

Grandparenting

Opening Prayer

O God, you have helped us know you through story and ritual. Help us to remember your words and actions so we can share them with our grandchildren and others in our lives. Amen.

Scripture Theme

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 (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Introduction

At certain times in your life you may have carried the assumption that God calls you *once*, for just one purpose. Don't miss the call, or you might spend the remainder of your days in meaningless mediocrity. In reality, it is safe to say that God calls us many times throughout the seasons of our lives, and each call challenges us to stretch further than we might have anticipated or imagined.

Responding to the call of grandparenting is likely not your first response to God's call, yet it is no less important, both for you and your grandchild. You had little or no choice about becoming a grandparent, but now that the role has been thrust upon you, how will you respond? Hopefully, it will bring you great joy that you can turn around and share with your grandchild. But as you reflect on this new role and new title, it's quite logical to seek deeper meaning from it. It's also normal to have some questions.

- ◆ How do I establish my own relationship with this child?
- ◆ What do I most want to pass on to my grandchild?
- ◆ What challenges or difficulties will I face in this new role?
- ◆ What qualities do I see in myself as a grandparent that I didn't have as a parent?
- ◆ How will my relationship change with my grandchild's parents?
- ◆ What about faith and religious practice with my grandchild?

Congratulations! You are called to be a grandparent. You likely have a bit of anxiety, and a whole lot of wonderment for how this is going to go. One thing is certain. As you respond to this call, you will discover an aspect of God that you have not seen or experienced before. Place your trust in God, say 'yes' to the call as best you can, and give it your all.

What's Changing?

This call likely means a change in your life. In his book, *Managing Transitions*, William Bridges writes that transitions always start with an ending. Seems odd, yes, but he maintains that the first step toward a life change is identifying what you are losing and learning how to manage the losses.

Read

Take a moment to read the article "What I Wish I Knew Before Becoming a Grandparent" by Nancy and Tom Biracree (<https://bestlifeonline.com/grandparent-advice/>). A few points that the authors make:

- ◆ The last thing a new parent needs is a vocal backseat driver.
- ◆ Your opinions aren't *always* welcome.
- ◆ Your number-one job is to assist. The kid's not yours.
- ◆ Don't take it personally when you're reprimanded for doing something wrong. Your child will have different parenting tactics than you.
- ◆ No, you can't spoil them.

Write and/or Discuss

As you embrace this role, and respond to the call of grandparenting . . .

- ◆ How will the routine of your life change as you welcome your grandchild into your life?
- ◆ How is grandparenting different from parenting?
- ◆ What mental and emotional adjustments do you need to make in order take on the role of 'assistant'?

Take a few moments to reflect on these questions. Jot down your responses, or discuss them with your group.

Reflect

You may have a wide range of emotions and feelings about becoming a grandparent. Here a few examples:

- ◆ I want to shower this child with love.
- ◆ I feel too young to be a grandparent.
- ◆ I know what's best for this child, even more so than her or his parents.
- ◆ I don't quite know or remember how to be around a baby or young child.
- ◆ I want to share my faith (*the* faith) with my grandchild.
- ◆ I don't know how to find time for my grandchild because my life is still very full.

What would you add to the list? What are your strong feelings and emotions?

All is normal. It's part of the change process. Acknowledge them, and recognize that God is present in them. And pray for trust that God will mold you into the authentic grandparent that your grandchild needs and deserves.

Take Heart

Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12).

They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green (Psalm 92:14).

The steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children (Psalm 103:17).

What's Emerging in My Life?

Let's consider what might be emerging in your life as a result of these changes. As we do so, let us remember a few things that others have discovered about God's callings in their lives. We can say that responding to God's call will likely . . .

- ◆ Lead to happiness in the long run. If it makes you depressed, it's likely not God's call. Although it won't make you immune to all other emotions such as sadness, frustration, resentment, guilt, etc. But if there is no happiness whatsoever, somehow you are not aligned with God's desire.
- ◆ Not be easy. It will probably stretch you toward something you never thought you could do or be. But you can do it, especially if you have some help.
- ◆ Benefit others besides yourself. If it only involves you, it's not God's call. This is baked-in to grandparenting.
- ◆ Not be overly complicated. You'll be able to explain it to others in just a few words.

Consider

Let's focus on the third bullet point: benefit others besides yourself. Grandparenting is a call to a role of love, encouragement, wisdom-sharing. And for some, it's also a call to primary care and ultimate responsibility. You can learn to improve what you do naturally—love your grandchild. Responding to this call may be difficult: they are busy, you are busy, technology invades, family may be disjointed, etc. Amidst the challenge of frenetic chaos, time together is what counts. With grandchildren, you can take time to be tender. It's a promise all grandparents can make: never a goodbye without a word of love.

Write and/or Discuss

The call of grandparenting beckons you beyond yourself.

- ◆ How can you show unconditional love to your grandchild?
- ◆ How have you experienced unconditional love from your grandchild?
- ◆ How has grandparenting shifted your focus from your own concerns to the concerns of others?
- ◆ In what ways is grandparenting drawing you closer to God?

Take Heart

Have you not known? Have you not heard? . . . Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:28, 30-31).

How Should I Live?

Now we seek to turn the corner and fully embrace the call as grandparent. We seek to develop fruitful patterns of behavior that bring fulfillment and grace to grandparent and grandchild.

View

Watch the video *Grandparents Are Important*. Two young grandchildren share what they love about Oma and Opa. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lasSu84MK7A>)

Write and/or Discuss

- ◆ Does this video resonate with your image of being a grandparent?
- ◆ In what ways do you feel God's love and care flowing through you to your grandchild?
- ◆ Is there a favorite ritual you want to pass on to your grandchild?

Consider

Here are links to helpful practices and strategies for responding to the call of grandparent.

- ◆ "Ten Tips for Being a Reasonable Grandparent" by Melissa Charles (<https://www.scarymommy.com/10-tips-reasonable-%C2%ADlaw/>). Relationships with in-laws can be a major source of stress for many families. Add a new baby in the mix, and things can go from tense to flat out explosive.
- ◆ "Seven Tips for New and Expecting Grandparent" by Melanie Haiken (https://www.babycenter.com/0_top-7-tips-for-new-and-expecting-grandparents_10360339.bc). Here are seven tips to help you avoid common new-grandparent pitfalls and handle your role with flair and grace.
- ◆ "Grandparenting is a Great and Happy Vocation" (<http://www.madisoncatholicherald.org/guestcolumn/5792-sr-constance-veit.html>).
- ◆ "5 Ways to Embrace Your Vocation as a Grandparent" by Dr. Allen R. Hunt (<https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/5-ways-to-embrace-your-vocation-as-a-grandparent>). Five simple ways to shape your grandchild's life and faith.
- ◆ "Passing on a Heritage of Faith to Your Grandchildren" by Lynda Freeman (<https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/life-issues/relationships/grandparenting/passing-on-a-heritage-of-faith-to-your-grandchildren/>). When it comes to passing on a heritage of faith, we need to be grandparents who focus on what matters, on what lasts.
- ◆ "How to Help Your Grandchildren Grow in Faith: Ideas for Grandparents" by Traci Smith (<http://www.traci-smith.com/how-to-help-your-grandchildren-grow-in-faith-x-ideas-for-grandparents/>).

Take Heart

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts (Psalm 145:3-4).

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers (Proverbs 17:6).

Blessing for Grandparents

This blessing may be used with a small group or with the entire congregation.

To the Grandparents:

Dear Grandparents, congratulations on the new grandchild in your life. You now have a call to be a special person in his or her life. To be a person of God for him or her. Your touch is God's touch. Your embrace is God's embrace. And so today we bless you, and we pledge our prayers and support for you.

To the Community gathered:

Please extend your hand in blessing over our grandparents. Grandparents are cherished members of our community. They bring gifts of wisdom, experience, and love and share with us their life of faith. We thank God for their example and ask that God bless them with happiness and good health. Please respond with "Amen" to each blessing.

To the Caregivers:

As you embrace the call to grandparenting, may you also experience the blessing of inner growth and understanding.

All: Amen.

As you seek to love, care for, encourage, and bless your grandchildren, may you be open to the Spirit's guidance as you do everything for the Glory of God.

All: Amen.

As you seek to assist their parents in raising these children, may you be blessed with infinite patience, sustained energy, true wisdom, and good timing.

All: Amen.

May God be your role model as you extend love, encouragement, wisdom-sharing, and, for some of you, primary care for your grandchildren.

All: Amen.

May you always serve God's children and grandchildren with compassion and humility.

All: Amen.

May God bless you with every heavenly blessing, and keep you safe and strong. Know that we carry you in our hearts each and every day. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.