

Influencing Grandchildren

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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's become less clear what role grandparents can best play. Are they just a good source for gifts and free babysitting? What's 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. 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 that 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—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 there 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. So be very intentional about creating opportunities to nurture faith during the years your grandchildren are receptive to your influence.

GOING FURTHER - Resources

(*Available at the HomePointe Center, or HPC library check out)

Recommended Books:

****Extreme Grandparenting*** (by Tim Kimmel and Darcy Kimmel). Are you ready to take grandparenting to the next level? This book offers timeless and tested principles for grandparenting in the twenty-first century.

The Gift of Grandparenting (by Eric Wiggin) and ***Extending Your Heritage*** (by J. Otis Ledbetter and Randy Scott) both present a vision of how grandparents can actively engage with their children and grandchildren to help pass a strong spiritual legacy.

Recommended Website: ***christiangrandparenting.net*** offers resources and recommendations to "promote effective grandparenting which is intentional about helping children and grandchildren know and follow Christ anywhere wholeheartedly."

GOING FURTHER – North Bible Church

Be Creative

There are many ways you as a grandparent can influence your grandchildren. In fact depending on how often you are with your grandchildren you can use many (with a little modifying) of the “going further” tools referred to in any of the other Pointers for parents.

Additional Info

For more information or to meet with someone from our staff please contact Sharon Smith at the North Bible Church office – 480-607-5091.

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