

CHILDREN: THE HOPE OF THE HOME

By:

Dr. E. Harold Henderson

Dr. E. Harold Henderson was for 25 years, from 1972-1997, the principal English language speaker on LifeWord Broadcast, an international radio outreach of the Baptist Missionary Association of America. Dr. Henderson was the Writer of Adult Sunday School Quarterly (Baptist Publishing House, Little Rock, AR) for 39 & ½ years. He authored four books and numerous religious periodicals.

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A SUBMISSIVE DAUGHTER

Jephthah's Daughter

The Bible recognizes three classes of people in the home. The father is the head of the home; the mother is the heart of the home; the children are the hope of the home. As head of the home, the father directs its affairs and is the final authority in all decisions. As heart of the home, the mother sets the emotional tone of the family and demonstrates love and devotion to all. As hope of the home, the children receive guidance and training from their parents and move out into society as God-fearing honorable men and women to produce a better world than their parents experienced.

I propose that we look at some of the children mentioned in the Bible to see how a child relates and responds to his parents. That study can profit us as parents and as children, thereby strengthening our homes today.

Ephesians 6:1-3 sets the standard for all homes and all children in all

generations. It reads, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*"

Our first case study of a child in the home is set in the book of Judges, chapter 11. Here we meet a man named Jephthah. He has a lovely daughter, his only child. Her attitude toward her father, through all the experiences of the family, is a great example today of "A Submissive Daughter." The one thing which marked this girl whose name we do not know was her honor and submission to her father. She sets an example for young people today.

Honor your parents even when others do not

Jephthah was born into a tragic situation. He was the illegitimate son of a prostitute. His father took him into his home to rear, but his brothers rejected him. They ran Jephthah away from home saying, "*Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house, for thou art the son of a strange woman*" (Judges 11:2).

Somewhere Jephthah found a woman willing to marry an illegitimate who had been rejected by his own family. To that union was born one child, a daughter, who was the delight of her father's heart. When she grew older she learned the situation of her father, why they were not living near their kindred. What would be her attitude toward such a father? She honored him even when his family did not!

What a lesson for today! One's attitude toward his parents must not be determined by other people's opinions. God said, "Honor thy father and thy mother," and He set no circumstances at which such honor was not to be given. Blessed is the child who obeys God rather than let people set his attitude toward them. Let the young learn this lesson well and honor their parents.

Honor your parents when they offer less than you desire

Jephthah's daughter missed a great deal in life by being born into the family she inherited. She could not live near her relatives. (They had driven away their father from among them.) She could not share in the family inheritance. (They had refused to include her father in their division of the estate.) She could not be accepted in "polite" society because she was the daughter of an illegitimate father. Yes, she missed much of the benefits of life because of who her father was. But that did not make her disrespect him or disobey him. He was her father. Whatever faults he had, and however they might affect her, he was still her father and she was subject to him.

In a counseling session a young man asked me, "How do you respect a father who is immoral and a mother who is an alcoholic?" I replied, "You do not respect them because of how they act, but because of who they are. They are your parents and God requires each child to honor father and mother." Jephthah's daughter teaches us that lesson most dramatically.

Honor your parents even when they are "used" by their peers

The Philistines invaded the land of Israel. Elders of the very tribe which had driven Jephthah from among them came to request him to lead them in battle against the invaders. What an ideal opportunity to "get even" with them for their previous insult. Let them suffer under the oppressor; it serves them right getting just what they deserve. But no! Jephthah had compassion for his people and went to lead them in battle.

How would Jephthah's daughter look on this? Would she consider her father a weakling and despise him for it? Not at all. She honored him when it appeared other people were taking advantage of him for their own benefit. Is that the attitude you have toward your parents, respecting their judgment and esteeming their actions as worthy and appropriate? God would have it so.

Honor your parents even when they are rash in their actions

Jephthah went into battle knowing it was a dangerous and possibly fatal undertaking. He was convinced they could win only if God was with them. So he made a vow that if God would give them victory, he would offer in sacrifice to God the first thing which came out of his house to meet him when he returned home in peace. God gave the victory, whether the vow had anything to do with it or not. God did not require such a vow, but once it was made Jephthah was bound by it (Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Numbers 30:2). His action proved to be rash, for when he returned home the first thing to come to meet him was his lovely and only child, his little daughter.

How would she react when she heard his rash vow? Did she despise her father and condemn him for the judgment he had brought on her? Not at all. Still she honored him and submitted to him as an obedient daughter. She knew it was not the place of a child to sit in judgment over and condemn a parent.

Honor your parents even when it costs you dearly

The life of Jephthah's daughter was at stake in this matter. Her father's rash vow cost her the privilege of living a normal life marrying, rearing children, and enjoying the blessings of domestic life. That was the goal of every Hebrew girl in those days. Her dreams for the future were dashed to the ground by the father whom she was to respect and obey. What was her attitude? She said, "*My father, if thou has opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth*" (Judges 11:36). What a lesson she teaches us concerning respect and honor to the parents who have given us life. What an example she becomes to every boy and girl today who is tempted to disrespect his/her parents because of mistakes they have made. It is a difficult lesson to learn, but one of the most profitable you can ever receive. "*Honor thy father and thy mother... that it may be well with thee*" (Ephesians 6:2-3).

I have suggested five principles about the child's honor of the parents. Honor your parents even when others do not, when they cannot provide privileges enjoyed by others, when they are "used" by their peers, when they act in a rash and unthinking manner, and even when it costs you dearly. That is God's command.

But I must say a word to parents. Be, like Jephthah, a parent who trusts in God. There are no less than nine references to God in Judges 11 regarding Jephthah. He was a man of God. If you trust God as he did, you will be the kind of parent it will be easier for your children to honor.

A GOD-CALLED SON

Samuel

The greatest honor God could give to any person is to call him to special service in the Kingdom of God. The greatest honor God could give to any family is to call a member of that family to serve God in a special way.

I assure you who wonder about it, there is a real spiritual experience of a divine call to serve God. That call comes to people of different ages. Abraham received such a call when he was 75 years old (Genesis 12:1-4). Moses received such a call when he was 80 years old (Acts 7:23-30). Jeremiah, on the other hand, received God's call when he was of such tender age as to call himself a child (Jeremiah 1 :58).

God's call comes to people in different stations of life. He called a shepherd, a soldier, a statesman, a farmer, a fisherman, a tax collector and others. He calls the wealthy and the poor, the educated and the untrained, the young and the old, the male and the female. Yes, God calls chosen ones to special service.

I wish to speak to some young person in whose heart God has placed a divine call. I point you to a young man mentioned in the Old Testament division of the Christian Scriptures who will serve as an example to you in dealing with God's call. The record can be read in I Samuel 1:1-3:21. What should you do if God calls you? You can find guidance by a study of a lad named Samuel to whom God spoke His divine call when Samuel was only in his early teens in age. His response is worthy of our study.

If God calls you, follow the example of devout God-fearing parents

Samuel was fortunate to be born into a home with a father and mother who loved and served God. If you are blessed that way, thank God. If not, you can still be God's faithful servant by looking to others as your spiritual parents in the Lord.

A devoted father can guide you in the faith

(I Samuel 1:3,21). Elkanah, father of Samuel, was such a devout man. He was a man who worshiped God with all his family. He worshiped God continually year after year.

He worshiped God sacrificially going a great distance from home to attend ceremonies at the tabernacle of the Lord in Shiloh. He worshiped the Lord reverently offering sacrifices and making a vow. He worshiped the Lord influentially taking his whole family with him to the house of God. He worshiped the Lord personally with his whole self.

A praying mother can guide you in the faith.

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was a woman of prayer. She asked God to give her a son and Samuel was born in direct answer to that petition (I Samuel 1:10, 11). She was so sure of that fact she named him "Samuel," which means "Asked of God." Having prayed for a son, she received her son as from the hand of God Himself.

Hannah dedicated her child to God. She dedicated him by vow before his birth (1:11). She dedicated him by name at his birth (1:20). She dedicated him by act at the time of his weaning (1:24-28). She said, "*For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him... as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord*" (1:27,28).

Some of you have come from such a home, a home with a devout father and a praying mother. If so, thank God and follow the example of your parents in serving God. Others of you have come from homes where God was not recognized and His name used only in curse words. Do not despair. God receives all who come to Him. You can be saved and serve God also, for He is a God of mercy.

If God calls you, do not be contaminated by corrupt religions

It is a tragic fact that some religious leaders are corrupt. The Bible says of the priests who served in the tabernacle where young Samuel lived and served God that they were "*sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord*" (2:12). Imagine living with men who were supposed to be spiritual leaders and they did not even know the Lord. But young Samuel did not permit that to turn his devotion from the Lord God.

It is a further tragedy that some rituals of religion are abused. The priests among whom Samuel lived so abused God's provision for them through the sacrifices offered at the tabernacle that "*men abhorred the offering of the Lord*" (2:17). But that abuse did not make Samuel reject the rituals God established in the religious observances.

It is more tragic that some religious teaching is ignored. Eli, the high priest, rebuked the evil of his sons the priests. But "*they hearkened not unto the voice of their father*" (2:25). Samuel heard and responded to the teachings of Eli even though others did not. Do you get the principle I am suggesting? You can be faithful to God even if no other person is. Do not be defiled by impurities about you. Keep right with God.

If God calls you, keep on growing in grace

How? Keep available to God. Young Samuel worshiped the Lord and served him as best he knew how. You can serve God also even if, like Samuel, you "*minister before the Lord, being a child*" (2:18). God requires no more than you can give. Keep on growing in grace by seeking in all things to serve God. As His will becomes clearer to you, move more perfectly into it. Always keep your heart open for a word from God, never thinking your relationship with Him has reached its highest potential. "*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (II Peter 3:18).

If God calls you, respond fully to His will

There are four guidelines I suggest that you follow when you are aware of God's call on your life.

Respond humbly to the will of God as best you understand it.

When God's voice was heard in the night, young Samuel responded, "*Speak; for thy servant heareth*" (3:10). That means, "Tell me your will for I am ready to do it." You can give no better response than that.

Receive readily the word from God.

The Lord had a message for Samuel that he found difficult to receive. It was a word of coming judgment on the household of Eli, the very man who had befriended him and reared him. But God's word is not left to our choice. We can only receive what He gives. We need no more or less. When God has spoken, man has nothing further to say. Receive God's word.

Report courageously what God has said.

The next morning Eli asked Samuel what God had spoken to him during the night. "*And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him*" (3:18). How difficult that must have been. But it is as the prophet Amos said, "*The lion hath roared, who will not fear; the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*" (Amos 3:8). Say nothing but what God said; say all that God said. That is enough for God's messenger.

Recognize respectfully those whom God calls.

Do not try to promote nor detract God's messengers. Recognize them as messengers of God and hear their word from the Lord.

Do you want the best from your life? Then be available to the will of God, whatever it may be for you. Whom God chooses, He calls. Whom He calls, He qualifies. Whom He qualifies, He uses. Whom He uses, He blesses. If God calls you, be fully available for faithful service and you will hear His "Well done" at the end of the way. And that is the mark of a victorious life.

A FAITHFUL SON

Solomon

One's direction in life is often set in youth, sometimes at a surprisingly young age. Habits, patterns, goals, ambitions are formed early. That is why I encourage those who are still young to resolve to love and serve God all their lives. It is a challenge to be faithful to your potential.

But life is not easy. As one develops, there are problems which arise to challenge his commitment. Thank God, one is not alone. He can pursue his goals faithfully and realize his greatest ambitions in life in spite of those problems. Sometimes the very problems contribute to the qualities needed to be faithful to one's vision.

God has given us a case-study of "A Faithful Son." I present to you a royal prince, named Solomon, whose rise to fame was by a difficult road of conflict, intrigue, deception and multiplied other problems. A review of his experience will be an encouragement to some young person who receives these words today. I seek to answer the question, "How can I be a faithful son?"

Be faithful in spite of blemished reputations of your parents

Their sins are not your fault, but they may be your problem. Solomon's parents were David and Bathsheba. From their first acquaintance, their relationship was marked by adultery, deceit, and finally the murder of Bathsheba's husband so David might take her as his wife. People knew of it - you can never keep such a thing quiet. People knew of it and must have talked about it. Some never forgot it. That blemished reputation must have followed Solomon even into adulthood. The gossips kept it alive, but Solomon was faithful in spite of their repetition of the tragic failure.

If Solomon could overcome such a problem as that, you can win over blemished reputations which your parents may have. (If you have no such problem, thank God and get on with living. If the problems are there, ask God for wisdom to continue to pursue your goals without bitterness or resignation to despair.)

Be faithful in spite of problems within the family

David was a polygamist. His several wives, with the mixture of their children as half-brothers and half-sisters, was ready made for jealousy and intrigue.

That family faced problems beyond our imagination. One son raped his half-sister and was, in turn, murdered by her brother and his half-brother (II Samuel 13:1-29). One son led a political rebellion against his father and set King David running for his life from Jerusalem (II Samuel 5:1-18:32). Adonijah, an older son, almost took the throne of the kingdom shortly before David's death while the king was doing all he could to put Solomon, a younger son, on the throne (I Kings 1:5-52; 2:12-25). What family do you know, including your own, who had more problems or more severe

problems than that one? There was jealousy among the wives, jealousy among the children, and all sort of evil running rampant there. Yet, Solomon came forth from it unblemished and an example of a faithful son.

Do not blame your failures on others. You can reach your goals in life by faith in God and commitment to pay the price for success.

Be faithful because others see your potential and expect your success

When the little son was born to David and Bathsheba, they named him Solomon, which means "Peaceable." They may have had in mind their own turbulent past in choosing that name. But a prophet named Nathan looked on that baby through the eyes of God. The Bible says of the child, "*The Lord loved him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord*" (II Samuel 12:24, 25). Jedidiah means "Beloved of the Lord." David and Bathsheba saw their little son as only a Jewish boy. Nathan saw him for what he could become in the Lord. Perhaps through the prophet's influence, "*Solomon loved the Lord*" (I Kings 3:3).

There is someone who sees your potential and expects you to succeed. It may be a relative, a teacher, a friend, or perhaps your pastor. Do not disappoint the one who has confidence in you. Be all that you can become. Let his confidence challenge you to your highest potential.

Be faithful in spite of honors heaped on you

And Solomon had those honors! He was the son of Bathsheba, the favored wife of David. As such he had benefits the children of less-favored wives did not have. He was the recipient of the special name given him by the prophet of God. (Nathan must have explained the nick-name he gave the young prince.) He was chosen of God to be the future king of Israel well before he sat on the throne. He bypassed his older brothers, who were the first heirs to the throne, to become king. People came from afar to hear his wisdom; even the Queen of Sheba journeyed to see him and praise him. His literary accomplishments were astounding; he wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1005 songs. But none of that "went to his head" as we say and spoiled his outlook on life. I have seen many a young man ruined by honors which came too fast too early in life. Do not be spoiled. Accept your compliments with humility and keep on serving faithfully.

Be faithful in view of the help of God available to you

After Solomon was crowned king of Israel, the responsibility of the office overwhelmed him. So he sought the Lord. His prayer was, "*Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people.*" The request pleased the Lord and He replied, "*I have done according to thy words. I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart*" (I Kings 3:9, 12). That was why Solomon was such a wise man:

he received wisdom from God. And that is the secret of your greatness, also. You can receive all you need, whatever it is, from God. The Bible says, "*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:19). The way to be prosperous and to have good success is by following God's guidance which is recorded in Holy Scripture (Joshua 1:8).

Be faithful to carry out the ministry assigned to you

King David wanted to build a temple to the Lord God. He was forbidden to do so because he was a man of war who had shed much blood. But God promised David's son, Solomon, would build the temple in Jerusalem. David's dying charge to Solomon dealt with his faithfulness on the throne and commissioned him to build the house of God (I Kings 2:1-9; I Chronicles 22:5, 6, 11, 19). What a privilege to build a house where people of the whole nation could come and worship the true and living God! And Solomon was faithful to perform that assignment.

There are so many things in life which may turn you from your real mission. You may become interested in lesser things. You may be caught up in the desire to accumulate money and be rich. You may become discouraged when your plans do not materialize in the way or with the speed you desired. You may permit other people to substitute their goals in life in the place of what you are to do. Refrain from all such temptations. God has put you in the world for a special purpose. He had that purpose in mind before you were born (Jeremiah 1:4-10). Your highest attainment in life is to be faithful to that assignment and glorify God by serving the good of people in the name of God.

Set your ideal on a worthy objective. Commit it and yourself to God. And be faithful to that God-given dream, working diligently to see it realized. Be full of faith and the Holy Spirit and you will be blessed and be a blessing.

A WITNESSING GIRL

Naaman's Maid

Young people can have a profound influence upon adults. In fact, the witness of young people often leads to life-changing decisions by adults. I know that to be so because of Bible teaching and because of personal experience. God called me to the gospel ministry of teaching the Word when I was only 14 years of age. I hesitated about entering that ministry because I was sure no adult would listen to one as young as I was. But upon the persistence of the Holy Spirit, I devoted my life to serve God as a preacher/teacher of the Bible. And I was surprised at how adults received me, a mere boy-preacher. Yes, I know by personal experience that youth can influence adults if they give a true God-centered witness.

The fact is confirmed by Bible records also. I call your attention to the Second Book of Kings, chapter 5. There you will find the record of a young slave girl, whose

name is never recorded, who influenced her master and influenced the destiny of nations by her faithful witness for her God. Consider her story.

The master's name was Naaman. He was the commanding General of the armies of the great nation of Syria. Held in high esteem by his king and exalted by his peers, he was "*a mighty man in valor.*" There was one problem: he had leprosy! That was an incurable disease in those ancient days and meant sure death by a slow and loathsome process.

There was in Naaman's house a little Jewish girl who had been taken captive out of her homeland. She was a slave to the wife of Naaman. One day she remarked to her mistress, "*Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy*" (5:3). The word was reported to Naaman who reported it to the king of Syria. The testimony of a slave girl was believed by men of noble position and great authority.

The king of Syria did not know who to contact in Samaria for the healing of his officer. So he sent a letter to the king of Israel saying, "*I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy*" (5:6). The king of Israel was distraught. He was sure the king of Syria was seeking an excuse for war, for he knew no man could cure the dread disease of leprosy.

The prophet Elisha sent to the king the word that God could heal Naaman and asked the General be sent to him. When the officer arrived, he was instructed to dip seven times in the waters of the Jordan. After a bit of hesitation, he dipped and came forth cleansed and healed of his leprosy. Imagine the rejoicing and the glory given to God for such a miraculous thing.

Where did it start? It started with a Jewish slave girl who believed in her God and was not ashamed to speak of her faith to her masters. Yes, the witness of a youth can have a profound effect on adults.

What lessons can we learn from that event? I mention five things.

Witness for God whatever your circumstances (5:2, 3)

The idea in those ancient times was that each nation had its own god. When two nations were in war, the winner considered that proved his god was greater than the god of the other nation. The Syrians probably believed their god was superior to the God of the Hebrews because of the successful raids they could make into the land of Israel. They may have believed it, but the Jewish slave girl did not.

The gods of the Syrians had not been able to heal Naaman of his leprosy. But she was convinced the God of Israel could. So she said so quite positively.

It seems a slave girl would be hesitant to speak to her mistress of her God. But not when you know the Lord God, the true and living God, sovereign ruler of the whole universe. Like that little unnamed lady, let us witness for our God whatever our personal circumstances may be. God is greater than any circumstance.

Witness to whoever will listen

The Jewish slave girl witnessed to her mistress, knowing the word would reach the ears of her master. Who would listen to her? Would her witness make any difference in the decisions of her master? It was not hers to say. It was enough that she speak the truth of God and leave the results to God.

Do you notice how we tend to witness "down" to people: to those younger, to those less powerful, to those less influential? Not so with this girl. She witnessed to one of the most powerful families in the empire, and God honored her witness.

Witness in the face of impossible circumstances

There was no known cure for leprosy in those days. To say God would cure Naaman's disease was a giant step of faith. But the little girl thought of the greatness of her God and not of the severity of her master's illness. So she said with confidence that God would heal her master if he contacted the prophet in Samaria. The same is true of the Gospel witness today. The gospel is "*the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*" (Romans 1:16). You can never share it with the wrong person. God changes men from the worst of sinners to the holiest of saints upon their repentance and faith in the Christ of the Gospel.

Witness with total faith in God

The little slave girl said positively God would "recover" her master (heal him completely and forever). She believed it. Let others doubt if they would, she was confident her God was faithful to act.

You can follow her example. Do not speak of God with half-hearted confidence. He is faithful. He never changes. Speak with confident faith and your faith will be rewarded as God acts.

Witness and leave the results to God

The slave girl probably never knew what happened in Samaria. She knew her master Naaman made the trip and she knew he returned healed. That was all that mattered. She did not know his approach to the king of Israel almost started a war between the two countries. The adults did not understand as well as the child. But God worked His miracle just the same.

God's name was vindicated. Man's needs were met. A pagan became a convert to the God of Israel. And it all began with a slave girl. She drops from the historical record. Her name remains unrecorded. But the witness of her faith remains to honor her, to challenge us, and to glorify God.

There is but one word left to say in view of her faith and witness. "*Go and do thou likewise.*" You can be a witness of Jesus Christ, whatever your circumstance. You can be a witness if you trust Him and are willing to speak of Him. You can be a witness to those who are considered more "important" than you, who consider

themselves "above" you. You can be a witness because God will enable you. The question is not whether you can be, but whether you will be.

Jesus has commissioned us, "*Ye shall be witnesses unto me. .. unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). Those who walk in fellowship with him declare, "*We are his witnesses*" (Acts 5:32). I challenge you to witness whatever your circumstances, to whoever will listen, in the face of impossible circumstances, with total faith in God, and leave the results without worry in the hands of God when you have witnessed. Witness and be a blessing to someone in great need.

A MISSIONARY SON

Timothy

Have you noticed how God seems to have gifted certain people for certain ministries? Some of His greatest workers have come from most unlikely backgrounds.

Who would have thought that the greatest fellow-missionary to work with the Apostle Paul would be a sickly and timid young man? Yet Timothy was just such a person. I take heart in the realization that since God used a seemingly unqualified young man like Timothy, He can use people like you and me. Timothy is an example of a fine (but somewhat unpromising) young man whom God made great in spiritual service. Consider this young man as typical of workmen of God today.

God's workman can arise from a divided household

The Bible ideal is a family where each member is devoted in faith toward God and committed in love to every other member. God raised up a lad named Samuel from such a home and made him the prophet of the Most High God. But we humans do not always measure up to the ideal. So we thank God He can take less than the ideal and still use us to His purposes and glory.

The Bible reports of Timothy that he was "*the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek*" (Acts 16:1). That means his mother was a Christian and his father was a pagan. Yet out of that mixed marriage came a young man whom God used greatly to the salvation of sinners, establishing of churches, building up of saints in the faith, and the faithful helper to the greatest Christian missionary the world has ever known. What God did then He can do now. If your home situation is less than ideal, make the best of it and go on serving God.

God's workman can develop in spite of improper parental guidance

It was the women in Timothy's life which influenced him toward God. His Greek father seemed to have made no contribution to his spiritual life. Paul wrote of Timothy's faith being first in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice before he

became a believer. There is no reference to any faith in Timothy's father. It is the husband/father whom God made responsible for the home and the teaching of the children. But when the man fails, God honors the influence of faithful women. Timothy was taught what to believe, but the influence of his unbelieving father kept him from practicing some of the principles of his faith. That was why he had not been circumcised at the age of 8 days, as was the custom of Jewish children, since his Greek father considered that a mutilation of the body and would not agree with it. Paul circumcised Timothy as a young man before taking him on the missionary journey (Acts 16:3).

Incomplete parental preparation does not disqualify one from the service of God. Let the young man or woman follow God as completely as possible, and wait for God to open the door to fuller service. You can not blame your parents for your personal failure to trust and serve God. Do not dare make that mistake. You can know Him through faith whether any other member of your family is a believer or not.

God's workman must exercise personal faith in Jesus Christ

Timothy was a believer in Jesus. Christian brothers who lived in Lystra and Iconium, the two towns where Timothy was best known, reported to Paul of the young man's faith in the Lord Jesus (Acts 16:2). It is very likely he came to trust Jesus under Paul's influence during the first missionary journey of the great apostle through Lystra. At least, Paul referred to him as "*my own son in the faith. my dearly beloved son*" when writing to Timothy and called him "*my beloved son*" when writing to others concerning him (I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2; 1 Corinthians 4:17). And he wrote to Timothy of "*the unfeigned faith that is in thee*" (II Timothy 1:5). Yes, Timothy was a true Christian believer through the influence of his Christian mother and grandmother in spite of the unbelief of his pagan father.

No one can serve God effectively apart from personal faith in Jesus. He said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6). That is why it is essential that you believe in Jesus just as you believe in God (John 14:1).

God's workman can serve effectively in spite of personal problems

Two great problems seemed to handicap Timothy's service as missionary-companion to the apostle Paul. Health can be a problem which hinders service. Paul wrote in I Timothy 5:23, "*Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.*" Notice the words "thine often infirmities." They indicate Timothy had repeated problems with health, something seeming to have to do with his stomach as drinking "a little wine for thy stomach's sake" would correct or improve it. I think it had to do with the problems of travel eating different foods and drinking water in many different areas. We have that problem with international travel today with all our water purification systems. What

a problem it must have been then.

Timothy served in spite of his health problem. Do not use that as an excuse why you cannot (or do not) serve God. There is something you can do in divine service, whatever your health condition.

Personality problems can hinder service.

Timothy was self-conscious and introverted. Paul wrote the church in Corinth asking them to receive and deal gently with Timothy "*that he may be with you without fear.*" He asked them to respect him and enable him to continue his mission in peace (I Corinthians 16:10, 11). Why? Because of Timothy's timid personality.

In spite of health problems and an introverted and timid personality, God used Timothy in a great way in His service. Just so can He overcome your hindrances to service and make you a blessing. Trust Him to do it.

God's workman must be available to serve God at all times

Timothy was willing to leave his home and family to travel to mission fields of the world to serve God (Acts 16). You find him with Paul in Philippi, Corinth, Athens, Thessalonica, and Rome; being sent by Paul to places the great apostle could not visit and guiding the people of God (I Corinthians 4:17). Tradition reports Timothy served for years in the church at Ephesus where the apostle John distinguished himself before being exiled to the isle of Patmos. John Mark began with Paul and left to return home in the midst of a missionary tour. Not so with Timothy. He remained faithful under all circumstances, even during the imprisonment of Paul in Rome.

No wonder Paul wrote of him, "*I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state*" (Philippians 2:20). What a man of God was Timothy to have such a place in Christian history and to have two books of our Christian Scriptures addressed to him and carrying his name forever!

What was his background? He came out of a religiously-mixed and less-than-ideal home. He had physical and personality problems which might hinder him. But he was a man of God in spite of those hindrances.

Do you want to be a man or woman of God? Do not let your home background, personality traits, or personal problems prohibit you. Trust Jesus and make yourself available to serve God. As God enabled and used Timothy, so He will use you to the blessing of many in the name of Jesus.