

The Faith of Godly Mothers

There are a few things that all humanity has in common. One of these is mothers. While we all have a mother in a biological sense, not all of us “have” a mother in the same way. For some of us, our mothers have already passed on; others of us may have never known our mother. Some of us who have Godly mothers are fortunate and blessed to have our mothers with us today. One thing for sure, if a mother is present, she will always have an influence, be it good or bad. A mother that is present (or willfully absent) through her child’s formative years wields an incredible influence – one that is hard to overestimate. It is a sobering thought to realize that possibly many individuals are experiencing their eternal destiny in heaven or hell partly because of the influence of their mothers.

Let’s look at some Bible examples of godly mothers. We want to learn from positive examples as well as negative ones. In the negative, we learn how not to be.

In Genesis 12, we have the example of Sarah. In Sarah’s life, we learn faithfulness in uncertainty. While faith is not mentioned specifically in this passage, it is implied; she joined her husband Abram on a journey to a land she knew nothing about. I am sure she raised questions that Abram may have found difficult to answer. She surely had some reservations and worries about how an endeavor like this could end! But the Scriptures give no indication of hesitation. What carried her through? She chose to have faith in God and, by extension – her husband, even though she had no way of knowing how their story would end.

However, just four chapters later, we have a different story. This time she chose not to have faith. She must have been aware of God’s promise to Abraham that his seed *would be as numerous as the stars* (Gen 15:5). After ten years of waiting, she loses faith and takes matters into her own hands by encouraging her husband to have a child with her maid (Gen 16:1-5). Abraham follows her ill-advised direction and more problems ensue. God did mean exactly what He said, and in due time a son was born to Sarah. A godly mother of faith will wait on the Lord despite how much she thinks the circumstances call for her to take things into her own hands. This is especially tempting for her when a husband does not take the responsibility and leadership in the home as he should. But God cannot bless an upside-down headship order. This is where a brotherhood steps in to provide direction.

Another example from scripture is Jochebed. Jochebed was the mother of Moses (Ex 6:20). We want to notice her faithfulness through courage. It is easy to exercise faith when it doesn’t take much of it. *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment* (Heb 11:23). Whose faith? Moses’? No. Of course, the faith in focus here was exercised by the parents – not Moses, per se. This was a trying time; the orders of Pharaoh had to be disregarded in favor of God’s higher standard of protecting innocent life. This took courage, courage to stand and face the consequences of their stand if called to do so. Her faith, (Exodus 2:2) gave her courage to do what needed to be done regardless of consequences.

In I Samuel 1, we have another mother in focus. Her name was Hannah. We want to learn faithfulness in love. Hannah was a mother that knew true love. That love that loves even when there is no return. One of the reasons she had the capacity to love is because she experienced love from her husband, verse 5 – *But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah*. Love in action often sets in motion a ripple effect of love. (The opposite is also true – a lack of love promotes an atmosphere of tension and distrust.) She had a loving husband but no child to love. Verse 10 says that in her bitterness of soul, she prayed unto the Lord. Bitterness of heart leads many to turn against God and blame Him. She did not. She loved God so much that she offered her son back to the Lord after he was born and weaned. She loved Samuel back to God. Even though she was in pain, grief, and sorrow, she did not lose her ability to love. Often, we allow the hard things of life to isolate ourselves from love (to God and others). This leads to bitterness – not love. Love releases and then rewards – again and again; in this life and most assuredly, in the next.

In the book of Job, we have a story of Job's suffering, and to a lesser degree, how his wife responded. We have in her an example of unfaithfulness through pain and suffering. She suffered tremendous losses – seven sons and three daughters, and their possessions. From their perspective, the cause for the sudden losses was unexplainable. A sense of helplessness and hopelessness set in – her husband was suffering, and she could do nothing about it. In her anguish, she encouraged her husband to curse God and die. When times got tough, she lost her faith and sinned, adding more stress and anguish to her husband. May we learn from Job's wife how not to respond to hardships in life. She could have chosen to have faith in God as Job did, but her carnality won out.

In II Kings 4, we have the account of the Shunammite mother. She was a righteous example of faithfulness in daily life. The Scripture calls her a "great" woman. She was faithful in seeing the real needs of those around her – she noticed how often Elisha passed by and what comforts would bring him happiness. She had a spiritual perception – she perceived that this man (Elisha) was a holy man. She was hospitable and ready to open her home to a stranger. What made her great? The text does not speak to that directly, but we can safely deduct that her faithfulness in daily life stemmed directly from her selflessness. When a mother is full of herself and her own needs, she cannot see the needs of those around her and becomes unfaithful in daily life.

Acts 16:1 introduces us to Timothy's mother – Eunice. Eunice is remembered for her faithfulness in passing on the faith. *Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek (Acts 16:1)*. She was a believer, but the implication is that her husband was not. But apparently, she was instrumental in witnessing the faith to her son. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also (2Ti 1:5)*. Note the sincere faith that was first evidenced in her mother is now evidenced in Timothy. How did she do that? Again, the text does not say, but since we are trying to learn about the faith of godly mothers and how they express it, we need to consider how she might have done that.

First, you cannot pass on something you do not have. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb 11:6)*. Second, once you have it, you must use it to keep it. The verse quoted above is from what is commonly referred to as the Faith chapter. It could also be known as the Obedience chapter, for faith without works is dead. The characters of Hebrews 11 all had a working faith, not just a mystical belief system, but practical, down-to-earth actions. The faith of godly mothers then is a practical faith born out in their daily lives.

Through ups and downs, health and sickness, happiness and sadness, wealth and poverty, sunshine and clouds, mothers live out the gospel of Jesus Christ, building souls which in turn build homes, schools, churches, and societies. The faith of godly mothers is of God and precious in these dark days.

Twenty-five years ago, God called my mother home at the young age of fifty-seven. The faith of my godly mother influenced me profoundly both in ways that I remember and which was impressed upon my subconscious memory. The old adage "more is caught than taught" is especially true, I believe, for mothers. She was not perfect, but the testimony of her life to me is similar to what was said about her New Testament namesake in Mark 14:8 She hath done what she could. Her faith in action blessed me.

May God bless all godly mothers of the world, and may all of us honor our godly mothers.