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Practice the Art of Grandparenting

It's a responsibility and a joy—that has real impact on the future.

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In at least three things in life, we personally have little say: when we are born, when we die, and when we become grandparents. Today, as people live longer, there are more grandparents than ever.

Yet the art of grandparenting, in the main, has been lost.

The role of a grandparent has changed, especially with the continuing breakdown of families. Millions of grandparents rarely see their grandchildren. Millions of others have grandchildren living with them, and are their primary caregivers.

Do you realize the weight of responsibility? Some of the *most* important people in the family are **GRANDPARENTS**. When once asked about training a child, Napoleon answered that it was done “with their grandparents.” The importance of grandparenting is perhaps captured best in Proverbs 17:6: “Children’s children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.” There is great joy in seeing grandchildren grow up. I can speak as a grandfather myself.

Training for grandparenthood begins in childhood. We learn *as children* how to be grandparents from *our* grandparents! Grandparents are indeed role models for future grandparents!

The Apostle Paul admonished a young minister, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Timothy 1:5). the Timothy’s faith dwelt first in his grandmother. That woman’s example had a wonderful effect not only on Timothy’s mother, Eunice, but also on Timothy.

God instructs us to respect old age and its wisdom. Leviticus 19:32 commands, “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord.” We can see the importance of grandparents and grandchildren “connecting.” In this less-than-perfect society, this is seldom possible to the extent that God intended. Nevertheless, we should aim to make those connections, and to make the most of them whenever the opportunity arises. Parents, it’s not always easy, but make time for your kids to spend time with their grandparents. Teach your children to respect them. The connection is vital for future generations.

Young people need to be encouraged—even by their grandparents where suitable—to seek grandparents’ company, experience and even advice. It is a wise young person who takes advantage of his grandparents’ knowledge.

Grandparents, you bring a wealth of wonderful resources for your grandchildren to enjoy. There are many things you can pass on to them. The most important and most valuable asset is your experience. Life is filled with so many lessons.

One of the privileges that comes with the role of a grandfather is being a wise and trusted counselor. In sharing yourself, you are giving your grandchildren your unique outlook on life, your ways, your memories, your skills and interests, and most of all, your love. As the child grows and develops wider knowledge, this can become more and more significant.

There's a saying, "When an elderly person dies, a library burns down." A grandparent is a bridge to another era. Family history can be relived in stories from Granddad and Grandma—stories from "the good ol' days," as we tend to say.

One cardinal rule of effective grandparenting is to treat all grandchildren equitably—no favorites. Our grandchildren need to know that we are there for them, that we love them. Grandparents can be a point of stability and comfort for their own children and their grandchildren. Often grandparents are in the best situation to provide the emotional and spiritual nurturing the children need. You can be a consistent long-term source of encouragement as your grandchildren grow through the various stages of their lives.

Adults who have had a good relationship with their grandparents show a heightened self-respect, a greater chance of success in life, and a strong sense of family values.

Children are natural observers, and they learn powerful, lasting lessons from watching and listening to a grandparent who goes through life with dignity and selflessness, and who provides a strong sense of family. This relationship with your children and grandchildren is with those who will be the leaders of the next generation. As we look forward to a world ahead where families will learn the true value of each other, when grandparents will fulfill their God-ordained role, think about your legacy as a grandparent today that will extend to future generations.

For many, as seniors, we represent grandparents they may not have due to other circumstances. Our examples within our physical and spiritual families will impact the minds of children who will be the grandparents of tomorrow. These children, these future grandparents, need to see and feel the faithfulness in you as you strive to be the best you can be. ■

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