



Happy Grandparents Day!

By

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Did you know that September 9, 2018 is Grandparents Day? I think that's pretty cool, but then I am a grandparent.

I love being a grandparent. My wife and I have three beautiful granddaughters and they are among our greatest joys in this world. We moved back to Huntsville a few years ago specifically to be near them. Why? Good question.

We became Christians a couple of years before our first child was born. The Bible became our guide to becoming new parents. I recommend it highly. God created the family and knows how it works best. That includes creating a very special role for grandparents.

The Bible also became a guide to teach us how to be grandparents who would bless and be blessed by this amazing new relationship with these very special human beings who are made in God's image.

Our Heritage

“Behold, children *are* a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb *is* a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So *are* the children of one’s youth.” Psalm 127:3-4

Remember this little saying? “First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage.” I know that may sound a little old fashioned today, but it’s how God intended things to begin in the family. First there’s love, then marriage, then what the psalmist called “the fruit of the womb,” a reward to parents. It also becomes a reward to grandparents!

“Children’s children *are* the crown of old men, And the glory of children *is* their father.” Proverbs 17:6.

I remember holding our first grandchild in the hospital. She was about an hour old. I walked her around the room and told her how much I loved her and that Jesus loved her even more.

“One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts.” Psalm 145:4

Christian parents tell their children about the “mighty acts” of God. That’s an important part of raising children to know that God exists and what He has done. Christian grandparents do the same thing and that is an important reinforcement to their children’s children.

“... when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” 2 Timothy 1:5

The Apostle Paul made an important point here that we do not want to miss. Timothy, who played a vital role in supporting Paul’s foundational ministry, was impacted powerfully by his grandmother and mother. Acts 16:1-3 tells us that Timothy’s mother was Jewish and his father was Greek. Paul pointed to the importance of the “genuine” faith of his mother and grandmother. The word *genuine* in the Greek means “sincere, without hypocrisy.”

Timothy’s grandmother lived out her faith sincerely and without hypocrisy. Lois lived her life in such a way that her daughter Eunice and grandson Timothy saw what genuine faith looked like. Our children and grandchildren need to see us living a genuine Christian faith. Why?

Our Challenge

Our challenge is to model genuine Christianity in a culture that is both disingenuous and post-truth. If we as Christian parents and grandparents don't model a genuine faith, where will our children see it? They won't – and too many aren't.

The statistics about the number of young people raised by one or more Christian parents “walking away from their faith” is high. Some surveys show the drop-out rate to be as high as 80% of young people between the ages of 17 and 19 leaving Christianity – most for a more secular view of the world – a world that either doesn't believe God exists or that the God who exists is not necessary.

I dropped out of church at the age of 17 and was an atheist by the age of 19, so I can relate. I was a statistic when I dropped out in the mid-1960s, but to my parents I was much more than that. I was their son. And that is the point. These massive statistics have names and lives and parents and grandparents. They are the precious children we have invested so much time and energy in raising to believe in Jesus Christ only to see them grow up to walk away from Him. That's heartbreaking.

Why is this happening? One of the primary findings of surveys by groups like Lifeway and Barna is that many young people view Christians they know as hypocrites – Christians who do not have a genuine faith. That was my first response to people who asked me why I walked away from

Christianity – the hypocrisy I saw in the lives of Christians I knew. Here we are more than 50 years later and the problem of hypocrisy is still with us.

Are there other challenges? Yes. Young people surveyed said:

- the church seems to reject much of what science tells us about the world
- the church is not a safe place to express doubts
- the faith and teachings they encounter at church are shallow
- the church seems like an exclusive club

(Barna Research, Gen Z, 2018)

Our Response

How can Christian parents and grandparents respond effectively? Let's start with **genuine faith** – just like the faith of Lois and Eunice that impacted Timothy. What does genuine faith look like? Glad you asked!

“But the mercy of the Lord *is* from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.” Psalm 103:17-18

Grandparents are in a unique position in families. Their faith and practice have a strong history with their children and that opens the opportunity to influence the next generation – “to children's children.” Grandparents have lived long enough to have a strong understanding about the mercy of God and how important it is to fear God. That understanding is priceless in today's family and society.

Grandparents have the ears of their children and their grandchildren, so it's wise to be thoughtful and purposeful in speaking to them about what it means to have “genuine faith.”

“Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren.” Deuteronomy 4:9

Moses pointed out three things we grandparents need to do for our grandchildren:

1. Take heed to ourself (Hebrew – *shamar* – “keep watch, preserve”)
2. Diligently keep ourself (Hebrew – *shamar* – “keep watch, preserve”)
3. Teach what we’ve seen and learned to our children and grandchildren

Grandparents are an important part of how families protect children and it begins by guarding ourselves “lest you forget the things your eyes have seen.” As we are careful to keep watch over our own lives, we can preserve the lives of those we love most.

Happy Grandparents Day! Let’s make a difference in our families for the glory of God.

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