

G P S

For Grandparents, Parents and Seniors

By Rick Shrader

Grandparents as Figure-Heads

The primary headship of the family is in the fathers (as parents over children), but the figure-headship of the family is in the grandparents. A “figurehead” is one who is in charge “in name only,” or as a “representative of another.” As the parents, we were the ones in charge, the “hands-on” authority over our children. As life progressed we went from commanders of young ones to advisors and counselors of older ones. Yet the Scripture still presents the grandparent as having a certain headship, not primarily but in symbolic importance in a number of ways.

A Godly Heritage. “For You, O God, have heard my vows; You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name” (Psa 61:5). Our heritage is the faith and history of our forefathers entrusted to us for transmission to our own posterity. Solomon said, for a man “to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God” (Ecc 5:19). These are responsibilities only the elders, those connected to past generations, can fulfill.

A Godly Inheritance. “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children” (Prov 13:22). I’ve never liked the bumper-sticker that reads, “I’m spending my children’s inheritance.” Paul warned, “For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children” (2 Cor 12:14). Houses, lands, and riches matter not compared to eternal things. David said, in light of his faith in Christ’s resurrection, “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance” (Psa 16:6).

A Godly Posterity. “A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation” (Psa 22:31). More than an inheritance, a posterity of people, of the Lord’s servants, will rise up after us and call

upon the Lord. My daily prayer for each of my grandchildren is that they would give their lives to the Lord’s service. I pray for their future spouses that they would join together in this great endeavor. “The posterity of the righteous will be delivered” (Prov 11:22).

A Godly Memory. Moses warned the elders of his day, “Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren” (Deut 4:9). Many times at funerals I have watched the tears in grandchildren’s eyes as they remembered the wisdom of their grandparent. They had not seen what grandpa or grandma had seen but they often listened with respect as they were told of the biblical faith being passed down to them.

A Godly Testimony. “For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psa 78:5-7).

The most important responsibility for the figure-head of the family is to pass on the testimony of faith in Christ. When Moses sang his song of deliverance after crossing the Red Sea he said, “The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him” (Exod 15:2). Wouldn’t any grandparent love to hear those words from his or her children and grandchildren?

Book Review

On Death

By Timothy Keller

I am not necessarily a Tim Keller fan. I don't align with much of his ecclesiology. Since, however, I deal with death and dying, I wanted to read this small booklet. I found it informative and helpful. Keller has only two main sections: *The Fear of Death*, and *The Rupture of Death*. The first section is made up of four reasons why people today don't face death well. 1) *The blessing of modern medicine*. He means that medicine is a great blessing but it has removed the presence of dying loved ones from the home and family. 2) *This-World Happiness*. He writes, "Modern culture, then, is the worst in history at preparing its members for the only inevitability—death." Everything in life seems to be more important than preparing for the next one. 3) *The Sense of Insignificance*. Modernism and postmodernism have reduced life to the few years we have with nothing beyond. Death, then, highlights the meaninglessness of life. 4) *A Fear of Judgment*. By this he means we have lost the "categories of sin, guilt, and forgiveness in modern culture." All of this "triggers a crisis for modern people in the face of death."

In the second section, *The Rupture of Death*, Keller deals with how a Christian should grieve in light of biblical promises. Here he builds on Paul's statement that "we sorrow not as others who have no hope" (1 Thes 4:13). The best part of this section is on the *Beatific Hope*, i.e., the Christian hope of one day seeing the glory of God. This has historically been called *The Beatific Vision*. It is an emphasis that even many Christians have missed.

Statistics

Josh Mulvihill, in his seminal work, *Biblical Grandparenting*, gave the following four "Perceived Roles of Christian Grandparents" from his own research. His intention was to encourage grandparents to be disciple-makers.

The Encouraging Voice (16%). "A cheerleader who loves grandchildren for who they are and the unique gifting they possess. This grandparent sees the positive

and desires to bring out the potential in their grandchildren. One who seeks to help a grandchild accomplish goals and has a natural tendency to ask questions."

The Supportive Partner (32%). "A helping hand with the day-to-day tasks of parenting. This grandparent operates as a co-laborer who comes alongside their adult children in a variety of ways. Oriented toward seeing a need and meeting a need. An agreeable grandparent who reinforces their children's parenting practices and philosophies without interfering."

The Loving Friend (28%). "A companion whose focus is building a strong relationship with grandchildren and having fun together. Often avoids difficult conversations or disciplinary matters. An activity-oriented grandparent who likes to create memories, communicate affection, and occasionally spoil grandchildren."

The Disciple-Maker (24%). "A mentor who intentionally attempts to pass faith in Christ to future generations. Desires to see their grandchildren know Christ and grow in Christ. Seeks to live as a Christlike example and share godly wisdom with grandchildren." (Josh Mulvihill, *Biblical Grandparenting*, p. 134)

A Quotable Quote

William Law on growing old. "Delight in its service and beg of God to adorn it with every grace and perfection. Nourish it with good works, give it peace in solitude, get it strength in prayer, make it wise with reading, enlighten it by meditation, make it tender with love, sweeten it with humility, humble it with penance, enliven it with psalms and hymns, and comfort it with frequent reflections upon future glory." (from, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, 1729)

On the Light Side

An out of shape person was working out at the local health club. The trainer said, "You should try to communicate with your muscles more often." The trainee replied, "I don't like to talk to strangers." The trainer persisted and said, "You have to listen to what your body is telling you." The trainee replied, "But I didn't come here to be insulted." (Thanks to Bro. Bernie Augsburg for this funny in the *Trumpet Notes*)