

INFLUENCING GRANDCHILDREN



FAITH @Home

Influencing Grandchildren

Grandparents in the 21st century face a mix of new opportunities and challenges. Extended life expectancy has dramatically changed the length and look of the empty nest years. Many grandparents now have greater opportunities for work and travel. Tight-knit family relationships have increasingly given way to family members spread over wide geographic distances. Some grandparents face the challenge of getting time with grandchildren because of divorce. A growing number of grandparents have watched circumstances drive them to take primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren.

In this context, it has become less clear what role grandparents can best play. Are they just a good source for gifts and free babysitting? What is the most important thing a grandparent can do?

STEP ONE: Be There For Them

A grandparent's first priority is to "be there"...one way or another. For the active grandparents whom the Wall Street Journal has described as having a full slate of work and travel, it means stopping to remember how much you depended on grandparents when you were younger and knowing how critical your presence is to younger generations. For others, "being there" means taking on the challenge posed by miles or strained relationships that might be keeping you from your grandchildren. Technology solutions such as video chatting have helped some grandparents close the gap.

Being there gives you the opportunity to show the kind of unconditional love even parents can struggle to maintain on a consistent basis. It gives you a chance to tell the family story—the people, places, and plot twists that have made your family distinct. Being there also allows you to teach things that parents may not have found time for such as how to skip a

rock, how to build and fly a kite, how to make fudge, and other priceless lessons.

STEP TWO: Nurture Their Faith

Most importantly, being present and making memories with your grandchildren gives you the opportunity to impress your faith on them. Psalm 78 presents a concept of extended spiritual heritage.

“He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands” (Psalm 78:5-7)

Nothing you can give as a grandparent is more valuable than your spiritual legacy. Your gifts, time, games, food, and other contributions find their primary value when they are offered in the context of a spiritual heritage. Be very intentional about creating opportunities to nurture faith during the years your grandchildren are receptive to your influence.

GOING FURTHER—Resources

Extreme Grandparenting (by Tim Kimmel & Darcy Kimmel) offers timeless and tested principles for grandparenting in the twenty-first century.

It Starts At Home (by Kurt Bruner & Steve Stroope) gives grandparents practical suggestions for influencing the faith of their grandchildren.

Passing It On: Investing In Lives (by Marvin J. Martin) was written over a period of 35 years by an aging grandpa to pass on an inheritance of life experiences and learning to succeeding generations who are following.

Four Generations: A Journey Through Life (by Marvin J. Martin) is part of a volume in which “Grandpa” traces 85 years of life and concludes we are all on a common journey.

Don't Quit Before You Finish (by Jimmy Draper) addresses the key elements to Christian leadership.

Your Legacy - The Greatest Gift (by Dr. James Dobson) will help you teach your children what matters most by being intentional about their spiritual training.



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