

INFLUENCING GRANDCHILDREN

GRANDPARENTING

Grandparents in the 21st century face a mix of new opportunities and challenges. Extended life expectancy, capacity for work, and, increased ease of travel has dramatically changed the length and look of the empty nest years. Some grandparents face the challenge of getting time with grandchildren because of distance or divorce. Yet, a growing number of grandparents have watched circumstances drive them to take primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren. In this age, it's become less clear what role grandparents can best play. Here are two things to focus on:

BE THERE FOR THEM

A grandparent's first priority is to "be there"...one way or another. Though you might have a full slate of work and travel, stopping to remember how much you depended on grandparents when you were younger can remind you of 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 and texting 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 circumstances that have made your family unique. Being there also allows you to teach things that parents may not have found time for—like skipping rocks and making fudge.

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.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- **Extreme Grandparenting** by Tim and Darcy Kimmel – in printed book or video series on RightNowMedia
- **It Starts At Home** by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope