

The Safety Net: Grandparents

Family Circus #5 – Pastor Gary Combs – August 18, 2024 – Psalm 71:14-18

INTRO: Good morning church! We are concluding our sermon series called, “Family Circus.” We called it “Family Circus” because although we all hope for the perfect family, what we often end up with is more like a crazy, chaotic circus! We’ve been learning over these past weeks that aiming for a perfect family will only lead to frustration and failure. But we can aim at having a blessed family, one that lives under God’s blessing!

Today we’re preaching a sermon we’ve never preached before. It’s entitled “The Safety Net: Grandparents. I guess I’ve been waiting to gain some experience myself before preaching this one. Now my wife and I have been grandparents for 15 years and have 10 grandchildren, so we at least might know what not to do. But I’m not sure we needed to wait this long to discuss grandparents. Indeed, grandparents are often overlooked when we consider what’s best for the family. Yet, the Bible says that being a grandparent is a joy and a blessing!

Psalm 128:5-6 (NLT) May the Lord continually bless you from Zion. May you see Jerusalem prosper as long as you live. May you live to enjoy your grandchildren!

ILL: Being a grandparent may not always feel like a joyful blessing. It may take some adjustment. Take a look at this “The Family Circus” cartoon by Bil and Jeff Keene: **“Grandma, why do you always start redecorating as soon as we come?”** Your house may not be the only thing you have to “redecorate” and adjust!



ILL: In an article in *Good Housekeeping* entitled, “The New Age of Grandparenting, it describes an uncomfortable adjustment a grandmother named Patty had to make:

“Last December, in one of her first interactions with her newborn grandson, Patty cradled him close, inhaling his sweet smell and marveling at his tiny perfection. The baby, born a few days earlier during a blizzard, was now safely home in suburban New York. Gently, Patty lay her grandson in his crib on his stomach. “Mom, what are you doing?” her daughter cried, scooping up the baby. “Don’t put him down like that — he’ll smother!”

Patty bit her lip. Welcome to today’s world of grandparenting. The Baby Boomers and Gen Xers navigating their roles as family elders face a dramatically different parenting world than the one in which they raised their own kids. When Patty raised her children in the 1980s, the prevailing medical wisdom was that babies should sleep on their stomachs, to prevent them from choking on their own spit-up. Parents today have new information — babies who sleep on their stomachs are at higher risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and its safe sleep recommendations.” <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/a36502413/grandparents-role/>

Need: Patty’s situation is just one of many adjustments that grandparents have to make. For grandparenting and parenting are two different roles that require different approaches. It can be confusing because grandparents are still their grown children’s parents, but they are not their grandchildren’s parents. Moving from a direct role to a support role, from the decision maker to the influencer, from being in charge, to being an encouragement, is a challenging shift. According to that same GH article, “Grandparents not respecting rules was one of the biggest complaints from parents in the GH Institute survey. ‘Some of my children’s grandparents try to undermine my husband’s and my decisions,’ one respondent said. ‘It crossed our boundaries of respect.’”

Trans: So what’s a grandparent to do? Does the Bible have anything to say about it?

BODY: In Psalm 71, David expressed his desire that in his old age God would help him pass on a godly legacy to his grandchildren. We can depend on the Lord to help us to pass on a godly legacy to our grandchildren. How can we depend on the Lord to help us pass on a godly legacy to our grandchildren. The text gives **four ways** we can depend on the Lord to help us pass on a godly legacy to our grandchildren.

Today’s text: Psalm 71:14-18 (ESV) ¹⁴ But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. ¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. ¹⁶ With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. ¹⁷ O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. ¹⁸ So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.

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HOW TO PASS ON A GODLY LEGACY TO YOUR GRANDKIDS:

1. Determine to be an example of hope and praise.

EXP: (14) Circle “hope” and “praise.” David had determined what kind of old man he wanted to be: hopeful and full of praise. Indeed, he was determined to grow even more hopeful and worshipful the older he got.

“I will” (14-16, 5x) (Imperfect ‘yiqtol’) - The imperfect depicts an action as a continuing process.

“Hope” (14) (יָחַל, *yāḥal*) - to wait, await, tarry, to wait for, hope for

“Praise” (14) (תְּהַלֵּל, *təhillâ*) - praise, song or hymn of praise, adoration, thanksgiving (paid to God)

ILL: Do you remember the story of Naomi in the book of Ruth? She lost her husband and two sons. She was left with only her daughter-in-law Ruth and no grandchildren. She was becoming bitter and losing faith. Indeed, when she returned to her hometown of Bethlehem, she told them to no longer call her Naomi (which means “sweet, delightful.” Or as J. Vernon McGee called her, “happy sunshine”), but to call her “Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (Ruth 1:20). But God wasn’t finished with Naomi:

Ruth 4:13 (ESV) ¹³ So Boaz took Ruth into his home, and she became his wife. When he slept with her, the Lord enabled her to become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son.

ARG: Ruth 4:14-15 (ESV) ¹⁴ Then the women of the town said to Naomi, “Praise the Lord, who has now provided a redeemer for your family! May this child be famous in Israel. ¹⁵ May he restore your youth and care for you in your old age. For he is the son of your daughter-in-law who loves you and has been better to you than seven sons!”

Ruth 4:16-17 (ESV) ¹⁶ Naomi took the baby and cuddled him to her breast. And she cared for him as if he were her own. ¹⁷ The neighbor women said, “Now at last Naomi has a son again!” And they named him Obed. He became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David.

APP: In an article entitled, “Magic Happens When Grandparents Care for Grandchildren,” author Karen Nemeth with the National Association of Education for Young Children writes: “Here are some ways I believe grandparents can have unique connections with young grandchildren that foster them to learn and grow:

- Give your time - it’s the greatest gift. Stop everything and focus on your grandchildren.
- Play WITH your grandchild. Paint together, play board games together, play catch, play pretend. When you interact, you model good sportsmanship, good manners, good vocabulary and so much more.
- Tell your stories. Stories are the vehicle we use to pass down our family and cultural traditions.
- Read the old, classic children’s books you enjoyed. Make funny voices and dramatic flourishes that bring them to life.
- Share your passions. For music, or sports, or drama, or history, or museums...
- Teach them your skills. Don’t hurry them away when you are making or fixing something. Let them help.
- Include them in conversations. Don’t talk over their heads. Ask them questions and show them how to make good conversation by expressing an interest in other people.
- Talk about your things. Do you have special collections, antiques, photo albums, old home movies or family heirlooms? Tell the stories behind them and why they are important to you.
- Keep things the same. It means so much to young children when they know there will always be certain toys or other items at the grandparents’ house.
- Be the cozy lap, the warm embrace, the listening ear and the relentless cheerleader that every child needs to grow up strong, caring and confident. What you do with your young grandchildren really does matter!” <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/blog/when-grandparents-care-grandchildren>

Decide to be an example in your old age of a hopeful, full of praise person. Decide not to become bitter, but better with God’s help! Be a blessing to your grandchildren!

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2. Tell them the good news of salvation.

EXP: (15-16) Look at verses 15-16. Notice the “I will” statements. “I will tell... come...remind... Of what? Of God’s “deeds of salvation” (15). David determined to be a constant “teller/reminder” of salvation.

“Righteous acts” (15) (צַדִּיקָה, *ṣ^odāqâ*) - Of justice, righteousness.

“Salvation” (15) (תְּשׁוּעָה, *t^ešû‘â*) - rescue, deliverance, salvation, victory.

“Mighty deeds” (16) (גְּבוּרָה, *g^ebûrâ*) - strength, might, mighty deeds (of God).

“Lord God” (16) (אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה, *ădōnāi Yāhweh*) - Lit., “Lord Yahweh.”

“Remind” (16) (זָכַר, *zākār*) - to cause to remember, remind, to keep in remembrance.

ARG: Paul reminded Timothy of his spiritual upbringing.

2 Timothy 1:5 (ESV) I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

ILL: Talk about how your mother and grandmother taught you the good news about Jesus.

APP: Decide to be the one who “tells” and “reminds” grandchildren about Jesus. Be an evangelist!

3. Proclaim to them what God has taught you.

EXP: (17) What God has taught you in your life, your testimony, “proclaim” to your grandchildren.

“Youth” (17) (נַעַר, *nā‘ûr*) - youth, childhood, youth. What God had taught David as a younger man.

“Taught me” (17) (לָמַד, *lāmaḏ*) - to be taught, be trained

“Proclaim” (17-18, 2x) (נָגַד, *nāgāḏ*) - to tell, announce, report, to declare, make known, expound

“Wondrous deeds” (17) (פְּלֵאָה, *pālā‘*) - marvelous, wonderful, extraordinary deeds or actions.

ARG: Make known to your grandchildren what you have learned from the Lord.

Deuteronomy 4:9 (ESV) 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

Teach your children and grandchildren the stories and lessons that were handed down to you.

Psalm 78:1-4 (NLT) O my people, listen to my instructions. Open your ears to what I am saying... I will teach you hidden lessons from our past— stories we have heard and known, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, about his power and his mighty wonders.

ILL: My mother’s father, my Papaw, wasn’t well educated, but he taught me the value of working hard. He was also a fantastic storyteller. I think I got my story telling gift from him. He had been an unbeliever and an alcoholic. But thankfully, he came to Christ, stopped drinking, and became a committed follower. I remember his favorite hymn was “I’ll Meet You in the Morning.” I can still see the tears pouring down his face as my mother’s gospel quartet sang:

V.1 I will meet you in the morning, by the bright river side, When all sorrow has drifted away; I’ll be standing at the portals, when the gates open wide, At the close of life’s long, dreary day.

Chorus: I’ll meet you in the morning, with a “How do you do?” and we’ll sit down by the river, And with rapture “auld” acquaintance renew; You’ll know me in the morning, By the smiles that I wear, When I meet you in the morning, In the City that is built foursquare.

APP: Proclaim your Christian testimony to your grands. Be a teacher!

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4. Ask God's help to pass on a godly legacy.

EXP: (18) This verse is often called the “Grandparent’s prayer.” Grandparents are to be the prayer warriors for their families: “Lord, allow me to live and be able to pass on the legacy of faith to my grandchildren.”

“Old age...gray hairs” (18) - old age, old, elderly. “Gray hair” signifies old age.

“Forsake” (18) (עָזַב, *ʿāzab*) - to depart from, leave, let alone, abandon, forsake.

“Might” (18) (זִרְוֹעַ, *zîrôa*) - Lit., “arm” (as symbol of strength) , might, strength.

“Another generation” (18) (דֹּר, *dôr*) - period, age, generation. Grandchildren.

“Power” (18) (גְּבוּרָה, *gʿbûrâ*) - same word as “mighty deeds” in verse 16.

ARG: A sobering reality, when some fail to pass it on...

Judges 2:10-11 (ESV) ¹⁰ And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel. ¹¹ And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.

Will you leave a good “inheritance,” to your grandchildren?

Proverbs 13:22 (NLT) Good people leave an inheritance to their grandchildren

ILL: - When Jacob, who was called Israel, was coming near to the end of his life, his son Joseph brought his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh to him for his blessing. He praised God that had let him see them!

Genesis 48:8-11 (ESV) ⁸ When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, “Who are these?” ⁹ Joseph said to his father, “They are my sons, whom God has given me here.” And he said, “Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.” ¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. So Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹ And Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face; and behold, God has let me see your offspring also.”

Jacob laid hands on their heads and blessed them, giving them equal portions to his own sons, Joseph’s brothers. Oh what an inheritance, what a godly legacy, Jacob passed on to his grandchildren!

- When I was a little boy, my grandmother used to tell me that she thought I would grow up to be a preacher. I’d say, “No Granny, I’m going to help Papaw and be a chicken farmer.” When I was older, married with three kids, I spoke at my grandparents 60th wedding anniversary. Afterwards, my grandmother pulled me close and thanked me for my words, then whispered in my ear, “I still pray and believe that God is calling you to be a preacher.” She passed away not long after that. But Granny was right. I soon answered God’s call at the age of 30, quit my corporate job, went to seminary and planted this church.

APP: What power God has given to those grandparents who rely on Him and pray for their grandchildren. Ask God and He will give you the power to pass on a godly legacy!

CONCLUSION: What a blessing it is to be a grandparent when we know Jesus and depend on Him to pass on a godly legacy to our grandchildren.

Will you...

- 1) Determine to be an example of hope and praise?
- 2) Tell them the good news of salvation?
- 3) Proclaim to them what God has taught you?
- 4) Pray and ask God’s help to pass on a godly legacy?

Let’s pray.