



The Legacy of a Grandparent

Never underestimate the value of being a grandparent!

You may be older in years and your body may have a few more limitations these days. Perhaps your mind may not be as sharp as it once was, and the energy levels are diminishing. You may not understand the next generation, let alone the one after that! But despite all this, you can be one of the most significant people in life to your children and grandchildren. You can listen, love and pray.



As I see it, you can be a blessing in two ways. Your children can be blessed as you support them through one of the most difficult times in life, the childrearing years. When no-one else will listen to the ups and downs of raising kids, often the grandparent will. If understanding does not come from any other source, it may come from you. Somehow a grandparent can usually find the silver lining in the cloud when the sky is black, and perhaps you are the only one who will see the beauty in your grandchild on a bad day. What a gift this is to your son or daughter battling to find their way through the maze of parenthood.

You can also be a tremendous blessing to your grandchildren. You have a wealth of life and experience to share, and the opportunity to love unconditionally and then hand them back! When mum and dad are busy, you may be the only one interested in the little things in their life. And never forget the value of your prayers. Take heart from the words of 2 Timothy, where we are told of his grandmother Lois, who was the first in the family line to have and share her sincere faith. What an impact this lady had on future generations!

Only last week I witnessed two examples of wonderful grandparenting. One friend told me of the faith and prayers of her grandmother during her childhood years. This older lady did not live to see the results of those prayers, but some 20 years later my friend came to Christ! Another friend introduced me to her parents-in-law at the soccer fields. Their uneven step belied the hip operations and health problems they had experienced, but nothing could hide the love and pride that shone from their eyes for their daughter-in-law and grandchildren. I suspect no-one was more proud that day of a young soccer player than this couple were of their grandchild.

I am not a grandparent, but I have known the incredible blessing of having a mother who has loved and supported her children and grandchildren for over 20 years. A month ago my mum died after struggling with cancer for 9 months. Our loss is enormous. Mum was not a high achiever, and the world will not remember her for anything special, but she knew how to listen, love and pray. At her funeral, our son, speaking on behalf of the 11 grandchildren paid mum one of the highest compliments when he said, "Nana served us

with all she had supported us with all she had and loved us with all she had.”

As I write this I realise that not all of us share positive experiences of being parented/grandparented, or even of being a parent/grandparent. We cannot turn back the page, but we can try to write a new one. We can all strive to be a positive influence on others, whether they are our immediate family, or people we choose to love and support. If you are reading this as a grandparent, then let me encourage you to take seriously this honour. Your influence can be significant and your legacy may have eternal value.

(Sharon Kirk, MU Diocesan President & Community Education Coordinator, Anglican Counselling Service - Diocese of Armidale. August 2008)