

Building Strong Grandparents

Wisdom shared by Don & Jan Lovett Topics include - Biblical Foundation - Power, Love, Self Discipline - Grandparenting Reading from Psalm 78, Verses 1-8. Oh my people listen to my teaching Open your ears to what I am saying For I will speak to you in a parable.

I will teach you hidden lessons from our past - Stories we have heard and know, Stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children But will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord. We will tell of his power and mighty miracles he did For he issued his decree to Jacob He gave his law to Israel. He commanded our ancestors To teach them to their children, So the next generation might know them – Even the children not yet born _ That they in turn might teach their children So each generation can set its hope anew on God, Remembering his glorious miracles And obeying his commands. Then they will not be like their ancestors – Stubborn, rebellious and unfaithful, Refusing to give their hearts to God. Our laws have their roots in the Bible and time and again the Bible speaks to us of the Family Unit and of teaching and protecting our children. The reference to teaching our children is one of the most important directions given to us and it is the responsibility of every adult to ensure children are brought up with a sense of history, responsibility, duty and love. The most secure place to learn is within the home, the family unit. Jan and I enjoy being Grandparents and we dearly love our Grandchildren. We have two sons, both with children in or near their teen years. Gavern, our eldest has lived in Cairns since 1989 while Craig left home around that time to go to University. He never returned to Townsville and now lives in Hong Kong. Both our boys have a son and a daughter. It was not meant to be this way. Jan and I had discussed this many times and lo9ng ago we had decided that if my work started to impact adversely on family, if it looked likely we would leave one son behind in one state while we moved to another we would change career paths and settle down in one place. Unfortunately, what we plan for does not always occur. Were we good Parent? Are we good Grandparents? Our role models were our parents and our grandparents. Much of what we do today, many of our attitudes and our approach to our grandchildren and to life are a reflection on their love, their attitudes and their teachings in the family homes. Grandparents were loved and respected. My father's father was dead and his mother lived in Norwich, England. We kept in close contact by letter. I never met her. My mother's father died when I was nine and while I have a few good memories of him it was my Grandmother Cook who left the greatest impression with me. I can still picture Grandma in her kitchen, sitting around the kitchen table (a typical pine topped table scrubbed almost white by the use of sand soap and scrubbing brush) with Zody, Beth and I. Zody, Ernest was his real name, never spoke, couldn't move around by himself and he never grew but he smiled and made a lot of noises when Beth and I were there. We learnt a lot through him. Most of the fun, the conversations and jokes I remember were at that table. Grandmother Cook was a non-threatening and non-judgemental presence in our lives. We were more relaxed in her presence I think. We lived in Rockhampton, a small town then, this was in the forties and early fifties and our parents and grandparents had just come through the years of the great depression followed by the World War 2 years. My Grandfather's presence was still there, his pipe, his Buffalo Regalia, his pocket knife and many of his tools and personal things. Both Jan and I come from Christian Homes and we were introduced to Church at an early age. Our church was St. Pauls Cathedral in Rockhampton and I can still remember Sunday School and at one break-up standing alone on the Church Hall stage and singing 'Away in a Manger' for those gathered for the Sunday School break-up. I had loving parents. We never wanted for anything and we were sent to a private school. At home we had our family and house rules. Good manners and good behaviour in the house and respect for all of our elders was the order of the day. We learnt not to question decisions made by our parents and those older than us in the family unit. As we grew older we were slowly introduced to the workings that were the foundation to family life and living. We were given 'our share' of chores and I was soon familiar and responsible for servicing Beth's and my bikes, using the push mower to cut the lawns, caring for the dog and the fowls, cutting the fire wood for the copper and wood stove and cleaning both, and helping both Dad and Mum when they asked. Family is being included in everything. I knew I was loved, I knew I relied on my parents for everything but I was allowed a lot of freedom and I was a boy who did boy things and I learnt a lot of lessons on the way. I had great parents and God knows they had to correct me many times in many ways. In 2 Timothy Ch. 1. Verse 5. Paul, in giving advice to Timothy, says 'This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline. These are the gifts that help lay a firm foundation for parenting and grandparenting. Power. As Parents our power is to influence and direct young family members. Used wisely and carefully this will help create the foundation and the character a person will carry through life. Love. Love is God's greatest gift to us. Love is the keystone in creating a firm and inclusive family unit. Properly used, the family unit will not only survive the ravages of life but it is the glue that sticks us together for life. Self-Discipline. Without discipline we short change our children and they could wander off course. Parents and Grandparents exercise discipline because of their love for their children and they endeavour to instil understanding of right and wrong in the family unit and in life. Discipline leads to maturity and to self-discipline. Learning our lessons in life can be painful but it is better when it is one who loves us who re-directs us back onto the straight and narrow pathway. One day life takes another turn and we meet a member of the opposite sex we see as our soul mate. We marry and start a family. Our apprenticeship moves to the next stage and Grandparents come into their own. I returned from 2 years in Asia and married Jan before joining my next Unit in Melbourne. We were as far from home as we could be and exactly one year later our first son was born. Parents and families were the first to send their love and support along with the material things to welcome the newest member of the family. My mother sent all of the baby nighties etc that she had made for my birth and saved for a grandchild. We were ignorant when it came to babies and baby care and settling in with a new baby did have its moments. Telephones weren't as common in those days and we didn't have one so it was through the mail that Jan and I communicated with our parents. Each letter was filled with love and words of advice

regarding the care of their first Grandchild. Three months later we took Gavern up to Queensland to show him off to our parents and to have him christened in the family Church in Aitkenvale. What a wonderful experience it is to have your first child and to watch your Parents being Grandparents. Gavern was the first boy in Jan's family for a couple of generations. Jan was the eldest of six girls. We were fortunate to move back to Townsville early the following year where Grandparents, Parents and family were close and would exercise a positive influence as Gavern grew. Jan could visit and sit with her mother and other family mothers and talk about the babies and all of those little things that bother new parents. A new baby puts new life into the family and the Grandparents were soon active. My Parents lived in Rockhampton. They were regular visitors. My father had made Gavern's first cot and sent it to Melbourne. He now brought up a bed, a chest of drawers and a wardrobe he had made for Gavern. Jan's father nursed him and tried to teach him his first words. He was in a household of all women and sometimes he did things to annoy the ladies. Jan's father had been a very good cricketer in the forties and early fifties and he was to later teach him the finer points of cricket and some other sport. Gavern is still heavily involved in Cricket and sport. Both mothers were regular visitors. They nursed him, examined him, examined him, commented on his progress, offered advice and saw he was a well dressed boy with a hat for all occasions. Grandmothers offer advice in conversation, in a nice way. He was soon at home and comfortable with both his Grandparents. He was staying overnight and going on holidays with them Jan's youngest sister was only four or five at this time and was good company for him and with five of Jan's sisters still at home he was well cared for. After our second son Craig was born he was to settle into the same relationship with our Parents, his Grandparents. Unfortunately we were moved to Sydney in 1966 and then back to Melbourne and on to Darwin. Throughout these years we were assured of regular visits and contact from Jan's family and my family. We always holidayed with parents. As you can see, Grandparents have a big input into raising their grandchildren. They become an important part of the children's lives and will leave a lasting impression on our children. Jan and I use the examples set by our parents in dealing with our Grandchildren but times and technology have changed. Yes we visit regularly and in turn they visit us. We are in regular contact by phone and e-mail. We holiday with them and we try to ensure that they are educated in the necessary areas of life. We enjoy the back seat and we have a good relationship with both our sons and their wives and can express an opinion and get into a discussion with them about the children and choice of direction they are taking. We maintain regular contact by e-mail and write short stories of ancestors, family and 'remember when' events and send them off. We don't see our Hong Kong family as much as we would like but that is life. Jan: The foundation of my life was set by my Parents and Grandparents. I grew up in a loving Christian atmosphere, the 1st Grandchild born on both sides of my family and I always knew I was loved. I loved my Grandparents and they loved me unconditionally and such was the same with my parents towards all their Grandchildren. We adore our Grandchildren. They've been well bought up and are good polite children – not perfect by any means but they know that they can tell us anything good or bad and that we will not be judgemental though we will let them know if we think things could have been done differently. One family is in Cairns and the other is in Hong Kong. Don and I are absentee Grandparents but we endeavour to keep the lines of communications always open – telephone calls, e-mails, Don writes them little stories. If possible we are there for significant events in their lives – cricket and football finals, ballet, concerts, school plays etc. That is not always possible with the Hong Kong family but they know we are thinking of them and will ring to find out how things went. We make mistakes and hope we learn by them. I'm a present giving person and particularly when the Grandchildren were younger I would have a special gift for them when we visited or they came to stay with us. On one occasion my eldest son made a comment that he no longer got surprises. He felt neglected. Oh dear! We now make sure that we always meet Gavern and Craig at least once while we are visiting and take him to lunch. If possible Don will endeavour to go to a movie. So it is just as important to make sure that our children always know how much we love them. This includes our daughters-in-law. Just as important we must never undermine the parents. We may not always agree with them but then did our parents always approve of the way we were bringing up our children. Lastly but not least we must remember that there is another set of Grandparents who love those children just as much as we do. They also have dreams and wishes for these Grandchildren and whilst they may differ to our wishes they are just as important. Don again: If we were to summarize the influences of Grandparents in our son's lives we would say: Hold the family unit in high regard, contribute to its well being and protect and strengthened it whenever possible; Jan does those female things with her daughters-in-law and I try as well. Always remember you have a daughter-in-law or a son-in-law to love and to include in family. Unconditional love, open lines of communications and a strong foundation are to be exemplified. Respect the wishes of not only the parents but also the other Grandparents. Grandparents can be more relaxed and more understanding about some of the things Grandchildren do. It does not pay to be too close and too involved when something is happening between parents and their children. It's too easy to rush in with cross words in the heat of the moment and it helps to bite your tongue and keep your distance. Ensure that respect for others; good manners and rules that influence living together are exemplified within the home. We want our grandchildren to grow up to be good citizens and to obey the Laws of the Land. We do this through the parents and by example. Reading from Deuteronomy, Chapter 4 Verse 4. The Lord is our God and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your strength and you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Do not worship any other God beside me. Do not make idols of any kind, whether in the shape of birds or animals or fish. You must never worship or bow down to them, for I, the Lord your God am a jealous God who will not share your affections with any other God. I do not leave unpunished the sins of those who hate me, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations. But I lavish my love on those who love and obey my commands, even for a thousand generations. Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name. Remember to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days a week

are set aside for your daily duties and regular work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. Honour your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God will give you. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely against your neighbour. Do not covert your neighbour's house. Do not covert your neighbour's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey or anything else your neighbour owns. Prayer: Heavenly Father we give you thanks for your many gifts and for your word and the examples you have left for us. Having children and Grandchildren are not only one of your most precious gifts but is a binding process within the generations of each family and a responsibility that extends beyond the parents. We honour you and give you thanks for each child in our care and we ask you to strengthen us and guide us as we not only enjoy our children and grandchildren but that we bring them up to love and honour and obey our Father in heaven and we use your gift of love to bind us all in your name. All blessings, all honour and all glory are yours Father. Amen. We believe being honest and telling our grandchildren about life and what is around us if the occasion arises. I will leave you with this short story. Some time ago Kirstie, my grand daughter in Cairns, rang me to ask if I could help her with a school project. She was to prepare and give a talk about Grandparents at her school and she had a set number of questions she had prepared and she wanted my responses. These were simple and non-threatening questions and I was able to answer them to her satisfaction. They covered all of the usual areas that people associate with grandparents. Finally she asked me if I had done anything really different, out of the ordinary, and it must have been the right time because I told her that I am probably the only surviving person who has stolen a Prairie Schooner, a Covered Wagon. Her voice changed to questioning and 'should I believe this?' after I said this and she asked me more so I told her the story. (We lived at the western end of the Range in Rockhampton. The city was spread out on the south side and the Range dropped away on the other side into open bush. This bush area, referred to as Diggers Park, stretched from the Botanical Gardens to the north and around to the town's western road exit through Gracemere. A spread of Lagoons started below the Gardens, swung around to the western tip of the Range and continued to the south. Below us was the largest of these, Yeppen Lagoon. As boys we played and fished in this area and it was our playground in the late forties and fifties. I would probably have been just into my teens. An old gentleman had squatted in this bush area and had built his 'home' from bush timber and corrugated iron. He had a horse and a Prairie Schooner but I can't say I ever saw him use the wagon but it was in good condition. He died and everything, apart from the horse, remained in place - probably to disappear in time. It became overgrown and uncared for. Roy and I thought this wagon would make a good cubby house and some time later we rolled it out of the shelter and pushed it up through the bush to the old disused quarrying site just down from our house. We rolled it out of sight and camouflaged it. It was our secret place, our retreat and our home away from home. Bush fires were part of our life and were common and went through this area almost as a yearly event. One went through this area some time later and first thing next day, after the fires were out, a Policeman was on our doorstep wanting to talk to Roy and I about the Wagon. He asked if we had been smoking there. They knew all about the wagon, where it came from and who had put it there. The fires hadn't started there and I think it was just a gentle warning to us boys that they knew what went on in their town. We did get a stern warning about taking things that didn't belong to us. My friends and I were really sorry to lose that wagon as we had had some good times there. It's now just another memory of my youthful days.) Kirstie asked if I would mind if she included this in her talk. I didn't mind and it must have struck the right cord when she spoke of it and she got a real good response from those present. Oh well, you can't be good all the time!!!!!! What books would we recommend for Grandparents to read? We were raising our sons in the sixties. Our parents learnt their parenting skills in the forties and fifties. Not many books were available then that would help a parent and it was the wisdom passed down within the family that was the foundation to good parenting and grandparenting. We won't be recommending any books because it is up to those wanting information to look carefully and to choose. We couldn't go past the extended family and wealth of experience there.