



Grandparenting From a Distance



Grandparenting is an incredible adventure. It recalls youth, excites emotions, and renews energy. Many grandparents say fondly, “If we had known how great grandchildren are, we’d have had them first.” Grandchildren are a blessing from God. Our children’s children capture our hearts like nothing else. Just as God connects the hearts of parents with the hearts of their children, God creates a special bond between grandparents and their grandchildren. He does this for our good and His glory. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 explains that a parent’s primary responsibility is to disciple their children. The same passage includes grandparents in this divine assignment (verses 1-3).

The simple steps God outlined for parents to engage with their children are also applicable for grandparents: love God, love His Word, and impress that upon our children and grandchildren.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (ESV)

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

God has built a wonderful capacity to love and mentor into the hearts of grandparents. Sometimes, grandparents love and mentor from a distance. The distance may be geographical; in some cases, a rift with the parents causes the distance. This second distance is the most difficult to navigate.

You can easily cross a geographical divide with video chats, Facebook updates, texts, and birthday cards. If you want to go retro, you can write a letter – nothing says special like a personal, handwritten letter. Digital pictures and videos can bring grandparents into special occasions when miles prevent their physical presence.

Distance caused by relational rifts should be handled with prayer and wisdom. First and foremost, there has to be some level of consent by the parents. In many ways, the relationship with the parent



has to be dealt with first. Even if full restoration isn't achieved, acknowledging a parent's position and authority is important and may even be the bridge to relational restoration.

The distance is sometimes caused by philosophical differences. Just as with relational conflicts, we must follow the path of honor. Grandparents should follow the parental rules and wishes unless they violate biblical principle.

Grandparenting is an incredible adventure; it is also soul work. Grandparents have unique opportunities to minister to their own children through their grandchildren. Distance may create inconveniences or awkwardness, but it does not have to minimize a grandparent's influence.