

Mother's Day 2018 - "Mothers of Influence"

John Buckles

Video Montage Yes, Mothers Day 2018. Everybody tries to take this occasion to express it in their own way as best they know how ...how loved and appreciated and needed you moms are. Maybe that's why this weekend we dress up and make sure we're in church, why we make more phone calls , and go out to more restaurants than any other day of the year.

Motherhood can have eternally significant and rewarding impact, but only God Himself can fully understand and articulate the influence of a mother on her children. One person called mother "the most powerful and sustaining force for good in the world"..

Motherhood can also be highly demanding. I got **this card** for my wife this year, don't tell her. I got a lovey one too, so don't jump on me 😊 .

One mother said, "I need the power of God to avoid turning into a "MOM-ster". You know what a mom-ster is right? "It's what happens to mom after she counts to three." See that's not very funny, is it?

Another mom said "Raising a kid is one part pure joy...and one part guerrilla warfare.". The stakes are high, but it's worth the battle.

Dr. Jonathan Raymond just came out with a **new book called, "Social Holiness:The Company We Keep"** that reminds us how important are the influences of others in community helping us understand the love of God. And who is a bigger influencer in the community than a mom? Tammy Smith writes in Soul Satisfaction, "**Safety at two, boundaries at three, encouragement at five. Time spent at eight, making memories at ten, allowing independence at 12, providing feedback at 15, directive support at 17 - these are all developmental needs ...**" - **Dr.Tammy Smith** that moms (and dads) can meet like no other human being.

As a father and a husband I can say it's often humbling and jaw-dropping to watch a Spirit-filled mother's DNA gift mix in action. Like how she can walk into a house in total chaos - hypothetically of course - after being away for an extended time - like 15-20 minutes - and immediately read the landscape and calm all the storms. And my wife's graduate level instincts and insights into our kids ... sometimes I just stand there with my mouth open and think ..."Am I even a Christian?!"

But on Mother's Day we are also aware of *all* the potential swirling thoughts and emotions that can be present in a room this size. And they're not always positive. In the Buckles family today...WE miss our moms who are no longer with us. And when they *were* with us - like many of you - we had our OWN seasons of lament and relational distance and disappointment. We TOO have struggled with infertility and a sense that our family wasn't complete, and we haven't always been in the spaces we long for with our kids. So yeah...

But God knows each of our hearts, and only He can understand and meet each one of us in this room right where we are - whether on the mountaintop or the valley. So we're glad to be in the house of the Lord together, and we trust He will speak to each of us in a powerful and a personal way.

Oswald Chambers says, "Never preach the experience - preach the great thought of God behind the experience." God's great purpose behind mothers is really to show HIS heart. God

made them male and female, and then he made mothers. Equal at the foot of the cross, but unique.

There are tons of mother-referencing scriptures that reveal a smidgen of who God is, but here's one of my favorites. The Lord is speaking through the great prophet Isaiah, trying to convince us just how loved we are and how totally committed He is to us, and finally he says, Ok...here's the best illustration I've got...

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palm of my hands... Isaiah 49-15-16

In the interest of time, I made a top 10 list of ten motherly themes that scripture uses to communicate about the value of a mother and the accompanying heart of God toward us.

Top 10 List of Scriptural Motherly Themes Passion Compassion Faithfulness Love Provision Care Healing Adoption Comfort Redemption

So even though I'm a male and we are sometimes questioned as to whether or not we men come at these things as if we're from another planet (**Book cover Venus and Mars**), I will try my best to honor this weekend and you mothers. And take heart, because in just five short weeks Pastor Zoe will talk about the men on Father's Day.

Incidentally you can look this up later but the history and origin of Mother's Day in this country is directly linked to the influence of Christian women. One was the writer of the Battle Hymn of the Republic Julia Howe, who suggested Mothers should have a day to use their influence to promote peace and awareness of grieving war families, and another listened to the prayer of her Sunday school teacher Mother asking God for a day where this country could honor mothers for "the matchless service she renders to humanity in every field of life".

While there are several inspiring biblical "super moms" we could look at, today I want us to learn from three **mothers of influence** - who not only had a profound impact on their own family, but also on the Christian faith we now can enjoy. They are also women who I think both women AND men can relate to, kind of "in the trenches, boot-on-the-ground" mothers. They say "an ounce of mom is worth a pound of clergy", so let's see what we all can learn from them.

Mother of Influence #1. So you've heard of Timothy in the bible, right? The apostle Paul called him his son in the faith. Timothy was a source of joy and pride, and one of the leaders of the early church. Paul writes of him, **I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon., that I may also be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father, he has served with me in the work of the gospel. - Philippians 2:19-22**

And in the last book Paul ever wrote, he opens the epistle by telling Timothy **...I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.**

What is this faith that's been passed to Timothy, that "now lives in Him"? Whatever it is, it started with Timothy's grandmother - we'll get to her in a minute - then it came *through* his mother Eunice.

Mothers Of Influence

Eunice - a foundation of faith

Faith be can be defined as a belief, trust in and loyalty to something. Our faith can be described as "the sum total of one's beliefs and practices."

There's all kind of things you *could* have some measure of "faith" in. And you do need some foundation and structure in your life when - like Eunice and Timothy - you are living in a very turbulent time in history, with all kinds of religious confusion and cultural immorality pressing in on the family. You probably can't relate to that, right mom?

Add in family dynamics. You've got a mom who is a Jewish Christian, and a father who was believed to be greek, but is apparently is either physically absent - or spiritually a non-factor. How can a mom survive - much less thrive - under these conditions? Sometimes it's a war out there, and inside the home too. **Bird kicking out of the nest** Your faith better have a strong foundation, because at some point it may be all you have to stand on.

Well, interestingly enough, the name "Eunice" is made up of a latinized form of two words "Eu" (good) "nike" (victory). It implies that she is "one who conquers well, who enjoys a good or happy victory". What kind of faith does she have that allows her to live so victoriously? Here's one clue, Paul it a "sincere" faith.

1. **Sincere faith** - It's not just some fine-sounding rhetoric or a string of empty liturgies, it's true, genuine, honest, wholehearted, and it dwells in her as a living principle.

And it's been humanized and validated for Timothy.

2. **Modeled faith** - "first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice" She's walking the talk in front of Timothy. It's caught, not just taught. I met recently with a 45 year old guy who seemingly unfairly lost his job as the principal of a school, and now he's got three kids and his wife looking to him. and he said "I always remembered how when I was a child my mother took the high road when she got messed over by my father, so I resolved to do the same." I heard someone say, "Don't shine so others can see you, shine so - through you - , others can see Him".

But it's possible that you can be passionate about your faith, sincere as all get out, but still wrong, right? Let's see what other characteristics of Eunice's faith made her so influential in Timothy's life.

Look a couple chapters later **But as for you, continue in what you have learned, and have been convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. - 2 Timothy 3:4-15.** So we see it's a...

3. **Biblical faith** - "known the Holy Scriptures", it's anchored in truth. The next verse actually continues "All scripture is God-breathed". It's not only useful but living and active and doesn't return void. It's a primary way God speaks today. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. One of the great verses of the faith for me is

Proverbs 9:10. **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. - Proverbs 9:10**

Now we're talking about a solid foundation of faith. We also see that Eunice passed on a...

4. **Jesus faith** - "salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" - It's not a faith with a bunch of do 's and don'ts, it's focused on the main thing: Jesus!. Not an emphasis on creeds and causes, stay out of the weeds and the non-essentials. It's salvation through faith in Jesus. Our chief cornerstone of our faith foundation. And Timothy had received a...
5. **Defensible faith** - "learned, and have been convinced of" The life and resurrection of Jesus - and the word of God - it stands up to the test. It's not a blind faith. And an encounter and a surrendering to God changes everything. Mom, tell them your story about how Jesus changed and then changes your life. It was also a ...
6. **Lifelong faith** - "from infancy" its day to day, from the womb to the tomb. It's a daily, hourly, dependence on the teachings of Jesus. It's not "take these two scriptures and call me in the morning". It's often about a million steps, thousands of seeds planted, conversations and prayers... Just keep swimming...because it's also a...
7. **Lasting faith** - "continue in what you have learned" If it's real, it will stand up over time and then be able to be passed on with credibility. Hebrews says **Let us run with perseverance the race marked out before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.**" - Hebrews 12:1-2

Don't grow weary in well-doing mom. We all make mistakes every day. But give yourself some grace. They say **Behind every great kid is a mom who is pretty sure she is screwing it up.**

In due time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Abe Lincoln (best president ever, Illinois boy) - he lost like eight elections - including three in a row right before being named President. He once said "I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life. All that I am and everything that I hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

So, if you don't think you're seeing results or don't have it all together, that doesn't mean you're not a person of influence. It's never over until God says it's over.

And before you start wondering if this message will ever be over, let me show you another influential mother in the bible who might encourage you as **an example of redemption.**

Mother of Influence #2 You've heard of John the Baptist right? My mom called me that - when I converted to Christ and ended up in a little country Baptist church on the Illinois-Indiana border. But I digress. **THEE** John the Baptist was the one of whom Jesus said, **Truly, I tell you, among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist...** - **Matthew 11:11** Makin' mama proud, right?. One reason Jesus called him the greatest was John held the high honor of being the forerunner prophet to prepare for and point people for the Messiah, as predicted in the old testament . He was the chosen herald to introduce the world to Jesus - the hero of history.

When John was just an infant, His father Zechariah the priest prophesied about him. "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Him, to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins, because of the tender mercy of our God... **Luke 1:76-78**

And we read that ...his wife Elizabeth [there she is - mother #2] was also a descendent of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lords commands and decrees blamelessly. But... - Luke 1:5-7

But. In many ways, your dashboard and portfolio is looking good but...Maybe there's also a "big but" in your life right now. You're a Christian, and you're doing your best - by the grace of God - to follow Him in faith. You're trying to be faithful as a mom (or a dad), a daughter (or a son), but there's these realities that make you question your usefulness or put a limp in your walk, troubling thorns in the flesh, those less than stellar lines on your resume. Sometimes they are obvious to everyone, sometimes the pain and suffering is only known to you. These laments and longings my mom used to call those "Ifs, ands or buts". Let's continue reading...

But they were childless, because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were very old. Luke 1:7

For Elizabeth, she seemed to have two strikes against her, at least according to the naysaying culture at the time. But she didn't have children...and but she was very old. Scholars think she was likely in her 80s. BUT (or should we say "AND") nevertheless...**Elizabeth - an example of redemption**... the Lord in His sovereignty wants to make her an inspiring, influential example of HIS redemptive power. But GOD.

We were 40 when we had our first child (I should say I was 40, my wife was younger) and I was in my 50s when we adopted children. We all have "that thing" that might say we're damaged or disqualified, or at least cause grief or doubt. You're too "this" or you're not enough "that". What do you do with all that?

Look how Paul encouraged Timothy in HIS "achilles heel": **Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young**, [oh now someone is too "young"] **but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12.** If you feel liked a cracked pot of sorts - for any reason - how can you possibly be an example, a person of influence?

Elizabeth for starters

Accepts her situation. She keeps chasing after the Lord. There's no evidence she stepped out of worship, community and mission. You can read some details in the first chapter of Luke, but eventually the Lord tells Zechariah he and Elizabeth are not only going to have a son, but that he's going to be that one prophet who will make ready people for the Lord and turn the hearts of the parents to the children (talk about a spiritual reversal).

Look at verse 24 of Luke 1

After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months she remained in seclusion. The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days He has shown His favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Now we could speculate *why* she went into isolation, but given the overall character of this godly woman, at least part of that reason was likely to prepare her heart and consider how she could best to do her part training up this anticipated child. Look at how she **Acknowledges her hope** - three things she said here

- "The Lord has done this for me"
- "He has shown His favor

- **“He has taken my disgrace from me”**

Good principle of influence here...in your weakness, keep pointing those who are watching to the Lord - whether it's impressionable family members or a watching world. C.S. Lewis once said, “Don't shine so others can see you, shine so that through you, others can see Him.”

She is also fully **Aware of her seasons** - “**In these days**” translation “as opposed to back in *those days*”... the old has gone the new has come, these next four months - and actually the rest of my life - I need to be especially mindful and vigilant. It's “GO TIME”.

And so...as an act of her will, she **Embraces her calling**.

It's also important to emphasize that - if we desire to be a woman (or man or student) of influence - we need to see that part of our calling - much of what WE are going through- is meant for the encouragement of *others*. Because unbeknownst to Elizabeth, on the other side of town, her virgin cousin Mary is having her own supernaturally confusing God encounter, learning that she too is pregnant with Jesus.

Mary is asking the angel “How will this be since I am a virgin”. And look at the response, **Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.** “I am the Lord's servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her. At that time Mary got ready and hurried...and greeted Elizabeth.”

Luke 1:42-46 [add]

And Mary breaks into a famous Spirit-filled praise often called the Magnificat. This exchange between two woman is really one of the biggest moments in the history of the church.

Mary is so encouraged she stays with Elizabeth three months, and then returns home. So let's see here...she came to visit when Elizabeth was six months pregnant...and she stays three more months...

So Elizabeth isn't necessarily bringing her A game to the table by this point, but in her weakness she is still being used by God to encourage Mary to go forward in her weakness.

So how about you? What's God wanting to do in you and through you? In your present weakness?

Listen to this woman of “weakness” and example of redemption. I got it from a good friend on Facebook.

I'm missing many body parts. I'm missing ovaries, a uterus, a breast, many teeth and some of my hair. I pray I can keep what's left...LOL! The rest of me that's left is wrinkling, shrinking, drying out and not functioning properly. I must sound like a hot mess...but I tell you this...this outward wo-man might be decaying, but my inner man is being renewed each day. Thank God for his daily renewal of my spirit! (2 Cor. 4:16)

It's hard to be a “testimony” without a “test”, otherwise it just a bunch of “mony”. And I don't hear much whining from this woman.

Ok, so far we've looked at one mother of influence - Eunice - who provided a foundation of faith, and then another unlikely influencer - Elizabeth - who was an example of redemption. We've got one more Mother of Influence that I believe every person in this room relate to. Ok men - eyes up here - don't wait five more weeks for your word. “It's time for the playoffs.”

Mother of Influence #3 Look with me at the Book of Romans, chapter 16. Paul is wrapping up his foundational epistle by greeting and affirming the influence of more than 20 people who have been helpful in his ministry, including at least six women. But for this weekend, look at verse 13

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord... Romans 16:13

So what do we know about Rufus? Well, not much. Rufus was a common name in those days, meaning “Red-haired”, but the only other time he is referenced in the whole bible is when His father, Simon of Cyrene (from North Africa), is commanded to carry the cross of Jesus for awhile when Jesus falls. We can tell that Paul had a special place in his heart for Rufus because he claims he is “chosen in the Lord”. Since all Christians are “chosen” to a large degree, the word here - “eminent”- means he is a who has distinguished believer in some way, a “choice” Christian. And not just because he was a red-haired African.

Paul, like the rest of us, needs lots of Rufuses - or is the plural “Rufi”?! - when we’re trying to run the race marked out for us, while we’re living in a culture like Rome that is not exactly pro-Christian. Maybe sometimes he thinks no one notices your impact. But Paul apparently does, and a mom does too. Look at how this verse continues...

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother...

We don’t even know this mother’s name. She’s never mentioned anywhere else in scripture, but she clearly was enough of a woman of up front and personal influence that Paul includes her here. Let’s call her “Esther”, so we can have three E’s of influence.

Actually, Esther is a very good name for her. Do you remember the Esther of the bible? She was sovereignly used by God in a mighty way - by being the right person in the right place and the right time. Paul doesn’t say what Rufus’ mother did, but then look what he adds...

Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. - Romans 16:13

Since in the bible we never learn anything about Paul’s biological family, most scholars agree that this Esther is not a biological mother, but a woman who exhibited some kind of significant motherly influence on him. “**Esther**” - a **relationship of impact** Maybe when Paul came to faith, or when he came to town, Esther took him into their home. Maybe she counseled him and prayed with him into the wee hours of the night, or maybe she helped bandage his wounds when he was beaten. Someone once said “No matter how old I get, I still need a mom when I don’t feel good.”

In the marathon of life, we are inevitably going to need several “Esthers” to help us carry our cross at critical junctures. It does take a village to raise each one of us in community, to fuel our worship and to keep us moving in mission.

Spiritual mothering Susan Hunt It may look more like a “traditional” mother model, with an older woman pouring into a younger one. It could be more overtly spiritual or just practical assistance to strengthen or direct us in some way. It could feel more like a big sister or just a credible coach or a mentor mom.

Our ministry coordinator Debbi - who functions as an administrative support mom of sorts to me, and pastor Andy and pastor Bob (and you think you have it tough) -She was given this **coffee mug [pic]** by her step-daughter.

On this Mother's day, I want you to think about your life, and try to recall the "bonus moms" the Lord has sovereignly stationed along your journey - **spiritual sentinels**. You know what sentinels are right? They have stood guard. They're gatekeepers and guardrails, or portals thru which expressions of God and His love enter your life. And they care about from their "positioned position".

These **relationships of impact** are diverse in age, ethnicity, purpose, and walk of life. Some are Christian, some are not. Some still walking with God, some not. Whether they added to a foundation of faith in your life or were broken and powerful examples of redemption themselves, or you had a relationship of impact for a season...they all matter.

They help you see clearly down the path. They listen, they fill you with faith and encouragement, they give you wisdom, they hear your heart and help awaken something in you. They meet practical needs, they help open doors.

I spent some time...thinking of the women in my life - spiritual and practical mothers and sisters - whom God has used most prominently to shape my life in some impacting way.

Here's my "21 Woman Salute". Vernetta...Carol...Mary...Sue...Grace...Karyl...Diane... Donna... Becky...Patti...Linda...Sally...Ann... Mari...Tina...Amy...Leann...Zoe...Nicole...Debbi...Donna

I can tell you all kinds of stories, but on this Mother's Day weekend why don't you start articulating your own list?

And couldn't each of you say the same thing? It does take a village to raise each one of us in community, to fuel our worship and to keep us moving in mission.

God places Esthers all kinds of in our lives. Just in my community life group one mom is a school secretary, shining His light to hundreds, one has a heart for mothers of pre-schoolers, one is helping homeschoolers, one is helping restore marriages, one is helping differently abled children. We're all trying to help each other work out our salvation and finish the race marked out for us.

If you're a mom - or if you want to honor a mom of influence this weekend, as a reminder of that influencer role God has given you...we invite you to take one of these **emory boards** on the tables outside the auditorium. These things - or so I'm told by the women in my life - gently grind down and shape and smooth out unwanted growth. The nails and callouses of life. In a small way, whether they are more stiff or flexible they can help you look more beautiful. [Ok maybe it's a cheesy way of remembering this morning, but hey I'm a guy. I'm from Mars. I'm trying 😊.]

We also have an **appreciation prayer card** to take with you today, and maybe you send it to a special mom in your life with the little token and your own blessing and appreciation.

This is what it says, and this is our closing prayer this weekend. Mom...

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you ? - 1 Thessalonians 3:9.

Amen? Amen. Happy Mother's Day to ALL of us.