

INFLUENCING GRAND- CHILDREN



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. They are not 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 78:5-7 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.

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

EXTREME GRANDPARENTING by Ted Kimmel and Darcy Kimmel

Offers timeless and tested principles for grandparenting in the twenty-first century.

IT STARTS AT HOME by Kurt Bruner and Steve Stroope

Gives grandparents practical suggestions for influencing the faith of their grandchildren.

POWER OF A PRAYING GRANDPARENT by Stormie Omartian

Offers powerful suggestions for prayer covering your grandchildren, yourself and your grandchildren's parents.

GOING FURTHER SUPPORT

SMALL GROUPS

Hill Country believes that we are better together and we need one another to continually grow, learn, and mature in Christ through all stages of life. We build that community through small groups. For more info and to get connected, visit hcbc.com/groups