

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. Are they 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 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.

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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Extreme Grandparenting (by Tim Kimmel and Darcy Kimmel) asks, “Are you ready to take grandparenting to the next level?” This book offers timeless and tested principles for grandparenting in the twenty-first century.

Creative Grandparenting (by Jenny Schreur) Gain a fresh perspective on what it really means to love and enjoy your grandchildren. Discover how you can creatively impart wisdom, share your values and faith, and build a legacy of lasting memories from one generation to another.

The Power of Praying For Your Adult Children (by Stormie OMartian) This little-but-powerful book of prayer and Scripture is ideally sized for mothers or fathers to pull from purse or pocket throughout the day for quick and meaningful talks with God about their grown children’s relationships, faith, finances, struggles, direction, and parenting.

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www.focusonthefamily.com Provides help and resources for all ages in the church.

www.familylife.com Provides transferrable, biblically-based help for you at every stage of life.



Extreme Grandparenting

Influencing Your Grandchildren

The vision of Legacy Church is to be a D6-Church, energizing and equipping people to love God with all their Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength.



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Marietta | Canton | Ministerio en Hispano
770-424-4004 | www.LegacyChurchGA.com

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