.

The text I settled on is 2 Timothy 3:14, 15. Read 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

It's important to see these verses in context. The verses prior - Paul writes about godlessness in the last days, how he lived and been persecuted for the faith. The immediate lead in is that evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived (V. 13).

The verses that follow speak of scripture's origin, its multiple benefits leading to its ultimate purpose - thoroughly equip Christ followers for every good work (v. 17). The focus continues in chapter 4 as Paul encourages Timothy, as a pastor, to continue to focus on God's Word, proclaim it, even though there are those who don't want to hear about the things of God. The context comes back to the godlessness of the last days.

Paul asks Timothy to continue in what he's learned and become convinced of - the faith. The reason - the people from whom he heard the gospel of Jesus. This included Paul. When he met Timothy, he was impressed by his spiritual maturity. So was the church, amazing as he was in his mid to late teens. Paul felt he'd be helpful and took him on his missionary journeys. Lots of time to talk about Jesus, scripture, things of God.

However, Paul isn't the primary person in mind when he writes to Timothy. He refers to people who were involved in Timothy's life from infancy. That leaves out Paul. Turn back to chapter 1. Read 1:5.

Most of the credit for Timothy's spiritual condition and maturation is traced to the family heritage of faith - grandma Lois, mother Eunice, Timothy. An earlier reference to his father states he was a Greek, meaning probably wasn't a Christian or Jew.

As hooks for the main points, I'm going to use an acrostic for the word moms rather than mothers. Only need 4 points and not 7. In preparation for the message, I wrote down words beginning with the letters

from moms, describing their character, their activity, adjectives and biblical women with names of the letters. I was looking for unique words, not just the ordinary ones that are used.

For M, I could have gone with magnificent or memorable but certainly not memes of a meddling mother-in-law. I tried to select something encompassing the totality of being a mom. Therefore, I landed on M is for... money.

I didn't pick it because children sometimes view their moms as an ATM because they need money for clothes, food, entertainment, this, that and the other thing.

A guy on a cooking show would say, when he really liked something, - "that's money." Dictionaries describe it as a compliment, an expression that something is really good, an indicator of unusual excellence, exceptional quality and worth. Moms are money.

The value of moms and motherhood is shown at the beginning, as in the beginning - the Creation account in Genesis. God formed the first man, Adam. He created the first woman by taking a rib from Adam. The first word from Adam was, "Wow!" Not really. He said "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man" (Gen 2:23). Adam didn't have any problem defining and understanding what a woman was - a female human. Nor did God who instituted marriage as between a man and a woman. They're quickly referred to as wife (Gen 2:24) and husband (Gen 3:6).

The female human needed a name as it wouldn't work for Adam to say "Hey woman" for the rest of their lives. The naming came after the pair disobeyed God and God placed them and all creation under a curse. "Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living" (Gen 3:20). All people are indebted to Eve, the first mom, the first one who had to endure the pain experienced during childbirth.

Think of what it would have been like to be the first mother. Someone pointed out advantages (adapted from sermon, Stan Szelkowski, Marr Community Church): no in-laws, no one to be compared to (Eve never heard, "Johnny's mother..."), no bad culture or influences to fight against, no birthdays to celebrate (except her own, perpetually 29 and holding), the title of "world's best mom" for decades, a family tree like no other mother.

Disadvantages: no mother to seek advice from, no manual or parenting books for raising children, no grandparents to babysit the kids, first to deal with snakes (we all know how bad that turned out), blame for every mother's pain (childbirth), blame for everything that's gone wrong for... basically for all of human history.

Obviously, we also owe a debt to our moms for our beginning because without them we wouldn't be here. Somebody, more than a few somebodies, a lot of people have said that if men had to go through what women do to give birth, there'd be a lot less people on the planet, maybe there wouldn't be any life on earth.

Jean went through intense labor with both of our kids. It was longer with our first-born Nate. She had to have C sections for both. Nate was born in Lincoln, NE and I wasn't allowed in the delivery room. Tiffani was born in Green Bay and I was allowed in. I sat by Jean's head as the doctor was preparing to make the incision. He barked at the anesthesiologist that he needed to administer more local anesthesia and said it was a good thing it wasn't an emergency. A little bit later Tiffani was delivered. Jean was ecstatic she had a baby girl.

Me? I was happy too...but...the doctor wasn't. He looked at me and told the nurse, "You better get him out of here, otherwise we're going to have another patient." I was getting woozy. She took me to the hall, sat me down on the cold floor and got me some orange juice. My, what a big brave man I was...

Another reason we can say moms are money is because they're mentors, models, molders. Non-M words we can use are teachers, trainers, encouragers. This is the theme of the passage. The passage twice says Timothy had learned. In order for somebody to learn, there has to be someone to teach. Teaching isn't always formal – "Now Timothy, my son, sit down and pay extremely close attention as I lecture." It also comes through the power of an example. Eunice and Lois must have been persuasive in what they said and how they lived. Timothy became convinced of the truthfulness of what they were teaching and showing.

There was interaction between Timothy and Eunice. It sounds a little cold to refer to the mother-child connection that way, like they were involved in trying to understand the life cycle of the fruit fly or how bats fly. A better way to describe it is intimacy. It wasn't distant learning.

Mom Eunice was the closest to Timothy and main teacher. Formal study of the OT scriptures began for Jewish boys at age 5. Timothy's education began earlier, in infancy, when he was a cuddly little baby. It's very unlikely she had a personal copy of the OT. She probably repeated what she heard, learned and memorized - the creation of the world, the crossing of the Red Sea, Jonah and the big fish, how God worked, people like David, Moses, Elijah. She'd recite Psalms, Proverbs, the 10 Commandments and helped him memorize them.

She exposed Timothy to God's Word. She took seriously her responsibility to impress on her son the Lord's commands when at home, walking along the road, going to bed, getting up (Dt 6:6, 7). She desired for him to love the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength (Dt 6:5). The result was, for as long as Timothy could remember and even before that, Scripture was impacting him.

Moms, dad, grandparents, siblings, adults can get involved in exposing tiny tots to the things of God. Have you ever sung "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so" to a young child, whether to calm him/her or just to imprint the words? When our grandson Elijah was in the NICU in Madison, his mom Tiffani would read the Bible aloud for her devotions so he could hear. He was only an infant so he didn't comprehend but there was impact as she was imprinting his mind and she was training herself to keep the right things in the forefront. 11 year old grandson has for some time been leading his sisters in hymn sings. I show the grandkids music videos of Cain, Charity Gayle (whom they call Lady Loud for the way she gets into Thank You Jesus for the Blood Applied), Stephen Curtis Chapman, David Phelps, Lauren Daigle who Josie had called Bagel. When first grandchild Caleb had colic, the only one who could calm him was Jean...by singing How Great Thou Art.

Four biblical scholars debated their preferred Bible translation. One liked the KJV because of the old English beauty and eloquence. A second chose a version for its literal accuracy from the original languages. A third liked a modern paraphrase because it used penetrating words that captured attention. The fourth admitted he preferred his mother's translation. The other men chuckled and asked if she really translated the Bible. "Yes. She did. She translated each page of the Bible into life. It's the most convincing translation I ever saw."

It's right and necessary to deliberately, consciously and consistently expose children to the truth of God and his word. The world system opposed to God isn't going to do it. A former president of Moody Bible College (George Sweeting) warns of the danger of putting children in a spiritual vacuum and allowing them to make up their own minds about what is true for them when they get older: "Modern parents often... do not urge them or encourage them to accept the claims of Christ personally. What a tragic mistake! The worst thing we can do to our children is to give them the impression that surrender to the Lord is optional!"

Moms, you've had and continue to have tremendous influence. Some of you have or will have the incredible privilege of leading your child to faith in Christ - help them understand they're sinners and the only way of salvation is through faith in Christ who took their penalty and offers eternal life and forgiveness of sins as free gifts to all who receive him. You contribute to your child's spiritual welfare through hours of prayer, telling and retelling the same Bible story before bed, answering questions, and discussing biblical truth. You take them to places where they are exposed to the teaching of God's word. You model the character of a person who is an authentic follower of Jesus Christ through your attitudes, actions, words, and responses to life.

This brings us to our next letter - O is for "on journey". Most people readily admit they aren't perfect. No one in the Bible is presented as being perfect except for Jesus Christ. The lives of numerous moms are presented but many had glaring faults even though they were people who loved the Lord.

If perfection were the standard, we'd quit because we know it's impossible to attain. That's why some don't like Proverbs 31. They're intimidated by the words taught to Lemuel by his mother. "How could she say those things? The total woman? I hate her... the total woman and Lemuel's mom. Who can live up to such expectations?" Rather than being inspired, they're de-inspired.

Author and pastor Greg Laurie has good insight into the passage. He breaks it down into six qualities to strive for even as we're told in other places to pursue holiness, make every effort to add to our faith. He says Proverbs 31 is about character and integrity, being trustworthy, being an encourager, loving, hardworking, wise. He points out how some Jewish husbands and kids would read these words before Sabbath to honor and thank their wives and moms, not to hold an unattainable standard over their heads: "What you're doing is nice, but do better next time."

We know no one is perfect. Children understand that as well. What they need is to see a person who is growing in their relationship with Jesus Christ and trying to love people as God the father has loved them.

The second M could stand for magnificent, momentous, memorable. I'll use it for modest as in humble. It's the recognition that the ultimate credit belongs to the Lord and that we're his servants and managers. Manager doesn't sound like the best word to describe mom's role, although sometimes life seems to be just about managing - getting the food on the table, settling squabbles over toys and maintaining sanity. God has placed us in the role of being managers, stewards, not just of our finances and talents. It includes the people who've been entrusted into our lives. Like the servant Jesus spoke of: "We have only done our duty" (Lk 17:10)

S. The easy words are special, super, super duper. Sometimes overuse causes them to lose their

meaning. I thought of “surrounder in chief,” as in once a mom always a mom. We could use stupendous or stratospheric to reference the high calling. I want to elevate it a little bit more and use the word “sacred.”

We live in a society where major segments denigrate moms and motherhood. They push the idea that being a mom should be viewed as an oddity. “Just a mom” is spoken with derision.

Leslie Flynn summarizes that thinking: “If a woman teaches someone else’s children, she is given professional status - a teacher. But if she teaches her own children, she is just a mother. If she does interior decorating, she is a career woman; if she decorates her own home, she is just a homemaker. If she takes care of others, she is a nurse: but if she nurses her own children: she’s just a mom doing her job” (tract by American Tract Society).

A couple years ago the punter for the Kansas City Chiefs got in hot water when he gave a commencement speech at a Catholic University. He spoke of how his wife felt her highest calling was to be a mom. People thought he was hating women. Apparently, Carrie Underwood has gone on record as saying that moms shouldn't just think of themselves as “just a mom” but it’s the most important thing they can be and do.

When Tiff went to college she figured she’d get a B.A. but her main interest was getting an M. R. S. She wanted to find a godly husband and have children.

I encourage you to check out the Church Connection insert from Wisconsin Family Council. It discusses how people are trying to redefine who is a mom and who can have babies. They want more inclusive language and claim it's about science, but it flies in the face of true science which shows it's an incontrovertible fact that biological men can't give birth.

Author Elise Arndt: “I came to the conclusion that mom is one of the most important elements within any home. She is the one who sets the tone and creates the atmosphere. Home can be the very dwelling place of God, where the love of Jesus is experienced at every turn. Home can be a refuge for a weary husband and uptight children who seek refuge from a world which is really Satan's domain. Being a mom entitles me to the right and privilege of being one of the most vital elements in my children's physical, emotional, and spiritual development. No one else can do my job better” (tract “Just a Mom,” American tract society, from A Mother's Touch by Elise Arndt).

Moms’ self-giving is demonstrated in the poem Mother's Reward: “You are the trip I did not take. You are the pearls I cannot buy. You are my blue Italian lake. You are my piece of foreign sky. You are my Honolulu moon. You are the book I did not write. You are my heart’s unuttered tune. You are a candle in my night. You are the flower beneath the sun. In a dark sky a bit of blue, answering disappointment’s blow with, “I am happy! I have you!”

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