

Our Goals as Grandparents

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It hardly seemed possible just a few years ago, but we are *suddenly* grandparents. Don't get me wrong; they weren't unexpected. The grandchildren were all preceded by courtship and engagement and weddings and honeymoons (and yes, at least nine more months). It's also not like we didn't hope and pray and know in advance that they would come. But now, *suddenly*, they're here, in various stages of their first two years: three wonderful little bundles of life and energy and joy and wonder, who have now given us reason to think about our new role and what we hope to accomplish through it.



Having now this brief experience as grandparents, having planned a bit through our own private conversations about our involvement in these new lives, and having learned from God through what He says in the Bible about age and wisdom and grandparents and grandchildren, we offer a few thoughts about what we want our life to look like going forward. We hope the end result will be pleasing to God and profitable to both our grandchildren and their parents.

We hope to be involved but not intrusive. It is important for us to allow our children and their spouses to raise their children without feeling like Grandma and Grandpa are always directing the show, parenting over their shoulders. Will they do some things differently than we would have done? Surely they will. Will they make mistakes? Certainly they will. But so did we. Through trial and error (as it often seemed) we raised our own children. But through the recognition of our errors, and through repentance and correction, we learned better ways as we prayerfully walked the parenting path together. These failures as parents were instrumental in our growth in character and humility and wisdom, thus making us better parents. Our grandchildren deserve the same benefit, derived from their own parents' mistakes, recognition, and correction. They will not be helped by micromanaging grandparents who step in to shield their parents from every failure.

We hope to provide godly counsel and support. As our children confront the challenges of raising a family, there may be times when they will ask us for help or advice. Furthermore, despite what we just wrote about not being intrusive, there may even be times when we *should* step in and provide direction. Our habit of not being intrusive may actually promote listening ears if the time comes to lovingly say, "You might want to rethink that, and here's why . . ." Our hope is that if such situations arise, our counsel will reflect God's love and wisdom.

We hope to pass along a legacy of godliness. Being a grandparent should involve hugs and treats and gifts. It may even mean you live in that magical house the grandkids love to visit, or that you show them the heirlooms they will one day treasure as their own. These are good ways to create pleasant memories and lasting relationships, and to show our grandchildren how much we love them (as long as we're not going overboard and spoiling them before sending them back to mom and dad!). But God has given us so much more ability, responsibility, and influence—perhaps even more in some ways as grandparents than when we were young and parenting. There is one most important heirloom that we hope to pass along to our grandchildren.

In Deuteronomy 4:9, the Lord reminds Israel not only to remember the things He had done for them in delivering them from slavery in Egypt, but also to pass these things along to subsequent generations.

Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. *Make them known to your children and your children's children.*

Clearly, the instructing of grandchildren is in view here, whether through well-instructed believing children who then instruct their children, or through believing grandparents directly teaching grandchildren. In the Bible, when it comes to teaching and modeling godliness and wisdom, grandparents are so much more than retired parents. They are, in fact, the best and wisest of teachers. As Job says, "Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days" (Job 12:12). Psalm 92 says that the righteous will "still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him" (vv. 14-15).

Certainly one could be a grandparent and also be a fool. Age alone does not produce godliness or wisdom. But for the *godly* grandparent—the real Christian who first taught his or her own children about Christ and is now devoting the latter years to serving Christ, there is no more excellent way than to earnestly, eagerly, diligently convey the knowledge of Christ to yet another generation, from which God is certainly calling a people for himself. Whatever successes or failures life may bring to these precious lives, our hope as grandparents is for the conversion of every child, grandchild, and even great-grandchild—a hope and confidence which we express daily to God in prayer.

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