



Influencing Grandchildren

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Adapted by Greenville Oaks Church of Christ*

Are you a grandparent? Congrats! There has never been a better time in history to influence grandchildren.

But as with most valuable relationships, you will need to be intentional. Your adult children might be busy, trying to balance their marriages and career. Or maybe they are divorced and struggling to raise their own kids as single parents. 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 play. 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 can be for the younger generation.

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:

For he issued his laws to Jacob; he gave his instructions to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them – even the children not yet born – and they in turn will teach their own children. So each generation should set its hope anew on God, not forgetting his glorious miracles and obeying 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

Recommended Books:

Available for checkout at the Faith@Home Center or for purchase online.

Extreme Grandparenting (by Tim Kimmel and Darcy Kimmel). Discover how you can reach and relate to your grandchildren, not only as a mentor and loving family member, but as a spiritual rock during the hard times.

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