

# **“The Years Teach Much”**

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***First Presbyterian Church  
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Deuteronomy 6: 4-9  
II Timothy 1:1-14***

A concerned grandmother wanted to find out if her young granddaughter had learned her colors yet. She would point out an object such as a red apple. The granddaughter would respond – “Red” Next a blue scarf. Granddaughter – “Blue, grandmother.” Next black shoes. “Black, grandmother,” she replied. This went on for sometime, and the granddaughter always got the color right. Grandmother was really enjoying this and continued. As last the granddaughter headed for the door, and said to her grandmother, with some exasperation, “Grandma, I think you should try to figure out some of these yourself.”

Grandma was teaching her granddaughter, although there was some confusion.

Have you seen the T-shirt ? It reads; “If I had known being a Grandparent was so much fun, I would have done it first.” Hmmm...

For Grandparents (and Great Grandparents) out there, what do your grandchildren call you? What’s your nickname? When my grandson Bobby was born – his parents asked Shawn and me what do we want him to call us. I responded, Rev. Dr. Robert Zanicky. But, they didn’t take me seriously. I like(d) Grandfather, but I believe we have settled on Granddad.

How about you? Tell me later.

Shawn and I should have done our research. Here are the top ten grandparent nicknames: This may help some of you for the future. You may want to take notes.

Grandma	Grandpa
Nana	Papa
Grammy	Granddad
Granny	Gramps
Mimi	Pop-Pop
Gram	Poppy
Nanny	Papaw
Oma	Pop
Mamaw	Opa
Gran	Pappy

I don’t know, I just don’t see myself as a Gramps, Poppy or Pappy. Not that there is anything wrong with them!

Grandparents are important! That’s an understatement on multiple levels.

Did you know that Grandparents may have been the secret to our species' success? Serious business!

Historically, elders have been significant contributors to the development of families and enlarging societies. According to a recent Scientific American article – Grandparents were rare in ancient populations, such as Neanderthals. Grandparents first became known around 30,000 years ago. This surge in Grandparents (longer life spans) may have contributed to the explosion of new tool types and art forms.

This may also explain how modern humans out-competed archaic groups such as the Neanderthals. The question of “Biology or Culture” ever looms in such considerations. But, there is strong evidence that a shift in behavior strongly correlates to the rise and development of more integrated cultures – via Grandparents who care for, train and share experiences and traditions with the young. The survival rate for those who had “Grandparents” greatly increased compared to those without them. Grandparents reinforce complex social connections, as well as transmit cultural knowledge.

The family unit, within the wider social network is pivotal for development and growth. And our Grandparents have been and are primal for who we have been, who we are, and where we are going to be. From antiquity they (those rightly informed) have been the sustainers of learned experience and tradition. Today – allowing for much more information gathering; Grandparents continue to offer great value to the children – from affection, to shared memory connection with one's past, and pragmatic findings.

I love Emerson's delightful and challenging aphorism. “The years teach much, that the days never know.”

This really did not make much sense to me 30 years ago. I was still in the “days” mode. Over the past several years – his genius has emerged.

All those years of Grandmother and Grandfather offer knowledge and wisdom to be shared , and taken in and lived.

Being a grandparent myself now for two and a half years I have learned the privilege of loving and holding my grandson, and of handing him back to mom. There are those perks.

Referring to grandparents, Prof. Newman of the University of Pittsburgh states, “kids learn stuff from older people that they can't get from anybody else...

“Wisdom, patience, looking at things from many perspectives, tolerance and hope. Older adults have lived through wars, losses, economic deprivations, and they give kids the security of knowing that horrendous things can be survived.” For the older generation, the relationship is equally precious. “Having grandchildren is the vindication of everything one has done as a parent. When we see our children passing on our values to another generation, we know we have been successful,” says Margy-Ruth Davis, a new grandmother in New York City.

Which reminds me of the great “Shema” of the Old Testament in Deuteronomy. This was (is) to be committed to memory by all Hebrews – Jewish children. And of course, you, (we Christians) hear Jesus' injunction herein for all generations – from grandparents to grandchildren – to each generation – forever and ever and ever:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might...” Commit these words

to your memory! Keep them in front of you at all times! Everywhere – even on the doorposts of your house!

Grandparents – they (you) have the stories - the memories – the values – to share to the young – to teach them the way to live! There is a taken for grantedness of given respect for the elders – the grandparents in the Bible, in antiquity, for they carried the wisdom of the past for the next generation. And that guidance was absolutely necessary for the next generation!

Grandparents indeed function, have functioned as loving value guides for the children, for the culture at large. Too often the new, the latest fad takes over and we neglect what has worked in the past. We say, “Gram, it’s too old fashioned, it’s out of date.”

I’m reminded of a great poem written by Rudyard Kipling in 1919, just after the war to end all wars. The title, “The Gods of the Copybook Headings.” Thinking about grandparents, going back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – copybooks were used in our schools, by students. The student would copy the exercise from the board to learn the skill of writing – i.e. copybook. And in the writing the students would learn more than the skill. You could count on the copybook headings; they were always there to teach. They may seem to grow old, but they remain steadfast, like the ancient Shema of the Bible. It never grows old! Loving Guidance!!

Kipling’s Copybook poem – with biting sarcasm he screamed at his post-war listeners. Some things never change! Don’t get pulled into beliefs that cause destruction, that harm. These are values to remember and cherish!!

As I pass through my incarnations in every age and race,  
I make my proper prostrations to the Gods of the Market Place.  
Peering through reverent fingers I watch them flourish and fall,  
And the Gods of the Copybook Headings, I notice, outlast them all.

We were living in trees when they met us. They showed us each in turn.  
That Water would certainly wet us, as Fire would certainly burn;  
But we found them lacking in Uplift, Vision and Breadth of Mind,  
So we left them to teach the Gorillas while we followed the March of Mankind...

Then the Gods of the Market tumbled, and their smooth-tongued wizards withdrew,  
And the hearts of the meanest were humbled and began to believe it was true,  
That All is not Gold that Glitters, and Two and Two make Four --  
And the Gods of the Copybook Headings limped up to explain it once more.

### Guidance!

This generation needs guidance!

The copybooks are available! For Christians – the Bible, The Judeo-Christian tradition, history, and more!

- As surely as water is wet!
- As surely as fire will burn!
- Two plus two is four!

Each generation needs reminding – some things never change! Our children need Loving Guides!  
The years teach much!

Thank God for grandma Lois! Tim's grandmother. Apparently, Tim is a third generation Christian, grandma Lois, mother Eunice and Tim. Paul knew them all! He writes about remembering them, of their sincere faith, that was first in grandmother Lois and then in his mother Eunice and now Paul writes, "I am sure dwells in you." (Timothy)

How wonderful! How inspiring!

Lois saw to it that Timothy heard about Jesus, about the values of a Godly life – a way of life. Lois surely shared such with her daughter Eunice.

Lois – a Loving Guide.

Our children need value guides. They need to learn those copybook stories that never change – that will give them good guidance throughout their lives. Today we celebrate our grandparents!

We give God thanks for them. For those of us who are grandparents, may we be responsible loving value guides to our grandchildren, spoil them just enough and then hand them back.

The years teach much!

Amen.