How to Beat the Odds – Part 4

# Leaving a Legacy: A Mothers Influence

# (Exodus 2:1-2)

Today we’re wrapping up our series called “How to Beat the Odds” considering the question “How would our lives be different if we only had six months to live?” When Anna Maria died in 1908, her daughter decided to found a holiday remembering her mother and all mothers, because she felt as if they would never be thanked enough. You see, Anna, in the eyes of her daughter, was the model of the perfect mother. In addition to managing her home and her 11 children, she also taught Sunday school for 20 years and served in many different charities.

That very first Mother’s Day was celebrated in 1908 in Grafton, West Virginia; and six years later, Congress passed a resolution officially establishing the second Sunday in May as Mother’s Day. It’s for this reason that we have the opportunity today, to do what we should be doing every day, and that is to say thank you to our moms and all the significant women who are part of our lives. And so, today, this is a special message for mothers, but the principles I’m going to share apply to everyone, because everyone has a sphere of influence.

You know, time and time again, we find successful people giving credit to their mother. Denzel Washington on Biography, talked about how much influence his mother had on his life, how she had prayed for him and encouraged him on his path to stardom. Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow speaks publicly about the influence of his mother and even did an ad with her in 2010 that aired in the Super Bowl. Now of course, influence has its limits, because the choices that our children make are their own choices, but you could say that your influence gives them the home team advantage.

One of those children whose life was greatly influenced by his mother was a man named Moses. He was born during an extremely violent period of Egypt’s history, when the Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians, but the king became afraid of the Israelites who were greatly increasing in number and in Exodus chapter 1, at verse nine, he said to his people,

"Look, the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country. So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built…store cities for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly” (Exodus 1:9-13).

Verse 22 tells us that the Pharaoh responded by giving this order to all his people: "Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile but let every girl live" (Exodus 1:22). Now, we don’t know how many baby boys lost their lives this way, but we do know one that didn’t all because of his mother. Here’s what the Bible says in Exodus chapter 2,

“Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months” (Exodus 2:1-2).

You see, Moses’ mother refused to stand by and allow her baby boy to be killed; so she put her life at risk to keep Moses alive for a few more months; hoping that somehow, someway, that he would survive. Unknowingly, she was leaving quite a legacy, not just for herself and her family, but also for the people of God.

Today, I want to talk about leaving a legacy, you know, how will future generations be different because of you? We’re going to talk about how to maximize your influence in the lives of your children, whether they’re toddlers, teenagers, or maybe adults with families of their own. No matter what your situation is, I want to share with you three things you can do to maximize your influence in leaving a godly legacy. The first thing you can do is…

## 1. Continue to Pray

This is so important, but most of us if we were honest would admit that we probably don’t pray as much as we should. So why is it that most of us know that we have a God who answers prayer and yet so many of us don’t pray like we should? Well, I believe there are many reasons, but I just want to share with you a few.

And honestly, some people just don’t really know how to pray. They’ve never been taught how to pray, even Jesus disciples asked him to teach them how to pray, and so, therefore we often lack confidence in prayer. You know, “Am I doing it right?”

And then some people may actually get bored, even falling asleep while they’re praying. But you know, falling asleep in prayer isn’t anything new. Jesus friends did that too. Remember when Jesus went with his disciples to pray late one night in the garden and in Luke chapter 22, he tells his disciples, “Pray that you won’t fall into temptation” (Luke 22:40). Well, Jesus continues a stone’s throw further into the garden before kneeling down and praying himself. After wrestling in prayer for an undisclosed period of time he was strengthened and so he rose and went back to the disciples only to find them asleep. In verse 46, he asked them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray so that you won’t fall into temptation” (Luke 22:46).

And still others of you, you may be a little bit like I am, and you can lose focus in one sentence. You could call them ADD prayers, where you’ve got great intentions, but you get distracted so easily. And so, it’s like you’re praying for a miracle, but you know, Miracle Whip makes you think about a sandwich, you are hungry, and then there’s that shiny thing outside the window. You know, so you are wondering what’s that? And as you are praying, that ADD prayer falters and ends with an awkward pause.

Or maybe you just get intimidated when someone else prays really good. Do you know what I’m talking about? You know, they’re quoting Scripture, they’re binding demons and all this kind of stuff and all you can do is think, “Wow!” You know, if I was God I’d probably answer prayer like that just because it was so good.” Any of you know what I mean?

Well, here is what I am saying, we need to continue to pray, and so, I want to share with you a great example of a praying mom in the Bible. Her name was Hannah and more than anything else she wanted children, but she had none. And so, in desperation she cried out to God and the Bible says in first Samuel, “She kept on praying to the Lord” (1 Samuel 1:12).

She continued to pray and eventually God answered her prayer giving her a son. She responded saying in verse 27, “I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him” (1 Samuel 1:27).

In second Samuel, we find reference to Hannah and she’s praying again. The Bible records this prayer in verse two, “There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one beside you; there is no Rock like our God” (1 Samuel 2:2).

Later in that same chapter, in verse 21 we read, “The Lord was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters…” (1 Samuel 2:21).

What’s really amazing is that every time Hannah is mentioned in the Bible, she’s either praying or having children. But it was her first son, Samuel, who became a great man of God because Hannah was a woman of prayer. And so, number one, you need to continue to pray, because your prayers do make a difference. As a matter of fact, Abraham Lincoln said it this way, he said, "I remember my mother's prayers and they’ve always followed me. They’ve clung to me all my life."

And so, moms, when you pray for your children, you’re not only igniting the power of God in their lives, but you’re giving them an example to follow. Your commitment to prayer teaches them the power of prayer. And for those of you who have a mom who believes in the power prayer, keep her in the loop, ask her to pray for you and be specific. Give your mom a chance to pray for you because it’ll make a difference. And the second thing you can do to maximize your influence in leaving a godly legacy is to…

## 2. Continue to Build

In other words, what is the task that you must finish? What is that unfinished assignment? Now some of you, you may have children running around in diapers; others of you may have children preparing to drive; and others of you may have children moving out, getting married, buying a house; but what is it that you’re working on?

Continue to build, because every time you teach your children a lesson or drive home a principle of spiritual truth, you’re laying another brick on the foundation of their lives. And so, I want to encourage you to continue to speak into your children’s lives; continue to encourage them and build them up. Erma Bombeck once said, "When a mother asks, 'Do you want a piece of advice?' it’s a mere formality. It doesn't matter if you answer yes or no, because you're going to get it anyway." But you know what? That's not such a bad thing, because honestly there were times when I didn’t want to hear my mother's advice, but the fact is that she never steered me in the wrong direction.

Now, my mom has gone on to be with the Lord, but I want to encourage you who are mothers to continue to build into the lives of your children. I know you don’t want to try to run your kids’ lives and you don’t want to nag either, but you can give them encouragement. You can share your wisdom with them. You can give them the confidence to believe in themselves. But you just continue to build.

The apostle Paul said in Acts chapter 20, “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace” (Acts 20:24).

What is your unfinished task today? Paul said, “If I can just preach about Jesus, that’s all that matters, nothing else matters, but that I complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.” He had one thing on his mind, one thing left undone, and therefore he said in first Corinthians chapter 3, “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

We need to do what God called us to do, we need to continue to build, for some of us it’s one thing and for others of us it’s many, but what is your unfinished assignment?

There are those of you right now who’ve got someone on your mind, you’ve been thinking about them, but you just haven’t reached out to them. You know that you’re supposed to, but you haven’t.

Others of you, there may be someone who’s in need and you have the resources to meet that need, and God’s put them on your heart, but you haven’t done anything about it.

Maybe God wants you to lead your family spiritually, maybe you need to be the one who disciples them in the things of God, but you haven’t done it yet. What is that task that you need to complete?

Moms, you’re a brick layer. You’re laying a foundation and your words go a long way. Encourage your kids, building them up, because they need to hear it. It’s never too late to start and they’ll never outgrow the need. Continue to build so that they can achieve their potential.

We want to leave a legacy and in order to do that, number one we’re going to have to continue to pray, number two we’re going to have to continue to build, and then number three; the third thing you can do to maximize your influence…

## 3. Continue to Hang in There

Just consider the example of Mary. When her son Jesus Christ was dying on the cross, his own brothers had rejected him, nearly all of his disciples had abandoned him, but the Bible tells us in John chapter 19, “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother” (John 19:25). Today, your kids need to know that in the same way, you’ll never give up on them, and that you’ll always be there for them.

Denzel Washington tells how his mother’s faith in him kept him going. He said, "My mother never gave up on me. I messed up in school so much they were sending me home, but my mother just sent me right back." And so, when your child fails, you make sure that they never fail alone. When they feel like the whole world has turned against them, you make sure that they know your love is unconditional, your love is a never-give-up kind of love. Just continue to hang in there.

God said this in Hebrews chapter 13, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (13:5). And that’s what we need to be saying to one another, your children need to hear it, they need to know it and experience it. No matter whether they’ve done good or bad, they need to know that you’ll always love them. Whether they win or lose, they need to know that you’ll always be there for them. Whether they become successful or end up so much less than that, they need to know that you’re there for them as long as it takes. You’ll hang in there until they become the person they’re capable of being.

Today, I beg you, not to just listen to this, but let it wash over you, let God speak to you, correcting you, challenging you, and changing you, because when you do you’ll leave a legacy that will outlast you and last for generations to come. Check out what Jesus said to the church in Revelation chapter 2, “Be faithful, even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). In other words, he says, “Hang in there”.

And I’ll tell you more than anything else, I’d give anything to have great, great, grandchildren who’d say our family is different because years ago I lived. Saying, “You continued to pray, you built, and you hung in there. You were faithful.” Not that I’m perfect or that I ever will be this side of heaven, but because of the way I follow Christ, because of what I stood for. Leaving a legacy that says John and Dana were people of prayer, they were faithful, and they were willing to live their lives for Jesus.

We’ve been talking about “How to Beat the Odds”, living a life that matters, because today far too many people are living by their preferences instead of by the convictions of God. You see, a conviction will lead us to live for the things that matter, because a conviction is a belief on the inside that always shows up on the outside. If you want generations to come to say that you were different, that you were close to God, and that countless people were influenced because of you, live by the convictions of God. We’ve only got one shot in this life, it’s time to do it right because life is brief, it’s a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Do we really have to get sick or have a near death experience before we get our priorities straight? How would your life be different today if you knew that you only had six months to live? What are you waiting for?

As we close, I want to share with you one more Scripture, something that Paul said to his son in the faith, to his young friend Timothy. He said, “I’m already being poured out like a drink offering and the time has come for my departure” (2 Timothy 4:6). In other words, the apostle says my time is almost up and I want to be able to say, “I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I’ve kept the faith; I was faithful even to the point of death so that I might receive the crown of life.” Paul says, “I am ready.” Are you ready today? Live as if life is a mist, because it is. Let’s pray together.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ's Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

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[www.cccemmitsburg.org](http://www.cccemmitsburg.org/)

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