

Marriage - a physical union and a divine institution (Pt. 4) 'Grandparents' Frank Borg

Grandparents are so important to the healthy development and upbringing of children and grandchildren. Unfortunately, seniors or grandparents are often seen by this world as not having much value. The older the grandparents, the more they are seen as having gone past their 'sell by date'. In this final article on the series on family, we shall see that this cannot be further from the truth. As time goes on, there seems to be more disrespect towards grandparents by their grandchildren and others, yet God has given grandparents a serious responsibility within the family, and even society! Grandparents play a most pivotal and vital part of healthy family life!

We must always remember that grandparents are the forerunners of parents in a family. They taught, trained, nourished and unselfishly devoted their time and energy into family before their own children became parents. What they taught their families, and what they continue to teach, is passed on to future generations: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers so the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers..." (Mal. 4:6). Grandparents are the 'foundation' of a family unit, and need to be seen as such by every family member!

The Bible demonstrates that nations are families grown large (Gen 12:2), descending from patriarchs. The bible tells us that families are built upon a system of *patriarchs*. [For example, Heb. 7:8 refers to Abraham as a patriarch. Jacob's twelve sons were also patriarchs or founders of a tribe or family and so on. These twelve sons were the fathers of the tribes of Israel as spoken of in the Bible.] The word 'patriarch' appears in the Bible and is a translation from the Greek word 'patriarches'. Strong's Concordance tells us that this word could be translated as "progenitor", meaning "a biologically related [*male*] ancestor, predecessor, the originator". Dictionaries define the word "patriarch" as: "the male head of a family, a venerable old man", while the word "grandfather" is defined as "the founder or originator of a family". If we put all this together, we can see that the "patriarch" of a family is "the leading *older* man", or "*grandfather*" in the family! Evidently, grandparents play an important role in the family!

Before becoming a grandfather, the father had the responsibility of teaching and loving his children as we saw in earlier segments of this series. As grandfather, the burden is naturally alleviated but, the responsibility of teaching and loving grandchildren does not change. A grandfather will always have a responsibility towards his grandchildren as much as he does towards his own children. In 2 Chronicles 21:12-20 we see that Jehoram did not live by the good lessons and standards taught by his grandfather, Asa. Because of this he was rebuked by Elijah, and was eventually cursed with plagues and diseases. This should be a reminder to grandparents on the responsibility they have towards their grandchildren and, importantly, should indicate how carefully grandchildren need to heed the positive lessons of their grandparents! Grandfathers have a tremendous responsibility towards their grandchildren and vice versa.

Obviously, the responsibility of teaching and loving grandchildren also extends to the grandmother. 2 Tim. 1 gives us a good example of a grandmother (verse 5) teaching valuable lessons to her grandson. Titus 2:3, 5 emphasize: "The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things...to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed..". The "aged women", or the grandmothers, have a responsibility to teach by example and wise counsel that they have gained through time and experience.

Grandparents should set a standard through example in conducting oneself in a Godly manner. By their example, grandparents help lay the foundation for the building of God's Family. Young people need an example in how to build families and should get this from members of their family that have knowledge, experience and wisdom. This is a serious responsibility placed on the shoulders of parents *and grandparents*. Titus 2 is an important chapter for grandparents to review.

Due to the wisdom that has been gained through age and experience, because of the skills acquired over a lifetime, and as a result of the love that grandparents are to extend towards grandchildren, it would be logical to say that grandparents are the backbone of the family. As such, God demands that they are respected: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord". Grandchildren should take note! Another Biblical example indicating how serious God is about family and how we fulfill our roles within it, is recorded in Dan 5:17-29 where King Belshazzar was rebuked by Daniel the prophet for not following his grandfathers' positive example. As a result, that same night, Belshazzar was slain (Dan 5:30)! How important it is for grandparents to set the right example and for grandchildren to submit to it and apply it!

There are certainly many biblical examples that show us how much emphasis God places on the institution of marriage and family! God does not want us to take family lightly, or for granted, because of what it pictures: the Kingdom of God! Throughout this series we have endeavored to take a look at the importance of the roles of every family member! Now it is up to us to individually apply our roles and resist Satan, society and self. We must work hard at building and strengthening our families, ensuring that we resist all of Satan's attacks to destroy this divine institution!