

Create a GRAND Legacy

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Although the word “grandparent” is not found in the scriptures, the scriptures are full of examples of inspired grandparenting. Lehi offers us a great example of a “goodly” grandparent. He sets a pattern worthy of study and emulation (1 Nephi 8:12).

12 “And as (1) I partook of the fruit thereof (2) it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, (3) I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; (4) for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit.”

(1) *Lehi led his family in seeking the things of the Spirit which provide the only sure guide through this sometimes “dark and dreary wilderness” of mortality.*

(2) *He personally experienced the joy of salvation.*

(3) *His heart was turned immediately to his family and making sure they also experienced this same joy.*

(4) *His knowledge was now sure because of his faith and obedience.*

Later, as Lehi is nearing the end of his days, we see a great patriarch who is anything but “retired.” From his perspective of age and experience, he reminds and testifies to his posterity of “how great things the Lord had done for them in bringing them out of the land of Jerusalem” and of “the mercies of God in sparing their lives, that they were not swallowed up in the sea.” With great feeling, he urges them to “awake and hear the

words of a trembling parent,” reminding them in detail of the Lord’s promises and commandments to them (2 Nephi 1).

Finally, his last recorded act is to instruct, bless, and express love to his grandchildren.

2 Nephi 4:3–12

3 “Wherefore, after my father had made an end of speaking concerning the prophecies of Joseph, (5) he called the children of Laman, his sons, and his daughters, and said unto them: Behold, (6) my sons, and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my first-born, (7) I would that ye should give ear unto my words.”

(5) He calls them purposefully; he doesn’t wait for them to come to him.

(6) He speaks of his love for them, reminding them that they are as dear to him as his own sons and daughters, and that he is their father.

(7) He admonishes them to truly hear and understand what he is going to say.

4 “For the Lord God hath said that: (8) Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence.”

5 “But behold, my sons and my daughters, I cannot go down to my grave save (9) I should leave a blessing upon you; (10) for behold, I know that if ye are brought up in the way ye should go ye will not depart from it.”

6 “Wherefore, (11) if ye are cursed, behold, I leave my blessing upon you, that the cursing may be taken from you and be answered upon the heads of your parents.”

7 “Wherefore, because of my blessing (12) the Lord God will not suffer that ye shall perish; wherefore, (13) he will be merciful unto you and unto your seed forever.”

(8) Lehi clearly teaches them of the Lord’s promises.

(9) He gives them a priesthood blessing.

(10) He expresses his confidence in them.

(11) Acknowledging their parents’ disobedience, he promises them that they can create a different life for themselves.

(12) He assures them with a promise that they do not have to suffer the same consequences that their parents seem likely to experience.

(13) He teaches them that the Lord is merciful and promises them that they and all their posterity may receive that mercy.

In verses 8 and 9 Lehi gives the same blessing to his grandchildren from Lemuel. In verses 10 and 11 he blesses his grandchildren from Ishmael and Sam.

12 “And it came to pass after my father, Lehi, had (14) spoken to all his household, (15) according to the feelings of his heart and (16) the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, he waxed old. And it came to pass that he died, and was buried.”

(14) Even in his advanced age and frail condition, there was no one in his family that he did not speak to (teach, testify, bless).

(15) He did this out of the great love of his heart for them, not duty or obligation.

(16) Because of his obedient life, he was able to do all that he did by the power of the Spirit of the Lord.

Inspired and obedient Lehi was able to guide his family away from a wicked society doomed to destruction. With sure knowledge and testimony, he clearly taught them the way to live happily and find joy in a world often filled with the pain caused by disobedience. Today we live surrounded by a wicked society. Lehi has taught us much about how to navigate our way through the mists of darkness and lead our families to partake of that fruit which brings “exceedingly great joy” and is “desirable above all other fruit.”

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*The time will come when only those who believe deeply
and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families
in the midst of the gathering evil around us.*

President Spencer W. Kimball
(*Ensign*, November 1980, p. 4)

At no time in history has effective grandparenting been more critical. Grandparents have a uniquely powerful ability to influence, guide, teach, protect, and inspire their grandchildren through their love, example, and teachings. There are five aspects to the legacy we leave our grandchildren. As we prayerfully seek the Lord’s guidance, the spirit will give us those ideas that will be most effective in our particular families.

A LEGACY OF LOVE

First and foremost, grandchildren need to feel a grandparent’s love. This special relationship adds immeasurably to their feelings of worth. Be the president of your grandchild’s fan club. Teens feel safe coming to you for advice and help because they know your love is unwavering. Before we can teach or influence, we must love. A few ideas:

- Send love notes.
- Celebrate the effort as well as the accomplishment.
- Play hooky together for a day.
- Take a walk in the rain or watch a summer sunset until it is dark.
- Hang their art on your wall or keep a scrapbook of things they give you.
- Give them each their own picture of you with them.
- Keep a quote book with their cute sayings to give them when they grow up.
- Write them a letter the day they are born describing the reactions and joy of everyone in the family, how they looked, etc.
- Spend individual time with each one.
- Teach them games from your childhood: Red Rover, marbles, etc.
- Ask them to teach you something they do well.
- Let them see the affection and love you share as a couple.

A LEGACY OF FAITH

King Benjamin admonished us to teach our families “to walk in the ways of truth and soberness” (Mosiah 4:15). Nephi set the pattern of talking of Christ, “that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26). Righteous grandparents have a unique opportunity and stewardship to strengthen testimony, teach doctrine, and serve as an example of devoted obedience.

- Share your own stories—the experiences that are the building blocks of your own testimony.
- Start a scripture club. Have a scripture wall with everyone’s favorite.
- Give each grandchild his or her own subscription to the appropriate Church magazine.
- Plan summer activities that inspire.
- Have a yearly family scripture and reward those who memorize it.
- Tell the stories from the scriptures and help them find heroes there.
- Create a prophets’ gallery in your home, with pictures and a representative quote or two from each of the modern prophets.
- Make general conference a time of special traditions.
- Hold a quarterly scripture chase with older cousins using the scripture mastery scriptures they are studying that year. Give prizes.
- Give meaningful gifts.

A LEGACY OF HERITAGE

How do we make sure our grandchildren know the stories in those beautiful family history books sitting on the library bookshelf? How can they come to appreciate the sacrifices and feel love for a great-great-grandparent they will not meet in this life? Sometimes parents just can't do it all. Creative grandparents are the connecting link. Stories of heroic ancestors can have a great and steady influence in a grandchild's life. Real-life heroes always inspire and teach us.

- Have an ancestor dinner.
- Be a mystery guest.
- Tell their stories on tape in first person.
- Adopt an ancestral country and its culture for a year.
- Hold a 24th of July sleepover. Tell bedtime stories from family histories.
- Create a family cookbook.
- Appoint the 10-to-12-year-olds to be the family historians.
- Create a family heritage room.
- Rotate pictures of ancestors in grandchildren's bedrooms. Include their history (or a brief summary for younger children). They will find heroes and friends.
- Plan a family trek or summer activities that highlight the lives and sacrifices of family ancestors.

A LEGACY OF TRADITIONS AND MEMORIES

*In all of life have much of fun and laughter.
Life is to be enjoyed—not just endured.*

President Hinckley
Ensign, June 1996

Children treasure memories with their grandparents after they are gone. Great-great-grandchildren will hear stories of the legendary annual water fight, or the day Grandma took off her shoes and went for a walk with her grandchildren in the rain. The “we always. . .” events are the ties that bind an extended family together. Family traditions give grandchildren security and an identity as part of a wonderful group. The “just you and me once in a lifetime” days become great memories that extend a grandparent's love and influence for generations.

- Have a cooking specialty that you become famous for.
- Hold a summer Camp Grandpa.
- Celebrate fall with an annual leaf-raking, marshmallow-roasting party.
- Hold an annual tournament or competition (Ping-Pong, golf, croquet . . .)
- On a beautiful spring day, help them find a candy bar tree in bloom.

- Fly kites together.
- Plan a summer campout each summer.
- Celebrate the milestone days (baptism, blessings, ordinations . . .) with special traditions and recognition.
- Take lots of pictures! Photo-assisted memories always last longer.
- Plan traditions on nontraditional days. You won't be in competition with the other grandparents for your children's time. The first day of a new season, the longest day of the year, April Fool's Day, the first big snowstorm of the winter, etc., are all good times to create fun and totally unique traditions.

A LEGACY OF SERVICE

King Benjamin admonished us to teach our families to love one another and to serve one another (Mosiah 4:15). As they serve, grandchildren of all ages will be blessed with the confirming feelings of the Holy Ghost. They will gain the promised wisdom as they learn through serving “that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17). The Savior's parable of the good Samaritan teaches us that our service should extend to all people everywhere. We live in a day when our ability to serve is not limited by borders. Grandparents can involve their families in service of a humanitarian nature internationally, within the local community, or on a family scale.

- Example! Example! Example!
- Hold a special cousins' dinner honoring a cousin leaving on a mission.
- Go “country caroling”—sing patriotic songs at the homes of veterans.
- Choose a Christmas service project as an extended family.
- Sponsor a family walk-a-thon to benefit a favorite charity.
- Have an extended family garage sale—use the proceeds to buy supplies for quilts or simple toys needed by the Church Humanitarian department. Have a service Saturday to accomplish your projects.
- Grandpa's Magical Troups—monthly anonymous service.
- Encourage older grandchildren to write their government representatives on vital issues.

We would, if we could, leave our families a legacy of testimony that it might reach through the generations. . . . We can do at least three things to make that experience more likely for our families. First, we can teach sacred truth. Then we can testify that we know what we have taught is true. And then we must act so that those who hear our testimony see that our actions conform with what we said was true. The Holy Ghost will then confirm to them the truth of what we said and that we knew it to be true.

—Elder Henry B. Eyring