

I have been a mother for two and a half years. I have experienced two and a half years of cuddles and dirty diapers. Two and a half years of trying to teach my son, Dean, right from wrong. Two and a half years of bubble baths and sleepless nights. Two and a half years of stepping on Legos and finding toys hidden under the couch. Two and a half years of being a mother and yet it was my son who recently reminded me of the importance of prayer.

Dean and I always have some special time together before he goes to bed. We read three books together a night. For months I would ask him if he was ready to pray and he said, “No!” So for a while I stopped forcing the issue...thinking he is too young to learn. Until about a month ago I was changing him and he said: “Mommy pray!” and he cupped his hands together. So now each night we have a simple prayer: “Dear God, thank you. Amen!” Amen is his favorite part. Now this is a very simple prayer and yet it is still instilling in my son and reminding myself about the importance and power of prayer and the importance of thanking God every day.

One of the most beautiful things about being a parent is getting to start traditions with your child. Perhaps these are traditions that have been passed down in many generations of your family, or maybe they are new. That night my son reminded me about the power and importance of the faith tradition of praying as a family.

Full disclosure here I have to tell you sometimes he does still say “No!” to me and instead of doing that special little prayer together mommy has a special prayer in which I say: “Help me Jesus!”

The focus of our text today is about striving to fulfill a legacy of faith set before us through the amazing servants of God we meet in the Bible.

Today we continue the second week in our five-week series entitled: “Learning to Pray and Doing It.” Last week, Pastor Randy shared about how we need to learn to listen and recognize God’s voice calling out to us to serve God. This week, we learn how to enact our prayer lives through setting an example for our families.

Our Scripture for today from Joshua points to a legacy of faith. Joshua was Moses’ attendant and before his death, Moses laid his hands on Joshua transferring some of his authority to him. It was Joshua who was with the Israelites in the wilderness alongside Moses, and after Moses’ death, it was Joshua who made it possible for the people of God to inhabit the land of Canaan. Moses dreamed of the Promised Land, but Joshua got to be a part of the realization of that dream.

As I was reading back through the book of Joshua in preparation for this sermon I noticed something. The whole time Moses was leading the Israelites through the wilderness he kept promising them a land of “milk and honey”...Moses was a vision guy.

What the Israelites did not know at the time was that this land was not just going to be handed to them. They had to conquer it; this is why they needed Joshua, he was the military expert. With God’s help, Joshua was able to conquer and inherit the land of Canaan.

Joshua had to work very hard serving God and organizing God’s people. In our passage today we hear Joshua’s farewell discourse right before he dies. The most important thing he has to share is a charge to the Israelites to reaffirm their faith in God. They had become lax in their practice of faith and thought they could worship God and the other gods they came to know. Joshua reminded them they were called to worship only one God.

Making his profession of faith he says, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15b). Joshua used some of his last breaths to challenge and inspire God’s people. Joshua was a faithful servant of God.

The question this Scripture calls us to ask today is what gods are we serving in our lives?

As we focus on the family today I think one of the gods in our lives has become busyness. Families are so busy today, so much so it is hard for them to find a time to get together. It used to be when you asked someone how they have been their response was “good”...now more often the reply is “I’ve been busy.” In our culture we have attached worth to doing and not simply being.

The lures of busyness promise us that we will be successful, that our houses will always be clean, that our children will be well educated, well groomed, and well- rounded human beings that always behave; that we will maintain good relationships with all of our friends and family, and that our work will always be done on time. Culturally, we have equated busyness to self-worth. If we are not busy we spend time thinking about all the things we should be doing. We keep searching to add more and more and more to our lives.

In our busyness we miss out on a lot of things. In the not spending time with our families we miss out on being reminded of our family’s faith traditions. These are the things that ground us in life. Also in our busyness it becomes harder to decipher the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the world.

When we are busy we become stressed out and feel like we simply need to check things off a list instead of being fully present with the people we love. This not the life that God calls us to lead. There is so much more to life than being busy.

Joshua from our Scripture tells us, stop searching, stop adding things to your life that are not life-giving...God is enough. The Israelites had the same problem. They added things to their lives and became busier. Instead of adding activities, they added additional gods to worship. They wanted the instant gratification they did not feel they were getting from their God. God the Almighty was not producing results the way in which they had hoped.

They had to travel through the wilderness for 40 years, a pathway that should have taken merely a couple of days, even after all that hardship, they were not rewarded with milk and honey, but had to participate in battle after battle after battle. The gods of instant gratification lured them; this is what busyness has become to us. In our busyness, we satisfy our need to feel enough, to do enough, and we forget worshipping God is enough and should be our priority.

So many of our biggest stressors in life come from the mismanagement of our time. Why do we do this to ourselves? Why do we overschedule, over-function, and over-think every aspect of our daily lives? We live in a culture of me. When you wake up what is the first thing that crosses your mind: “What do I have to do today?”

When our first thought should be, “What would God have me do today?” Sure there are the daily demands of life, we all have deadlines and people to care for...but how are we prioritizing our time to spend with God as a family?

In the different seasons of our lives, our prayer lives look different. You heard about my prayer life with my toddler, but I also take time out of each day to pray for my family and church family. When we take time to pray for our families individually God reveals to us different ways to speak into their lives. Maybe they need a word of encouragement, maybe they need some accountability, and maybe they simply need to feel loved and cared for. In praying for our families we realize we do not have to fix them and we cannot change them, those things are up to God.

It is not simply enough to tell a family member you are praying for them...offer to pray with them on the phone, through a text message or in person. Prayer is powerful. In our prayers our families hear that God loves them that we love them, that we have been listening to their greatest celebrations and hardest challenges, and most importantly we remind them that God is with them.

In Deuteronomy 11:19 we read: “Teach [God’s words] to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” We should take every opportunity we have to pray with our families.

Opportunities to pray with your family:

- 1) Before a meal.
- 2) Before an important test or sports game or activity.

- 3) Before you get off the phone.
- 4) At the beginning of the day.
- 5) At the end of the day.
- 6) Keep a prayer journal of prayers for your family.

Just as Joshua was a spiritual father to God's people, become a spiritual mother to someone else. This Mother's Day thank the women in your life who pray for you. Thank the women in your life who have brought you up in the faith: your Sunday school teachers, children and youth leaders, and pastors. Thank the women in your life who may not be related to you by blood, but who have loved you like family.

On this Mother's Day there are a lot of things going on in this room. We have mothers who like Moses never got to see their dream become a reality. Mothers who have lost children to death, mothers who have lost their mothers, women who desperately wish to become mothers, but cannot due to infertility or other reasons. There are mothers who feel blessed today because their family is here with them in worship. There are mothers who are pregnant with their first children. There are mothers who are estranged from their children. That is why today we prayed for all different kinds of mothers. This is why we handed out pens and bookmarks to all the women in the room because you are all charged to be spiritual mothers.

Who is God calling you to be a spiritual mother to? Or for the gentlemen in the room, who is God calling you to be a spiritual father to?

The thing about being a spiritual mother is that it not just about encouraging people all the time. Like Joshua's final charge to the Israelites, being a spiritual mother means that we hold people in our lives accountable because we see the gifts that God has placed in their lives. We see the future of hope that God has set out before them.

So in the busyness of today my prayer for everyone in this room is that they would thank a spiritual mother in their life and discern who God is calling them to nurture, encourage, and hold accountable in this crazy thing we call faith.

In order to prioritize our time so that we too can care for God's people, so that we too can make time to pray with and for our families, again we can look to Joshua. On the day that Joshua made a covenant with his people and charged them to worship God only, he erected a stone in Shechem (Joshua 24:26-27).

He said this stone was the witness who heard the people reaffirm their faith and it would be a lasting statue to remind them of their covenant of God. How can we function like this stone? How can we be witnesses to God's saving action in our lives and worship God alone?

The good news for us today is that God will provide people in our lives who model absolute faith in God. These people, like Joshua, are our faith role models. They give us something to strive for, they are a means of God's tangible grace to us in our lives.

Following Joshua's example, how will you covenant to reaffirm your faith in God? How will you model for your family and friends that serving God is a priority in your life?

It all starts with prayer. When we pray God makes us acutely aware to the needs of others. When we pray we reaffirm our faith by naming who God is...this is how we start our prayers with the different attributes of God: Loving God, Almighty God, God of all grace, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer...

When we pray we name God's saving action in the world...Thank you God for everything you have done for me! Thank you for saving me!

When we pray we lift up those we love and lay them at the feet of Jesus Christ. We put ourselves in their shoes, even if only for a moment.

When we pray we call on the name of Jesus Christ, and then we let go with Amen...so be it.

Prayer is a beautiful and powerful way we can reaffirm our faith each and every day. I think this is why prayer was so important to Jesus Christ. I think this is why Jesus Christ taught his disciples to pray...he wanted them to be able to remember who God was, the Shepherd, and that God would lead and guide them all the days of their life.

Christ made time to pray...he would spend some quiet time away from the crowds and talk to his Father in heaven. Jesus was a wonderful model for us that busyness does not equal fulfillment.

We all have to take a moment to stop in our lives and be thankful. Thankful we are alive, thankful we have the gift of family, and friends. Thankful we serve a God who loves us and offers us grace, freedom, and love.

As we celebrate Mother's Day today, may we all be grateful for the spiritual mothers in our lives, who like Joshua took the time to set for us amazing examples of faith.

This week take some time to examine the gods you are serving and may not even be aware you are serving. It may be busyness, or money, or pleasing other people...whatever it is take it to God. Take it to Almighty God, the one who gives us rest.

Today we thank God for the legacy of faith that began with our brothers and sisters in the Bible and extend today to our spiritual mothers and fathers. Say this prayer with me: **Dear God, thank you. Amen.**