

# The Rock That Makes the Ripple

## 2 Timothy 1:5

**May 9, 2021**  
**Steve DeWitt**

Next Sunday is our last message in our series in Romans. We are going to wrap it all up and put a bow on it.

As is clear, today is Mother's Day. I want to talk about mothers, and really parents and grandparents, and a biblical concept I'm calling "Ripple." Ripple as in waves that ripple out. The study of waves is a big category of science: Sound waves, light waves, water, air. Perhaps you've heard of the butterfly effect. It is a theory about the long-term effect of something small that can become something big—like the motion of butterfly wings in one part of the world sets in motion air waves that become something much greater, like a tornado or a hurricane in another part of the world.

That's debatable but conceptually and spiritually, it is a powerful truth. That's my point today—the impact of a godly mother is a spiritual ripple whose effect is generational. It spreads and influences far beyond the immediate sphere of that mother and the tenure of her life. That's my point and my encouragement to mothers and fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers: don't underestimate the impact of your faith and your life's example in your family tree. Indeed, these ripples ripple into eternity.

I'm going to get there by one powerful example of ripple found in Romans. A couple weeks ago, we read a verse that mentions a guy who is our focus today. "*Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you*" (Romans 16:21 ESV). Timothy. The same Timothy who has two books of the Bible written to him, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. Timothy was a famous Christian leader in the first century. How he became a man of large spiritual impact is the ripple story.

Rather than start at Timothy's beginning, let's start at Timothy's finish. Who did he end up being?

### **Timothy was the Apostle Paul's Right-Hand Man**

Timothy was the Apostle Paul's protégé. In a sanctified way, Timothy was the Apostle Paul's fixer. Paul sent him into situations and churches to set things and people aright. Paul did this because he had absolute trust in Timothy. He refers to him as "his faithful child" and his "true child in the faith." They obviously loved each other and highly respected each other.

I have been blessed with a couple men in my story like this. I attended the funeral of one of them this week, Dr. Wilbur Williams, who always be special in my story. In each case, I was Timothy and they were Paul. At these earlier stages in my life, they were clearly the leaders and I was the young gun. They were the rock; I was the ripple. Paul/Timothy. Lone Ranger/Tonto. Batman/Robin. Are you with me?

### **Timothy was a Key Leader in the Early Church**

Don't think that Timothy was always standing in Paul's shadow. He was a leader of distinction in his own right. When the Macedonian church was facing persecution, Paul sent Timothy to comfort and assist them. He was a leader and pastor in Ephesus, whose other

illustrious pastors also included the Apostles Paul and John. He was with Paul when he went to Jerusalem and was arrested. He was with him in his two-year imprisonment in Caesarea. In the words of a famous musical, he was *in the room where it happened*. He was not an apostle but certainly in the next tier of leadership who supported Paul in his presence and represented Paul in his absence. Two books of our Bible are written to him and dedicated to him. Here is a great summary of Timothy,

*"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel" (Philippians 2:19–22).*

Paul ranks Timothy ahead of every other Christian leader he knows as he had as his first priority the interests and glory of Jesus Christ.

Before we idealize Timothy, we also know Timothy had a more timid personality. He had physical problems and was sickly. Paul encourages him to mix a little wine with his drink for his stomach—first-century Pepto-Bismol. He was also looked down on because he was young and he seemed to have a bit of an inferiority complex.

In my younger days, I remember feeling the same as a pastor. One quick story, when I was around 30 and Senior Pastor here at Bethel, I attended a funeral for the family of one of our church members. This church member was eager to introduce me to a group of pastors and their wives from another church. He said, *"This is Steve DeWitt, our new pastor."* One of the wives looked me over and said, *"Youth pastor, right?"* He said, *"No, Senior Pastor."* She looked at me and said with a tone I shall never forget, *"Ehhwwhh."*

I found inspiration in Paul telling Timothy, *don't let them look down on you because you are young.* (I Timothy 4:12) Set them an example they can follow. Timothy did and goes down as one of the major leaders in the early church.

### **How Did Timothy Become Timothy?**

We could accurately say that Paul made Timothy Timothy. The Holy Spirit made Timothy Timothy. Both are true but neither are the rock that made the ripple. Then who? *"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" (2 Timothy 1:5).*

Timothy had a mom and her name was Eunice. Eunice's mom, Timothy's grandmother, was Lois. Paul says that the saving faith that he is convinced is in Timothy, was first in Lois and Eunice. We know that Timothy's dad was Greek. He isn't mentioned here. Presumably, he was not a Christian, which should give some hope if you are here in a similar marriage. Your kids can still rock the world for Jesus.

His mom and grandmother were Jewish. So when did they believe since Paul says it was before Timothy? Were they Old Testament saint believers, like Abraham and Moses, who looked forward to Jesus by faith? Possibly. More likely is that when Paul went to Timothy's hometown Lystra, Eunice and Lois received Jesus before Timothy did. We don't know how long before. But here's what we do know is that there was a godly spiritual heritage passed down from Grandma to Mom. And from Mom to Timothy. What sort of heritage?

*"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" (2 Timothy 3:14–15).*

One obvious way Timothy became Timothy was that as a boy he was taught and nurtured in the Old Testament Scriptures. A good Jewish boy memorizes huge portions of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Jews dominated Awana back then. Who was teaching him? His Greek father? Hardly. It was old Lois and his mom Eunice.

Paul highlights the rich soil of biblical knowledge onto which the seed of the gospel landed in Timothy's heart. He responded in faith. The same faith in Jesus as Messiah that his mom and grandma had already trusted. Quick side note: parents, we want to make it as easy as possible for our kids to believe in Jesus. Scripture memory and spiritual conversations and church involvement fertilize the soil of their soul. When the gospel lands on fertile soil, it takes root. That's what happened to Timothy.

Here's the point: Mom and Grandma were the rocks that made the ripple we call Timothy—humanly speaking. Obviously, salvation is a work of God by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. None of us are saved by Mom or her faith. Some of the godliest moms ever have had prodigal and unbelieving children. There is no guarantee. But what we do see is that, generally speaking, the faith example of the Christian parents strongly influences the faith decisions of the children. Let's take a poll right now. If you were influenced by the example of your Christian mom or dad to personally become a Christian, would you please stand?

The numbers are so huge that I think we could safely say the greatest missionary category in the history of the church are Christian moms. Praying, Jesus-loving Christian moms. Dads as well, but it is Mother's Day. The greatest mission field for every parent is the heart, soul, and eternity of their son or daughter. Here we see how incredibly high the stakes are. The Bible says that every human being has the incredible privilege of being made in the image of God. With that privilege comes immense responsibility as we are accountable to God for the moral decisions of our lives.

As we have learned in Romans, *all fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23) and are under God's judgment. The only remedy is for our righteous standing before God to be restored. God provides this through Jesus' death for us. He took our sins when he died on the cross. This salvation from God's wrath and salvation to eternal life requires the sinner to repent of their sins, and turn in faith believing Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of all who trust in him. This personal turning to God is a work of God but God uses means to do it.

I think we will get to heaven and discover a primary means for the majority of people saved was Christian parents nurturing a gospel faith in their children. This is my personal story. My deepest desire is that it is the story of my daughters. This was Timothy's story. This is the hoped-for story for every child dedicated today.

### **What Does a Gospel Ripple Look Like?**

As we have seen, the story of Lois was ripple to daughter Eunice, ripple to son Timothy, ripple to thousands, perhaps millions. His spiritual character drew Paul to make him his apprentice and write two letters included in Scripture. How many people have been impacted by 1 and 2 Timothy? They are arguably the most important letters in the Bible on what a church and pastor is supposed to be and do.

Timothy is praised. Lois and Eunice are merely mentioned. Think of what is said of them now in heaven? The rock of their life and mothering created a ripple that still reverberates in eternity.

This is the incredible privilege of parenting. We have no idea the impact our children will have for heaven. Every child is a soul that will spend eternity somewhere. A life whose potential impact for the gospel is inconceivable. Since they are the ripple, what a difference one faithful, praying, humble, Christ-loving, God-glorifying mom can be. You can literally change the story of your whole family tree. Not just your kids—your grandkids, great grandkids, and onward.

*Paul Tripp says this, "These are not years merely to be survived! They are to be approached with a sense of hope and a sense of mission. Almost every day brings a new opportunity to [invest in] the life of [your child] help, hope, and truth....all must be seen as something more than hassles that get in the way of an otherwise enjoyable life."<sup>1</sup>*

What humanly hangs in the balance of the daily frustrations and challenges is an eternal soul. The balance here is that God does the saving so we must not pretend we are God to our kid's salvation. At the same time, shouldn't we do all we can to nurture their understanding of God, Scriptures, a Christian worldview, the better story Christianity tells about sex and gender and identity? Like Lois and Eunice, we fertilize the soil of the soul so that the gospel finds a rich environment to take root and grow.

## **How to Make Holy Ripples**

### **Pray, pray, pray for your children's spiritual state**

It's so easy to pray for their success, their schooling, their social development. Those are fine, but most of all, pray for their spiritual state. Pray for their salvation. Pray for their life to be lived for the glory of God. I pray for my daughter's future husbands, should God want them to be married. I pray for children God may give them, for their salvation. Is there any danger of praying too much for our kids? No. But we certainly can pray too little.

### **Give them an example to follow**

How will our children know what it looks like to be a *fully devoted follower of Jesus*? They won't get it from society. They likely won't get it from friends. It's best if they get it from Mom and Dad. So much of this is dripped into their soul over time. Watched. Observed. Caught more than taught. Our kids are watching us all the time.

In some places people hear this and think, *I have to be perfect so my kids go to heaven*. Is that the gospel? Lived out perfection before God? No. The gospel is God loving me despite my performance. Don't saddle yourself with the need to be perfect so your kids go to heaven. Teach them by example what the gospel is. We are great sinners and Christ is a great Savior.

I love to see this in our home. At times Mommy and Daddy have to ask the girls to forgive us. When we do, their little hearts open with love and grace and they run into our arms. Such a picture of God's forgiveness and restoration. Do that a lot and the soil of their hearts will understand and receive the gospel.

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Tripp as quoted by Dustin J. Coleman, "Learning to See the Glory in the Frustration of Parenting," *Theology Along the Way*, May 1, 2018, <https://theologyalongtheway.org/2018/05/01/learning-to-see-the-glory-in-the-frustration-of-parenting/>.

## Create a gospel environment in the home

What have we learned about the gospel in Romans? *Grace*—totally undeserved kindness from God. *Love*—self-giving for the good and joy of others. *Mercy*—not giving others what their actions deserve. *Service*—our response to Jesus’ sacrifice for us on the cross. Try to promote these virtues in the home. More grace than law. More love than retaliation. More putting others’ needs ahead of our own. These are all easy to say, hard to do. But they are the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. As we parents apply the gospel to our own lives, it shapes the culture of the home our children are nurtured in. They get it. The gospel of our lives ripples into their lives. “*Your family can show how great it is to live under God’s reign of love.*”<sup>2</sup>

A word for folks who would love to create a generational gospel ripple but there is no spouse or perhaps infertility. These gospel ripples can be created without biological children. Praise God for missional families who have adopted and are implanting the gospel in their children. Praise God also for singles who love and serve children toward Jesus. While I am a parent now, most of my adult life I was single with no kids. I rejoice to see my old kids from my youth pastoring days following Jesus. Just this week, one outstanding girl from my youth group announced she is going to be a grandmother. What? How is this possible? If we ask God to use us as a rock that makes a ripple, we need to be ready for opportunities God brings our way.

One great example of this reverberating wave was a study done of the descendants of America’s greatest theologian Jonathan Edwards when compared to the descendants of a contemporary of his named Max Jukes. Jukes was an atheist who married an ungodly woman. Edwards married the deeply Christian Sarah Edwards. A study was made of their descendants.<sup>3</sup>

From the atheist Jukes, of his 540 descendants, 310 died as paupers, 150 were convicted criminals, 7 were murderers, and there were 190 female prostitutes.

From Jonathan Edwards 1,394 descendants came an American vice president, 3 senators, 3 governors, 3 mayors, 30 judges, 13 college presidents, 65 college professors, 100 lawyers, 60 physicians, and 100 preachers and missionaries.

Our lives are rocks that ripple out far beyond the end of our lives. Indeed, into eternity. Today we honor our moms and challenge all of us who are parents and grandparents, to be the rocks that make the ripples that reach heaven itself. Like Lois and Eunice and Timothy, eternity will tell the story.

Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Permanent Text Edition® (2016)*. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

© 2021 by Steve DeWitt. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include Bethel’s website address ([www.bethelweb.org](http://www.bethelweb.org)) on the copied resource.

---

<sup>2</sup> Tim Chester and Ed Moll, *Gospel Centered Family* (Charlotte, NC: Good Book Company, 2014), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Alan Ward, “The Descendants of Jonathan Edwards,” *White Mountain Independent*, September 27, 2019, [https://www.wmicentral.com/community\\_beat/religion/the-descendants-of-jonathan-edwards/article\\_9e54e16d-59c5-5cf2-a99f-dea187da978a.html](https://www.wmicentral.com/community_beat/religion/the-descendants-of-jonathan-edwards/article_9e54e16d-59c5-5cf2-a99f-dea187da978a.html).