

GOOD FAITH

NINE THINGS I'VE LEARNED FROM GRANDPARENTING (SO FAR) WITH NANCY FRENCH

A GUIDE FOR GRANDPARENTS
& ALL THOSE INFLUENCING
THE NEXT GENERATION



DON'T BE PREOCCUPIED WITH LEAVING A LEGACY.

Legacy isn't always about what you leave behind. It's about who you help form now. You don't have to be remembered by name to shape the future. Emotional security, confidence, kindness – these are among the invisible inheritances we pass on, generation to generation. George Eliot called it the "growing good of the world," built quietly by those who "lived faithfully a hidden life." That's legacy enough.

YOU DON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO TEACH A LESSON. LEAN INTO PLAY.

Children are constantly exploring fairness, justice, and imagination, often through play. Whether it's "Barbie Robs a Bank" or a dramatic saga between Straw People, their make-believe is deeply formative. By entering into their world with openness and creativity – not correction – you give them space to grow. When you support their storytelling, you're also helping shape their moral compass. And you're giving yourself a front-row seat to the wonder of childhood.

DON'T DISMISS THE DRAMA OF A BROKEN CRAYON.

There's something sacred about a fresh box of crayons or a new stick of chalk, especially to a young child. So when one breaks, even in the first few minutes, it can feel like a tiny tragedy. Your instinct might be to downplay it ("It still works!"), but grandparents are in a unique position to pause and honor the moment. These early disappointments – whether it's a broken toy or a broken promise – are often a child's first introduction to grief. Sitting with them in those small sorrows is one of the most quietly important things we can do.

BE A LINK TO THE PAST, BUT DON'T SUGARCOAT IT.

Your personal and family history is a gift to the next generation, but it doesn't need to be airbrushed. Children deserve to hear the complicated, unvarnished stories alongside the proud and heroic ones. This extends to moments in American history, too. Sharing the full truth – in an age-appropriate and timely way – can build trust, connection, and resilience throughout your family.

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO BE A GRANDPARENT.

Not everyone lives close and spends four days each week with their grandkids like Nancy does. That's okay. There's no single template and no one right way to build meaningful relationship with the next generation.

Show up as you can, and trust that God will work in (and through) your presence. And if your best friend sees her grandchildren all the time and you're more on the Christmas/Easter schedule, remember: comparison can easily become the thief of joy. Trust in God's specific, unique design for your family's rhythms.

LET THEM LEAD YOU BACK TO WONDER.

Children are naturally attuned to awe and grandparents get the gift of reawakening to it. One day, Nancy took her grandkids on an "urban owl hunt" in Chicago, tracking down giant architectural owls on city buildings. Their delight turned into a homemade book – and a reminder: sometimes, we're not the guides. We're simply the companions as they experience awe and wonder – and we're often transformed in the process.

MAKE ROOM FOR GRANDPARENTING...AND TRUST GOD WITH THE REST.

The demands of modern life don't pause for grandparenting. And yet, something remarkable happens when you make space for it anyway. Nancy describes writing books with toddlers climbing on her lap, squeezing creativity into the corners of caregiving. What if showing up for your family doesn't diminish your work but deepens it? Trust that God honors love offered in small, interrupted moments and will equip you to do the rest.

REMEMBER YOU'RE FINITE, SO LOVE WHILE YOU CAN.

Nancy is candid about her cancer journey and the particular uncertainty it injects into her future. You may not have cancer, but none of us knows how many days we'll spend on this earth or how many of those days we'll get to spend with the ones we love. You might not be there for graduations or weddings. But maybe, like Nancy, you'll be there the first time your grandchild sees a giraffe and gasps in wonder. This is the invitation, then: to live with an awareness of your mortality, but not be consumed by it. To resist the urge to chase only the "big" moments and instead embrace the everyday opportunities to love, to laugh, to show up while trusting that you're laying down core memories that will last long after your time on this earth has come to an end.

"...for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

GEORGE ELIOT, MIDDLEMARCH