

Grandparents: Story Keepers

More often than not, the assumption is made that the primary role of grandparents is to “spoil” their grandchildren. It is true that grandparents are often, perhaps too often, guilty as charged. It’s fun to spoil our grandkids from time to time, but godly grandparents know that there is much more to being a grandparent than being a “spoiler”. One of the most important roles a grandparent can play is that of Story Keeper.

Life is a story – the story of our journey in time where God’s handiwork and activity in that journey reveal the wonder of His glory and love. In his book, “Recapture The Wonder”, Ravi Zacharias reminds us that life is “a story with a purpose and with all the gripping reality of both tears and laughter, revealing the truth about life in particular and life as it was intended to be.” This is what the Psalmist had in mind in the penning of Psalm 78:

*I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter hidden things, things from of old –
What we have heard and known,
What our fathers have told us...
We will not hide them from their children;
We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deed of the Lord,
His power and the wonders He has done. (NIV)--*

As grandparents God has given us another chance to teach important lessons to the next generation, and one of the most powerful tools for accomplishing this task is through reading and story telling. Some of us were too busy as parents to take time to sit and read with our kids or to spend periods of uninterrupted time with them. We may identify with the parent described in Harry Chapin’s “Cats In the Cradle” --- “I don’t know when, but we’ll get together then, son, you know we’ll have a good time then”, resulting in feelings of guilt about our parenting, but as grandparents, God has graciously given us the chance to do better.

Story telling, both your own stories and those that others have told, is a powerful way to give our grandkids a sense of wonder and understanding of the world around us as God designed it. Story telling takes time, something that seems to be in short supply these days. Grandparents can stand in the gap and provide that time – even long distance. May I suggest that starting this Christmas you think about giving gifts to your grandchildren that will do more than feed their sensual appetites? Give gifts a Story Keeper would give, rather than a Spoiler’s gift. Here are some suggestions that might help you:

Build A Library

Author and story teller Joe L. Wheeler says it well, “the greatest bond in the world is sitting there reading a book with a child on your lap, your arm around him. The child doesn’t care how articulate you are, but he does care that you love him enough to hold him and read him a story.” When my girls were young they used to love sitting with Dad as I read them the Chronicles of Narnia, or the Secret Garden. Now I have an incredible opportunity to sit with my grandchildren and help them discover some of the great stories of the ages that will stir their imaginations and shape their lives through the irrevocable truths God has revealed throughout history.

Begin collecting books and stories that will capture your grandchildren's imaginations and help understanding of those things that are truly important in life. Lamplighter Publishing has made it their mission to find and re-publish classic, rare children's books that communicate God's truth through powerful, heartfelt stories. This is truly one of the finest sources of quality books and stories you can find today. Visit their web site at www.lamplighterpublishing.com and request their catalog.

Share Your Own Stories

Don't forget your own stories – they will be the ones that will be most treasured by your grandchildren. Write them down and/or record them on tape or video for your posterity. One grandmother tells of her own story telling adventure that began when they were reading a “Little House On The Prairie” book that described playing football with a pig's bladder. The grandkids thought playing with a pig's bladder was disgusting until Nana remarked that she did that as a little girl. Intrigued that Nana would have played with a pig's bladder, they wanted to know more. Seizing the moment, Nana spent that next 10 days cuddled up with the grandkids every night telling her stories. A very wise and alert mother quickly grabbed a tape recorder and recorded the stories, which have become treasures beyond value for that family.

The Christian Grandparenting Network also publishes a tool that can be of tremendous help to you in writing down some of your stories and family history. The Family Legacy Journal is available FREE to anyone who subscribes to our monthly newsletter and requests a copy.

Create Living Stories

Create “living stories” with your grandchildren. Several of our CGN partners have told me about special events or outings that you do with your grandchildren every year. I know of grandparents who have set up an interesting tradition in which each of the grandchildren, upon reaching a designated age like 10, are given the opportunity to go anywhere they choose (within reason, of course) with grandma and grandpa. The grandchildren may spend years prior to that time planning and dreaming about that special outing. Other grandparents use the same idea but they choose the event or trip, such as a birthday dinner or a weekend trip to someplace special.

Whatever you choose to do, create your own cherished memories where you can show them God's wonders. If you take seriously your responsibility to leave a legacy for your grandchildren, which first and foremost should include guiding them a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, then teach them about wonder in life, and help them discover and develop the wonderful gifts and talents God has given to each of them. Our grandchildren are growing up in a world that is crowding out wonder and mystery with sound bites and an avalanche of new toys that distract them from real living. Ravi Zacharias says it this way, “Unless we understand how to harness the imagination for what it was meant to be, wonder will die earlier and earlier in life. What a waste when wonder dies in infancy. What a tragedy when delight can no longer deliver in the virility of youth.”

Grandparents, we can help prevent this from happening to our grandkids. We are the Story Keepers, the protectors of wonder, imagination, reflection, reason and truth. If we are to “spoil” them with anything, may it be with wonder – the wonder of God's world, the wonder of His love and grace, and the wonder of His workmanship in our own lives! May God raise up this generation of grandparents as Story Keepers who will faithfully and enthusiastically tell the next generation the wonders He has performed!