

GRANDPARENTING DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Have you ever said, “Why don’t our kids and grandkids come to our house for Christmas? They stayed with their other grandparents last Christmas!” or “Why do we have to go there? Why can’t they travel here once in a while?” Grandparenting during the holidays can be tough.

But as a grandparent, you know that it may not be easy to get the opportunity to see your grandchildren during the holidays. Though it’s rarely possible for everyone to get what they want, you can take on the attitude of the apostle Paul, who encouraged us to look not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4).

Here are some ways to put that verse into practice and enjoy Christmas [or every holiday] and your grandkids:

- 1. Remember Your Role:** While you have an important role in the lives of your adult children and grandkids, it is a supportive role. This is one of the harder parts of growing older — adjusting to your changing role in the family. As a grandparent, you get to provide love, wisdom and encouragement to your grandchildren. And as a parent, your job now is to support and bless your adult children — which includes offering understanding when holiday get-togethers may not be possible every year. Your children will value your graciousness when it comes to how and when they celebrate the holidays. Whether in person or long distance, you can find a way to stay connected with your grandkids and influence them as only a grandparent can.
- 2. Be Flexible:** Family schedules will not always fall in line with your ideal plans. This is increasingly true as more in-laws and additional sets of grandparents are involved. By asking yourself, How can I be a blessing to my grandchildren? instead of, How can I see them as much as I want? you’ll be following Paul’s admonition to put others’ interests before your own. You are modeling a loving and gracious lifestyle. And in return, you will have grateful adult children, appreciative co-grandparents and grandkids who can’t wait to see you when the next opportunity arrives.
- 3. Consider Your Grandkids:** Grandkids may be the most straightforward ingredient in this family concoction. They want a safe and loving family, which primarily refers to their immediate nuclear family. However, your grandkids also want a close relationship with you and to know they are special in your eyes. Grandparents are an extra set of adults they can feel safe with, have fun with, talk to about anything, look to as an extra source of wisdom and guidance, and count on as a comfortable home away from home. You are their extra layer of security. During the holidays, they want to engage and have fun with you, not feel the tension between their parents and grandparents.

Grandparents have a place like no other in their grandkids’ lives. Sometimes, though, it takes time for you to figure out your place during the holidays. When you do, your influence and involvement during those times will be a source of joy and godly wisdom that can guide the direction of their lives.

GIVE A THANKSGIVING BLESSING

DINE IN

Consider inviting someone that might be alone or needy to share the bounty at your Thanksgiving celebration. Invite them to join your family for a meal and informal time spent playing games, doing puzzles, telling stories, singing or just hanging out together.

DELIVERY

Plan to cook double the amount of food that you need for your family. If you usually have family members make different items to bring to your feast, ask if they will double the recipe and bring in two separate dishes. Check with the church or local schools to find a family in need. Contact the family and let them know that you will be bringing them a Thanksgiving feast and arrange details for delivery. Either before or after enjoying your meal, pack up and deliver the food. Spend time praying with the family before you leave.

GRATEFUL ROLLS

As guests arrive, have each person write a few things that they are grateful for on small sheets of paper. Make your own special roll recipe or bake pre-packaged crescent rolls. Place the papers on the dough wedges, roll them up into the crescent shape and follow the baking directions. When the rolls are served, pass them around and enjoy the moment as each guest tears into their hot roll and reads what someone else at the table is grateful for. Have fun guessing who wrote each “thanks.”

FURTHER RESOURCES

INTENTIONAL HOLIDAY TOOLS

Get ideas for Thanksgiving and Christmas by listening to the free podcast available on CD at the Faith at Home Centers. Be looking for the FREE Christmas@Home guide filled with practical ideas to help your family focus on the reason for the season. For more helpful tools, you can visit our website: www.valleygrove.org/faith-at-home

Faith at Home

EQUIPPING FAMILIES TO MAKE DISCIPLES

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A FAMILY GUIDE TO GRATITUDE

How can you make this holiday mean more than just turkey and football? Choose one or several of these ideas to help your family enjoy fun Thanksgiving traditions while expressing thanks to God for His many blessings.



ValleyGrove
BAPTIST CHURCH



HUNGRY, HUNGRY THANK YOU'S

Help younger children anticipate giving thanks with this simple, fun game.

1. Gather the children or entire family together before sitting down for the meal to enjoy a game designed to emphasize why we give thanks.
2. If you own the game "Hungry Hungry Hippos" get it ready. If not, create your own version by placing about 20-30 marbles on a large paper plate and giving each player a spoon with which they will pick up the marbles.
3. As the children anticipate starting the game, pause and invite the oldest child to read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
4. Afterwards ask the following questions:
 - Q: What is God's will for us?
 - A: To give thanks.
 - Q: Why do we give thanks?
 - A: To experience joy.
5. Tell the children that one of the most important ways we fill our hunger for joy is to give thanks for the blessings God has given.
6. Now play several rounds of "Hungry Hungry Hippos" or "Marbles and Spoons" where the children try to gobble or pick-up as many as they can. The winner is the person who has the most balls or marbles at the end of the round.
7. Now, turn each child into a real "winner" by inviting them to share one thing for which they are thankful for each ball or marble they retrieved. Emphasize that the more thanks we give the more our "joy tanks" fill up! Play as many rounds as you can until the meal is served.
8. Memorize Together: "Giving Thanks - Fills Our Tanks"

THANKFUL PUMPKIN

Use this Thanksgiving tradition with immediate and/or extended family as a reminder of the many blessings the Lord gives us. This activity can be done with kids and grandkids of all ages.

1. Plan a time to go pick out a pumpkin together. Pro Tip: Get a pumpkin big enough to write four bible verses on!
2. Weeks Leading to Thanksgiving: Pick one day each week leading up to Thanksgiving to read the bible verse, write it on the pumpkin and list something you are thankful for that week. You can finish your time together in prayer to thank God for all those blessings.
3. Thanksgiving Day: Take the pumpkin and use it as a centerpiece for your table. During your thanksgiving meal, take turns reading a verse and let each person give one reason they are thankful. If you do not have a meal on thanksgiving, find time on the day to do the activity as a family.

VERSES ON THANKSGIVING

1 Chronicles 16:34

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his faithful love endures forever"

Colossians 4:2

"Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

"Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Psalms 69:30

"I will praise God's name with song and exalt him with thanksgiving."

MAKE IT A FAMILY TRADITION

One great thing we can do for our kids is give them traditions they will remember for life. Be resolved to make this a tradition that can instill gratitude in the hearts of your kids. You might have to do it over FaceTime or use a plastic pumpkin. The point is to spend time pointing your kids to Jesus and have some fun together.

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THANKSGIVING ACTIVITIES FOR THE FAMILY

SHOW AND THANKS

Create a more meaningful time of sharing what you are most thankful for. Ask each member of the family to bring one item that represents what they are grateful for this year. It may be as simple as a good report card or as impactful as a hospital bracelet from a successful surgery or baby's birth.

THANKSGIVING TABLE

Designate a particular tablecloth for your family Thanksgiving celebrations. Provide fabric markers where guests can record their "gratitudes" or special prayers for the year ahead. Ask your guests to sign and date each message, as you'll be using the same tablecloth year after year.

THANK YOU NOTES

Set up an area with paper, pens and colors for everyone to write thank you notes to someone who has blessed them in some way this year. They can thank family members, friends, or teachers. They can also write a thank you to God. Younger children can draw pictures. Let everyone who wishes read their notes aloud during the meal.

THANKSGIVING ABC'S

Play a fun game with the ABC's and thanks. Start with saying something that you are thankful for that starts with the letter "A" and go through all the letters of the alphabet. Have members take turns or have each person share a "thanks" for each letter.

THANKSGIVING BLESSING CARDS

Write each person's name across the top of a card. Set these cards out and have everyone write something about that person for which they are thankful on the back. During dessert, gather the cards and take turns reading and blessing each person at the table.