

Be the One!

2 Timothy 1:3-12

Mother's Day Sunday

05 08 2011 Sam Jones Memorial UMC

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-12**The God Particle**

Last month there was a published rumor in the physics' community that the "**God particle**" had finally been detected. The subatomic particle is also known by its more technical name of the "**Higgs Boson**." The alleged discovery took place at the Large Hadron Collider near Geneva, Switzerland.

Without going into the details of what I don't understand, the "God particle" theoretically gives **mass** to all other particles. In other words, matter gains its mass from this subatomic field.

Gravity

To continue the science lesson another step, you may recall from school that anything with mass also has **gravity**. Gravity is the force of attraction that EVERY object possesses. Objects with less mass have less gravity, and objects with more mass have more gravity.

For example, the sun's enormous mass exerts a tremendous gravitational pull. All of the bodies in our solar system orbit under the sun's influence. In turn, the planets exert their own gravitational fields which hold their moons in place.

I LOVED this slide that features Sir Isaac Newton saying: "*Gravity. It's not just a good idea. It's the law!*" There are not only physical but also spiritual laws at work here. It's not a stretch of science or theology to say that we all possess the "**God particle**" in our lives. Our example exerts a gravitational influence on everyone around. When someone comes within our orbit, we affect who they are. Each of us has the opportunity to be the one who changes the course of another's life.

Timothy

Today's Scripture lesson demonstrates the gravitational influence of the Christian life. The passage comes from Paul's second letter to Timothy.

Timothy was a young pastor who had assisted Paul over the years. He was now serving as the pastor of the church in Ephesus. Paul wrote to the young minister with guidance about leading the congregation.

In the opening statement of 2 Timothy, Paul said: "*I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice.*"

It's been said before that God does not have grandchildren, only children. In other words, we cannot depend upon our parents' and grandparents' relationship with the Lord.

Each of us must develop a first-hand, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. However, our family can certainly influence this decision.

Paul recognized three generations of Timothy's family that had served the Lord. It began with his grandmother, **Lois**. I just gave you the sum total of what we know about Lois from the New Testament—she was a Christian and the grandmother of Timothy.

Earlier in the service we recognized the great-grandmothers and grandmothers present for Mother's Day. Parental influence affects generations of children. Many here today came to the Christian faith because of a grandparent who loved you and prayed for you. Perhaps they don't get as much recognition on Mother's Day or Father's Day, but grandparents can serve a vital role in raising up each generation in the faith.

Paul also mentioned Timothy's mother, **Eunice**. In Acts 16, we discover that Timothy's mother was a Jewish Christian married to a Greek man who was probably not a believer. Eunice shared the faith with her son, Timothy.

Later in 2 Timothy 3:14-15, Paul wrote:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you 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.

Note two important statements in this passage. Paul referred to "*those from whom you learned*" the Christian faith, including Lois and Eunice. Timothy had been raised in a faith-filled household with two generations of women who set an example for him. Lois and Eunice chose to be the ones who introduced him to Jesus Christ. Children grow up to make their own decisions. However, Christian parents and grandparents do to their best to stack the deck!

The apostle also observed "*how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures.*" Studying the **Bible** is an essential part of Christian discipleship. We recognize this in our congregational life together. Children who are born and raised in our congregation will receive three different Bibles from their church family.

1) When children are born at Sam Jones, we send them a Children's Bible. It is filled with colorful pictures and age appropriate stories. It is a very inviting way to introduce boys and girls to God's Word. Parents and grandparents have the opportunity to be the one to introduce the Bible to their youngsters. Like Timothy, we want to be able to say of our children: "*from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures.*"

2) At the start of third grade, we present our young people with their first "grown-up" Bible. They are invited on a weekend "Bible Retreat" where they learn how to study the Scriptures. The retreat leaders, Sunday School teachers, and families are the ones who continue to instruct these young people in the faith.

3) Next Week is Graduate Sunday when we will recognize our members graduating from high school, college, and other programs. When our high school seniors come forward, we will give them another Bible. It is our hope and prayer that they will continue to base their lives on God's they move forward into the future.

Several years ago I was talking with a young person in our congregation who was contemplating God's call to ministry. The teenager asked me a great question. She said, "What one thing did you do during your teenage years that best prepared you for the ministry?" I had never been asked this before. Without even thinking about my answer, I immediately responded, "I read the Bible."

The more I reflected on my answer, the more I realized the truth of what I said. I spent a great deal of time in high school and college simply reading the Bible. I still have on my book shelf the Living Bible and the New International Version of the Bible that I read cover to cover multiple times. The pages are dog eared and filled with highlights and notes. The investment of time that I made in my early years has paid eternal dividends in my life and ministry.

Lois and Eunice made sure that Timothy was immersed in God's Word early in life. They took the opportunity to be the ones who instilled in him a love of the Bible.

Paul

Home and family are not the only influences in life, however. Acts 16 describes how **Paul** visited Timothy's hometown during one of his evangelistic trips. The apostle was so impressed with the young man that he invited Timothy to join him on his missionary journeys. Timothy became a protégée of the apostle Paul, and they traveled together extensively. The two were obviously very close. In 1 Timothy 1:2, Paul referred to him as "*my true son in the faith.*"

They spent many months on the road together. Later during the final days of his life, Paul asked Timothy to join him in Rome. The young minister was also listed as the co-sender of six Pauline letters in the New Testaments.

One of the churches they founded during their missionary journeys was in the town of **Ephesus**. Paul eventually appointed the young minister to serve as the pastor of the Ephesian congregation. The New Testament contains two letters that Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage and instruct his apprentice.

A theme that runs throughout 2 Timothy is **boldness**. The apostle urges Timothy not to be timid about proclaiming the gospel. Time and again Paul challenges him to share the faith, "*in season and out of season.*" In other words, Timothy now has the opportunity to influence others as Paul influenced him. The young pastor can now pass on what he has received.

Paul seized the opportunity to be the one who served as a mentor and guide to this young pastor. By investing himself in Timothy, Silas, Luke, and others, Paul multiplied his ministry in manifold ways. His apprentices in turn became the ones who introduced others to Christ. As Paul had been the one for Timothy, the young minister now had the opportunity to be the one for his congregation.

Be the One

Who was **the one in your life** who served as a midwife of faith? Something about whom they were, how they spoke, what they did, and how they lived touched your life. You experienced the Christ alive in them. See their faces. Speak their names. Recall their

faithfulness. Give thanks to God. And be reminded by their example that we have the opportunity to be the one in someone else's life.

The New Testament uses a variety of images to describe the church. One of the most meaningful is that we are "*the body of Christ*." Think about this for a moment. You and I are Christ's incarnate presence in the world. If God's work gets done, it is because people like you and me are faithful to the task. We are here today because of people who led us to faith yesterday; and we have the opportunity to be the one for others.

When we discussed this topic in our worship planning meeting, we listed some folk in our community who are closely associated with particular ministries and missions. These individuals have made a significant impact on our community. Examples:

- ✓ Patty Eager Advocates for Bartow's Children
- ✓ Sandra Bruce Battered Women's Shelter
- ✓ Paula Womack Backpack Ministry
- ✓ Linda Thomas Bartow Resources

This made me start thinking about individuals without our congregation who stepped up to be the one in areas of ministry. Examples:

- ✓ Randy Wilcox and Joan Harwell Stephen Ministry
- ✓ Connie Smith Women's League
- ✓ Jim Hull Foreign Missions
- ✓ Cecil Mann Local Missions
- ✓ Lawton Fairchild Global Soap Project
- ✓ Linda Benton Salvation Army Bell Ringers
- ✓ Claudia Laughridge Scary to be Hungry
- ✓ Becky Post Basket Ministry
- ✓ Sally Black Homebound Ministry
- ✓ Steve Landrum Men's Ministry
- ✓ Rosie Francis PUMP
- ✓ Matt Flournoy Youth
- ✓ Daneise Archer Puppets

I've mentioned ministries and missions, but sometimes the impact occurs on an individual level. You can be the one who:

- ✓ Drops a note to someone who is struggling.
- ✓ Prays for a person that is hurting.
- ✓ Prepares a meal for a family with a long-term illness.
- ✓ Mentors a child at school.
- ✓ Volunteers at the hospital or nursing home.
- ✓ Teaches a Sunday School class.
- ✓ Works as a youth counselor.
- ✓ Signs up for a mission trip.

One person can make a difference; and WE can be the one. If we feel overwhelmed by the responsibility, then Take comfort from Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:6-7:

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us

We are "*jars of clay*" filled with God's glory. It is a responsibility to proclaim the gospel to others . . . but it is also a tremendous privilege. We have been given the chance to be the one who can make an eternal difference in another person's life.

Conclusion

I don't typically introduce a sermon with an illustration from **quantum physics!** Frankly, the more I read about quarks, bosons, and leptons, the less I understood. But I couldn't get away from the idea of a "**God particle**" giving mass to everything in the cosmos. In turn, everything with mass has a gravitational attraction to anything that comes within its sphere of influence.

What's true in science is also true in faith. Every Christian is a member of the body of Christ. We serve as God's the voice, hands, and feet of God in the world. We have both the responsibility and the privilege of sharing our faith with others. Whether we realize it, our very being exerts some sort of influence on others around us. We can make an eternal difference in someone else's life.

Are you the one? Be the one.