

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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5/10/09

## 2 Timothy 3:1-5      “Parenting in the Last Days”

Intro. From time to time you may run across an article in a newspaper or magazine which may have a title such as, “Parenting in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” The implication is that in this modern day in which we are living, we need to adjust and change the way we function as parents. Some, including the United Nations, would radically alter the role of parents and children in our day. It is true that the typical family has certainly changed, especially since the 50’s. Some changes are welcome, such as modern conveniences which can make family life easier. However, it seems most changes in modern family life have come to the detriment of our children. We may live in nicer houses, but in many cases our families are not better but worse.

I always prefer to preach a Mother’s Day message that primarily focuses on the positive. But the problems that we face today are too great to ignore. I believe we are rapidly moving into the last days that were predicted in my text today. The conditions of the last days will certainly affect family life, and I must share what God says about the problems of today’s family. But I will not only share the problems, but I also plan to share how we can keep our families from the kinds of problems that will be common in the last days. So let’s go ahead and begin. First of all:

### I. BEWARE OF THE PROBLEMS OF HOME LIFE IN THE LAST DAYS

In our text today Paul makes some predictions about the last days. He says that perilous or difficult seasons of time will come. Hard times are coming. In one sense we have been living in the last days ever since Jesus came the first time, yet I believe Paul is saying that the problems stated here will intensify in the last days that lead up to the return of Christ. These problems will certainly affect family life. These are difficult times for parents and children. The statistical evidence clearly points to the fact that we do indeed have problems in American homes. I believe the problems are getting worse. Nearly 6 million wives are abused by their husbands every year, and based on v.3, I expect the problem will get worse. Many homes do not have a biological father as head of the home. In some segments of society approximately 1/2 of all children are born to single parents. A *Time* magazine poll revealed that about 85 percent thought couples in their generation were more likely to divorce than couples in their parents’ generation. Another recent statistic is that 1/3 of all elementary students return to empty homes. More and more children are having to raise themselves. When mom and dad are not around, they are increasingly coming under the influence of TV, video games, the Internet, & their peer group.

Attitudes toward children have changed greatly. At one time most people considered children to be a blessing from the Lord. In fact, Psalm 127:3 says, “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.” Yet now, it seems many women consider pregnancy to be similar to a disease they want to avoid at all cost. Parenting can indeed be a tough job in our generation. Someone once advised mothers that if they have a lot of tension and get headaches, they should do exactly what it says on an aspirin bottle: “Take two aspirin,” and “Keep away from children.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Preaching* (March-April, 2006), 67.

I believe the Apostle Paul predicted that these types of problems would come, especially in the last days before the return of Jesus Christ. If you will look with me into our text, we will see a number of problems that certainly relate to family life in the last days. We need to do all we can to avoid becoming like the people described here. First, we need to avoid:

A. The Problem of Self-Centeredness - I believe self-centeredness is the root cause of many of the problems we have in family life today. You cannot have harmony in the home when most people in the home are self-centered. Mothers have a long history of selfless devotion to their children. But the time is coming when self-centeredness will be more and more common, even among mothers. There are 4 aspects of this self-centeredness that I want us to see here in our text. Paul says in v.2 that people [*anthropos*, not “men”] will be:

1. Lovers of Themselves – It is proper to love yourself in the sense of taking care of your basic needs (Eph. 5:29). But the word used here (*philautos*) refers to being fond of yourself; having a high opinion of yourself. It refers to one who is too focused on their own self-interest. They have put themselves on the throne of their lives. Even secular commentators are pointing out that people are becoming more and more narcissistic. Such egotistical people also love to receive praise from others, and will do anything to get it. That’s why Paul goes on to say that such people will be “boasters, proud.”

For at least the past 20 years we have heard much about self-esteem. Schools promote self-esteem programs. Parenting books talk about the importance of instilling a positive self-esteem in your children. I agree that it is important to have a good self-image, which comes from being loved, and from making a valuable contribution in the lives of others. But you don’t get it by being self-centered! Parents today are making a big mistake when they try to build self-esteem in their children by making them the center of the universe, and by always heaping praise on their children. Paul warned that in the last days, most people will put themselves first, ahead of everyone else. In our day, many people have cast aside the idea that we should put others first, even our own families.

Parents, we need to teach our children that God is the center of the universe. Life is about pleasing Him, and serving Him. We are to put God first, others second, and self last. You cannot have a good marriage or family if you are self-centered.

We should not be surprised at what Paul says next. Lovers of self become:

2. Lovers of Money – According to v.2, that will be another characteristic of people in the last days. The King James uses the word covetousness, but the literal meaning of the Greek word is “lovers of silver.” Paul wrote that in the last days, people would love money above most other things, including God. According to a 2006 Pew Research Center poll, about 80 percent of 18- to 25-year-olds in this country see getting rich as a top life goal.<sup>2</sup> Greed has been a factor in the financial problems we are facing today. There is greed in corporate Boardrooms. There is greed in Union halls. There is greed in the halls of Congress. There is greed in the homes of America.

Did you hear the story of the stockbroker who, as he got out of his BMW, a car slammed into the door, shearing it off. When the police arrived, the stockbroker was furious and said, “See what that idiot did to my beautiful Bimmer? Do you know what this car cost?” Then the police officer said, “Sir, you’re so worried about your car that you haven’t even noticed that you left arm was ripped off.” The stockbroker took a look at where his arm once was and screamed, “Where’s my Rolex?”<sup>3</sup> Yes, the love of money will characterize the last days, and we have arrived!

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<sup>2</sup> The Pastor's Weekly Briefing, January 26, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> *Readers Digest*, April 09, p. 36.

This love of money will indeed lead to all kinds of problems. Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 6:10 that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, including stealing, dishonest business practices, & gambling addictions. There is nothing wrong with making money. There is nothing wrong with acquiring wealth. But it is wrong when making money takes greater priority than pleasing God, or meeting the social & spiritual needs of our family. The decisions of family life are too often made based on money, rather than what is best for everyone involved. At times children are not receiving enough parental attention and training because their parents are too busy working, because they are lovers of money.

Another self-centered problem that will characterize family life in the last days is this: There will be a:

3. Lack of Natural Affection – That is how the KJV translates the first characteristic stated in v.3. The NKJV simply uses the word “unloving.” The Greek word (*astorgos*) refers to a lack of the kind of God-given natural affection that parents have for their children.<sup>4</sup> Motherhood has been praised for thousands of years because of the unselfish love and dedication that mothers naturally have for their children. Children have a natural love for their parents. They really want to please their parents. They don’t act like it sometimes, but even brothers and sisters have a natural love for each other. Yet in the last days, more and more people will not have natural affection for family members. This is one of the most profound signs of the last days. Evidence of this is mounting. Since 1973, millions of mothers & fathers have killed their unborn children through abortion. A significant number of fathers have abandoned their children in the past, but now even some mothers are abandoning their children. They have nothing to do with their children. The rise in child abuse may partly be due to this lack of natural affection that Paul predicted would come. Some children are beaten and it doesn’t seem to bother these parents who lack natural affection. Finally, when a mom or dad in a nursing home receives very little, if any, attention from their children, there is a lack of natural affection.

By the way, some who are hearing me right now have suffered the loss of natural affection from someone in your family. That can be painful. Let me encourage you not to focus on that, but focus on the love that you do have. Most of all, remember that God loves you. In Isaiah 49:15 God said, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.”

Finally, another self-centered problem that will characterize family life in the last days is this: People will be:

4. Lovers of Pleasure – Paul says in the last of v.4 that in the last days, people will be “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” Certainly we are living in a society that values pleasure over the needs of children and the positive values of hard work and discipline. There are many who are not in church today because they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They are on the golf course this morning. They are at the lake this morning. They are in still in bed even as I speak because they stayed up all hours of the night pursuing pleasure. Getting more to the root of the problem is what Paul goes on to say, lovers of pleasure *more* [*mallon*] than lovers of God. Pleasure is their idol. This is especially true when they pursue sinful pleasures, like sexual immorality, drunkenness, & drug abuse. America has become an entertainment, pleasure-mad society. All we are interested in is just having a big time and entertaining ourselves. During this recession people will cut back on everything except entertainment. There is nothing wrong with many of the pleasures of life, but when you put pleasures and love of pleasures ahead of the love of

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<sup>4</sup> McGee interprets this to refer to abnormal affection, like homosexuality,

God, you have a problem in your life. Parents, the pursuit of pleasure should not be more important than other family considerations.

Back in 1993 we learned of a couple who went to Mexico on a vacation and left their young daughters locked up in the house alone for over a week to take care of themselves. As we move into the last days, we can expect to see more of this type of activity.

Is self-centeredness adversely affecting you as a parent? Is making more money more important than spending time with your family? Do you value personal pleasure even over God! If these verses do describe you, you can change. You need to start by dying to self, and follow Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." If you put Jesus Christ first in your life, and can overcome the problem of self-centeredness that will lead to conflicts in your family.

Paul identifies other problems that will characterize family life in the last days:

B. The Problem of Abusive Language in the Home - Paul predicted that verbal abuse would be more common in the last days. Tragically the home is not exempt and protected from such verbal abuse, though it should be. In v.2 Paul says that men would be blasphemers. That word is not limited to blasphemy against God, but it can also refer to abusive, hurtful language toward others. He refers to slander in v.3. Some people have become quite skillful at hurting people with their words. Folks, this kind of language should not take place in our homes. Indeed, too many homes have parents and others speaking in such an abusive and profane way toward one another.

I guess I lived a pretty sheltered life, and I didn't know people lived like that until Cheryl and I got married & moved into an apartment complex in Dallas. There was a couple next door that practiced this kind of talk quiet frequently. They would argue, yell and fuss at one another, using profanity. We certainly heard quite a bit of it. Fortunately, they did not have any children. The problem is compounded when such verbal abuse is directed at young children. But what may be just as bad or worse is the number of kids who pick up such language from TV, music, movies, and from their friends, and they verbally abuse their parents. That's one of the characteristics of the last days.

How about doing a family-health check-up by examining the language in your home. When you visit a doctor, he often will ask you to stick out your tongue. Well, how you use your tongues says a lot about the spiritual health of your family. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt..." Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." I do not know how you talk to one another behind the closed doors of your home, but God does.

Finally, Paul warns that in the last days, there will be:

C. Problems with Children - In v.2 he wrote that they would be:

1. Disobedient to Parents – We know the Bible teaches that children should obey their parents. For example, Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:1, "Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." God has given them authority over you, and you should obey them. Now children have always disobeyed their parents from time to time. But Paul predicted that in the last days not only would children *occasionally* disobey their parents, but I believe he is indicating that this would be a widespread chronic problem. I'm afraid that we are seeing this fulfilled in our day. Many children are living in rebellion against their parents. Today, even grammar school children are

acting more like teenage rebels than sweet, obedient children. Studies have shown that television viewing fosters bad attitudes that contribute to the problem of disobedience in children.<sup>5</sup>

Children, it is God's will that you obey your parents. Don't follow the trend of others and be disobedient. One of the best ways you can honor your mother and show love to your mother is by obeying her. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep My commandments". And a mother can say to her children, "If you love me, you will obey me." If you do have obedient children, you should certainly be thankful to God! If you don't have obedient children, then you need to make sure you are giving them the consistent discipline they need.

According to v.2, another characteristic of people in the last days is that they will be:

2. Unthankful (*acharistos*) – In the last days this problem will not just characterize adults, but children as well. They will not appreciate the many acts of kindness which their parents have bestowed upon them. Many parents have made the mistake of over indulging their children. The toy industry is a multi-billion dollar industry. Instead of giving our children the attention they need, we want to substitute toys and entertainment and television. One main problem with this is that children tend to get the idea that they expect us to do things for them and to give them things. And when we do give to them, they are not grateful for them. I believe the more self-centered we are, the more ungrateful we will be.

Mother's Day is certainly a day when we should show gratitude toward all the love and sacrifice that our mothers have shown to us. Have you done so? We should not show gratitude just on Mother's Day. It ought to be a habit of our lives each and every day. Joy will characterize the homes where family members show appreciation to one another for what they do. Let us go against the tide of ungratitude in these last days.

Parents, we need to teach our children to be grateful. Do you have prayer at the meals of your house? Do you verbally thank the Lord for the blessings of life? Let us go against the tide of ingratitude in these last days. Joy should characterize our homes, and family members should show appreciation to one another for what they do.

Even though all of these problems that I mentioned will become increasingly common in families, that does not mean that these problems should characterize *your* family. We must not be swept away by the currents of modern family life. We must dare to be different. And so my last main point this morning is:

## II. BEGIN TO PREVENT THESE PROBLEMS IN THE LAST DAYS

In 2 Timothy, Paul not only warns of the problems that we have discussed but he also tells us how we can avoid having these problems in our families.

A. We Should Limit Contact with Bad Influences - Paul says in the last of v.5, "And from such people turn away!" Except for evangelistic outreach, we are to limit contact with such people. Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:33, "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'"

Then in 1 Corinthians 5:6, he used a classic illustration. He said, "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" Yeast is a symbol of sin because of the way it spreads. After a while, a little yeast will affect the whole lump of dough.

Even so, we need to turn away from the bad influences of ungodly people. There isn't much on TV that is worth watching these days, and much of it will exert a bad influence on you and your children. Young people, you need to be careful about the kinds of friends you make. You especially

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<sup>5</sup> According to a nationwide survey funded by Children Now.

need to be careful about the people you date. Don't rush it until you are fully mature. If someone is leading you into sin, turn away from them like you would turn away from a poisonous snake!

Furthermore:

B. We Should Model a Genuine Faith before our Children – There is an important contrast in 2 Timothy. In v.5 Paul describes many people in the last days, “having a form of godliness but denying its power.” Even though the last days will be characterized by so much ungodliness as described in vv. 1-4, people are still going to be religious. It is hard for people who are created in the image of God not to be religious. But their religion will simply be outward, not inward.

In contrast with that, look back at chapter 1, v.5. There Paul says, “when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” In contrast to those who have only a form of godliness, Paul says that the faith of Timothy's mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois was a genuine faith. Literally, they had an unhypocritical faith. Not only did Timothy's mother possess a faith in the Lord, but she passed on that faith to her son Timothy.

Children know if your faith is genuine, or hypocritical. If you want your children to love the Lord and obey Him, you need to make sure your faith is genuine.

C. We Should Teach Scripture to Our Children – The last days will be days of deception. False teaching & sin will abound. Now, more than ever, we need to teach the Word of God to our children. We see this exemplified in 2 Timothy. Turn over to 3:14-15, “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures....” Notice that Eunice taught her son the Holy Scriptures from the time he was a child. The word translated “child” refers to a very young child. From the earliest time when Timothy was just able to listen and learn, Eunice taught him Bible stories. And as he grew she no doubt taught him the commandments of God and other doctrines of the Word of God.

There are several reasons why parents should teach their children the Word of God.

1. It Leads to Salvation – Can you think of anything more important than leading your child to experience eternal salvation? If your children do not spend eternity in heaven with you, does it really matter if they did well in sports, or in school, or in business? Well, if you want to see your children saved, you must expose them to the Word of God, for in the last of v.15 Paul said that “the Holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Hearing and learning the Word of God is essential in leading a person to salvation. This is also indicated in 1 Peter 1:23, “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” The biggest mistake a parent can make is not seeing to it that their children hear the Word of God and are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. This is the responsibility that parents have. Obviously children are not going to be educated in the Word of God through public school. We must bring them to Sunday School and there should also be times in the home when children are taught the Word of God.

2. The Word of God Builds Character and Equips Children for Life – In vv.16-17 Paul says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The word of God will impart sound teaching. It will teach them the right way, and correct them when they are wrong. Proper training in the Word of God will help

your child to grow up strong, equipped for good works and enabled to become a contributing member of the church & society.

Parents, will you make a commitment to see to it that your children are well-taught in the Word of God? Children & young people, will you be willing to do your part, and learn the Word of God? If you have a mother that teaches you God's Word, and reminds you of the difference between right and wrong, you should be especially thankful this Mother's Day.

Conclusion: We are witnessing the terrible & destructive problems that Paul warned about. Due to self-centeredness, families are in conflict. Physical & verbal abuse is on the rise. Divorce is more common. Children are becoming more rebellious. We are seeing these problems more and more even in Christian families.

Though we can't prevent the last days from arriving, we can take steps to keep the last days from adversely affecting our families. Will you follow the steps I have outlined today? Will you turn away from bad influences? Parents, will you model a genuine faith before your children? Will you teach your children the Word of God? Will you pray daily for your children? Don't allow your family to become one of the troubled families of the last days. Be different. Be distinctively Christian.

Every Christian mother prays for the salvation of her children. Perhaps that is someone here today that needs to be saved. You need to repent of your sins, and place your faith in Jesus who died for your sins on the cross. This would be a great day to give your heart to Jesus. Turn away from the sins described in my text, and turn to Jesus. Help make your family a truly *Christian* family.

Finally, if your family attends here, but hasn't joined our church, consider making this your church home. A family that worships together, and prays together, is a family that is much more likely to avoid the problems we have talked about today.

Sources: Steve Felker (notes from sermon tape of 5/9/93); Donald Guthrie, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: 1-II Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon on 2 Timothy 3:1-4 dated 8/16/87). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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