



Thrones

Leveraging Authority to Help Others Win

Part 8 – Helping Your Grandchildren Win

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I'm excited to pick up where Ted left off last week in our Thrones series. The title of our message this morning is directed towards grandparents, which is so fun. *Helping Your Grandchildren Win*. As I talked with Ted about this topic... We don't think that we have ever specifically targeted grandparents in a message, so this is long overdue and we are really excited about what God has for us this morning.

Two weeks ago, Ashley and I prepared to take off for an annual abandon. This one was a little special because we are celebrating our tenth anniversary. We called up the grandparents on the Robbins and Medlin side and we said, "We need your help." We are so blessed to have loving and engaged parents. Our little family is far from perfect; I don't want to portray that at all, but, we are blessed to have parents that believe in us as a married couple and are thrilled to get the opportunity to invest in their grandkids.

Two weeks ago, we made the handoff and we passed off five kids, seven years old and under, to my parents. They got the first shift. Can you imagine? Talk about a blast from the past. In hindsight, I just giggle about it because it was like some kind of an A&E reality series, like a Life Swap or something.

We handed the kids over and then we spent a week together. It took about two days for Ashley and me to even figure out how to do nothing. It was such a peculiar situation. You love to sleep in on vacation, but I literally felt like I was taking on my father. Lying on a strange mattress, my sore back woke me up early in the morning. I ended up drinking about six cups of coffee and watching two hours of Fox News before I decided to put my pants on. The hardest decision I had to make all day was what I was going to order for breakfast. Ashley and I sat down and looked at this extravagant breakfast menu and it's got all these exotic foods and what not on it. I was shocked to find out how hard it is to make a decision when there's no pressure being applied. Where does all the pressure go? I ended up ordering some eggs.

Then we headed to the pool. One of Ashley's job descriptions is to keep me alive. That's one of her big responsibilities. If I had a better life insurance policy, she probably wouldn't have to work so hard. That's not a strategy; it's just that I like to live life on the wild side. We were at the pool and one of her big concerns was that I didn't get sunburned. Last year, when we were taking a little time out in the sun, she made sure to slather like 80 block sunblock all over my body, three and four coats at a time. Now, we are on a new kick because a study has come out that tells us that sunblock gives you skin cancer too. So, we're not doing sunblock anymore in the Robbins household; we're just using shade. I'm perfectly convinced that a year from now, they'll prove that shade gives you cancer too.

So, we sat in the shade. We were sitting in these little chairs by the pool and there was a big umbrella sitting over us. Come to find out, the only time that they provide shade is when the sun is directly overhead, which after a week in paradise, I'm not sure that even ever happens. But, there we were and our biggest problem was worrying about getting sunburned.

And there's my mom and dad. They were woken up probably four times the first night, not because they needed to use the restroom, but because everybody in the household did. By the time they hit the third level of rim sleep where they're really starting to snooze away, the alarm went off and the kids exploded out of bed. My kids don't slowly get up, they explode into action every day, so it's super intense. I just picture mom and dad changing diapers, feeding baby, and getting milk and cereal poured. My kids' arms... It's like they have go, go Gadget arms and they're just so fast, so their ability to be helpful and spill stuff all over is just amazing. And, of course, when you're old and something spills on the floor, you have to decide... "If I bend over, am I coming back up?" I'm pretty sure that's where broom handles came from: ingenuity and necessity.

One of the most taxing things in our house is just trying to get all the kids in the van. It's like herding cats. I just picture my dad herding all the Robbins cats into the van. And then you have to get up in this crazy thing and get everybody plugged in. They are all fighting you over it. By the time you get done, you feel like your back is going to explode.

We've got a lot to be thankful for: Mom and Dad, and then Dell and Peggy showed up for the second half of the week and they put their minds, their sanity, and they body on the line for our marriage and, for that, we are very grateful. We had a great week together.

Ashley and I love our grandparents. We love that they are involved in their kids' lives and, as I said, our family is far from perfect, but we're a team and, ultimately, together, collectively, parents and grandparents, we have an amazing job to partner together and to raise up the next generation of Christ followers.

This morning, we want to talk about engaging together as a church family in this great adventure. Just one more joke. I was thinking of my dad. When he finally got to slip away and get a little bit of peace and quiet, this is what he saw: [picture of a closed bathroom door with a little hand poking in under the door] Those little fingers are always scratching. Is that not the truest thing ever? As long as there have been doors on bathrooms, there have been little claws trying to get in there. But, Robby survived and I'm grateful for him.

You know that our church... This is Woodland Hills Family Church. We are devoted, we are committed to raising up godly families. So much so that our mission is "Inspiring the family to become fully devoted follower of Christ." We are a team in this together. As we dive into God's word, I believe this message is relevant to everybody in here. As background singers, we obviously believe in supporting marriage, but the vast majority of folks sitting in here and watching online and over in the chapel either are grandparents or they're going to be grandparents or they are being influenced by grandparents. This is a vital role that we want to elevate and honor and then also educate today.

In theory, there is no better background singer than grandparents. In theory because they raised up their kids, they know them, they believe in them. They often have biblical values, family values, the things that are important to them and they pass them on. Again, in theory, this relationship ought to be the strongest supporting role of marriage and raising up grandkids.

In reality, the dynamics of family can make this very difficult. That's just what we are dealing with. We're dealing with all of our own brokenness. Before we go any further, I want to put up two general warnings for grandparents. These are not comprehensive; this is just kind of two major ones that I feel like God has kind of sifted up in my heart as I've studied this. I want to put them in front of us so that we can be aware, whether we are in the grandparent phase currently or we're heading towards that that we can be aware of some of these potential pitfalls when it comes to being grandparents that invest in their grandkids.

The first pitfall is this: **Leaving and living rather than living and leaving.** Think about this. For those of you who have saved for your retirement, you may have spent your entire working life, 30 or 35 years, where month in and month out, you're saving and you're preparing and you're applying yourself to a plan that you've put in place year after year after year to prepare yourself for retirement. And when you finally hit that goal and you've gotten to this place and you've gotten this nest egg, one of the mistakes that we can make or one of the things that we need to be wary of is that we don't hit retirement and then take off and go live our lives. There is that temptation to go and to take advantage of everything that you've earned. Often, that can draw us away from some of the most valuable things in our life. Now hear me; I want to say this with great balance. Grandparents and elderly have earned the right to rest, they have earned the right to spend money and give generously.

Those are great things, but there can be an imbalance and here's something that I want to throw up in front of us. We need to **beware of a subconscious shift from being an investor to a consumer in retirement.** A lot of times, we give millennials a hard time for being selfish, self-absorbed, looking at themselves. So much of that is because of the technology age that they've grown up in. The iPhones, the iPads, the I this and the I that create this focus. But, I think if we are honest with ourselves, we can now look across all the generations and whether you're sitting at the pool on vacation or you're standing in the line at the coffee shop or you're going to visit some friends, all generations are being influenced by smart devices. Isn't that true. I mean six year olds, all the way up to 80 year olds, they have influence. It's important for us to just be wary of that, that we don't fall into the trap.

On the other side of things, some folks aren't as fortunate to have built up a retirement savings. Fortunately, we have Social Security that takes care of elderly, but that is a tight, meager living situation. I especially think about widows who have lost a husband who perhaps managed the finances for their entire married life and then, all of the sudden, they've got a very small income and the pressure and the fear that often comes with the unknown and really unfamiliar territory that perhaps their husband took care of for so long.

A lot of times, I think, with that pressure, **we can allow a tight budget to stifle every other area of life.** To be so conservative and so fearful that not only does it affect the way that I spend my money, but the way that I spend my time, the way that I invest in people's lives, the way that I serve in different

organizations. So, I feel like this is another thing that we just need to be aware of so that we don't fall into that trap. You have to remember that the enemy prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. It doesn't matter how old you are; he's looking to trip you up, one way or another, to draw you off course, especially when it comes to investing in the next generation.

So, **we want to be frugal in finances and rich in relationships.** Some of the most influential elderly people I know are not wealthy, but their influence is so rich and so powerful that they're making these eternal investments in the people around them. Regardless of how much money you have in your bank account, those are the kind of people that we want to be. We want to invest in a spiritual investment and that is the souls of people.

With the result of these pitfalls, combined with a lot of the pressures of our culture, I think three things can happen.

1) Devalued heritage. I actually had to look *heritage* up so I really understood what it meant. It simply means inheritance. I think for the basis of our conversation, when we are talking about a heritage, we're talking about the pillars of your family: faith, principle, morality that you hand down to the next generation. If we fall into these pitfalls, there creates a separation between grandparents and their grandkids and that passing of the baton is then devalued or watered down. You can see that. Think about the vast difference of the things that are important from one generation to the next. It's kind of crazy when you think about it. The things that were wrong one, two, or three generations ago, are now completely and morally okay in the greater culture in this generation. So, we can see how important that handoff is and how heritage has become devalued.

2) Devalued grandparent. Ashley's family is a great example of valuing grandparents. When I started dating Ashley, when I went down and met her parents, I also met her grandmother, her mamaw. Mamaw's husband had died quite some time ago. She had been widowed for a long time, but Dell and Peggy made sure that Mamaw had a little house just down the street in their neighborhood. And whenever that family was getting together, Mamaw was a part of it. She was there.

In fact, the first time I had dinner with them, I was sitting out on their patio, meeting Dell and Peggy for the first time. Sitting to my left was Mamaw and sitting to my right was Ashley. We were eating a steak dinner. They had made my favorite food. If you guys ever have me over, make steak; you can't miss. We were eating steak and, all of the sudden, Mamaw started choking. Everybody kind of looked at her and I just put my superhero cap on and I pushed back from the table. At my first meal with my in-laws to be, I gave Mamaw the Heimlich. I saved her life and added ten years to it. Don't worry; I'm a Red Cross certified life guard.

So, Mamaw was just a part of the family and she was highly valuable. God rest her soul. She's with Jesus now and we're excited for the day that we get to be reunited with her. She was valuable and her memory continues to be valuable in the Medlin family.

3) Devalued grandchildren. Grandchildren themselves can become devalued. A lot of times, when there is separation, the value of the relationship is less. It's as simple as that. I know some grandparents

who are honest enough to say that. The grandkids that live close to them, they have a tighter relationship with them than those separated by states. Unfortunately, the way that our society is so spread out, that's just a hurdle that we have to deal with, but it just goes to show you that the value of grandchildren can fluctuate and it shouldn't. That's not the way that it works in God's economy.

So, having those pitfalls and those potential effects on society in mind, we're going to look at what God's word has to say about grandparents influencing their grandkids. Let's look at that first scripture. Proverbs 17: 6 says this: ***Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.***

Grandchildren are a blessing from the Lord. That's something that you'll hear from this pulpit often. That's Psalm 127: 3. We believe that kiddos are valuable, more so than a retirement investment. The greatest most valuable thing that you have ownership over as a grandparent is those precious little kiddos. As you make investments in them, you're making an eternal investment, one that's not temporary, but one that lasts and then multiplies itself.

Genesis 48: 9 says this: ***"They are the sons God has given me here," Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, "Bring them to me so I may bless them."*** Israel is in his old age and he is having a conversation with one of his boys, Joseph, and he says, "Bring my grandsons here." He brings in his boys and he lay his hands on them and he prays a prayer of blessing over those boys. I believe that God's word is challenging us as grandparents to become prayer warriors over our grandkids. We believe that the power of prayer makes a difference. I've often said that I believe the most dangerous enemy of Satan himself is elderly women committed to prayer.

There's this picture in Revelation of this bowl of incense that sits before the Throne of the Lord. The scripture says that it is overflowing with the prayers of the saints that is the incense. I just think of that bowl and I've got to believe that a huge percentage of those prayers, the historical sum of the prayers of the saints are from elderly grandparents who have a passion for the Lord and who maybe have slowed down physically and have less ability to do and they've been limited to prayer. For those of us who believe in the power of prayer, that limitation is a tremendous advantage for the body of Christ. What an honor, as grandpa and grandma, to be able to strategically invest in your grandkids through prayer. You've got to know this. These kids are growing up in a society that is absolutely hostile to their faith. You can pray over the trials and temptations that lay years in advance that they are going to run into. The scriptures tell us that prayer matters, the prayer changes things. God responds to your prayers.

2 Timothy 1: 5 says this: ***I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.***

You see, **grandparents' faith is modeled, instilled, and handed down.** In this letter to Timothy, Paul had taken a role in Timothy's life. As far as we know, Timothy's dad was an unbeliever; he was a Greek. But, there was this heritage of a loving God that was passed down from his grandmother and his mother. Paul steps into Timothy's life as a spiritual father and he looks at him and he says, "I see the spiritual baton of faith that's been passed down; it evident in you."

As I look as our family, Dell and Peggy and both of my parents, Rob and Susan, have very similar roles in our lineage or in the lineage of their families. They were the first generation in recent generations that made faith the number one priority, that made Jesus the cornerstone of our household. Before them, our grandparents introduced faith that was cultural or traditional, it was a part of their lives, but our parents made it the number one priority of who the Robbins family is or who the Medlin family is. Ashley and I are reaping the benefits of them paving the way for us. We can look at our lives and our parents will tell you that we are further along in our faith and our understanding of who God is and it's because they paved the way for us. It's not because of how spiritual we are or how hard we work in our faith or anything like that; it's because of the heritage that's been passed down to us. We get so excited to think that when we pass the baton onto our kiddos, we can put them even further down the field. That's the way that a generational blessing of faith works. It perpetuates itself.

Psalms 103: 17 reinforces that idea. ***But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children...***

The next point comes from Psalms 92: 14. ***They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green...***

Grandparents are called to cultivate, plant, tend, and bear good fruit. Not only in their own lives... So, personally, as a grandparent or in your elderly years, you still have a responsibility to pursue the Lord, to grow in faith, and to produce great fruit. But, not only personally, but you have a responsibility to turn to the next generation and to invest in them. The idea of cultivation... this is obviously an agricultural analogy, but when you cultivate a field, you go into the field and you drive a plow and it turn the ground over. So, there's a hard crust on the ground and there may be some weeds left over from the last harvest, but when you drive that plow, it turns it over and this fresh, fertile new earth is uncovered and it's the perfect seedbed for planting seeds faith. I believe that the way grandparents cultivate the ground in the hearts of their grandkids is by spending time with them, creating memories with them.

Some of my fondest memories of my pa... They worked out on the farm. They had a hog lot right across the road from the house. We would walk out there and he would take a big sniff of the air and say, "Do you smell that? That's the smell of money." Then we would go out and do chores before we had breakfast. Would you believe that as little guy, doing chores with my pa, literally scooping poo... I loved it so much. I have such fond memories.

I have another great memory of my granny. We had about an hour-long bus ride home from school and it was agonizing as a little guy. I got heartsick for my mom on the way home on that long bus ride every day. They would pick us up at the elementary and then the next stop was the junior high. Every once in a while, when the bus would pull up, there Granny would be standing. She would walk up on that bus and tell the bus driver, "I'm taking Shay Robbins with me." My heart would just explode with joy. She'd take me to the Dairy Queen and we'd eat ice cream and cheese curds. That was the best!

I don't know how many grandkids they have. They have a lot, but every one of us grandkids love our granny. We hang on her every word. She is so highly honored in our family and it's because she did an amazing job of cultivating those memories. Those little hearts were ready to hear from Granny.

What I'd charge you with is that as you create those memories, then you be strategic. Don't let opportunities go by where you don't cast some spiritual seed into your grandkids' heart. You can just spend time with them, you can just come visit, you can just be there, or you can take godly seeds of truth and you can place them in your kiddos' lives. And here's the fun thing, grandparents: you have the ability to speak into your grandkids' life in a way that they won't hear it from their parents. They just won't. In their little flesh, they don't hear things directly from mom and dad from zero to eighteen. It's just this rollercoaster. But, Grandpa and Grandma can come in at a whole other level and reinforce what Mom and Dad are teaching. That's the way you partner together as a family to raise up godly children.

Proverbs 16; 31 says this: ***Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness.*** I think a lot of times... Not just grandparents; this really applies to anybody. We have a fear or hesitation to share wisdom or to share God's word or to share the gospel because we have an insecurity that's telling us that we don't know enough or they're not going to listen or we don't have the words. I believe that gray hair is to be highly honored; it is valuable. There are a lot of people that pluck gray hairs and dye gray hairs and some of the gray hairs fall out and they don't have a choice, but gray hair is valuable, it's important. Those gray hairs have been earned through trial and error and every little spiritual nugget or every life lesson that you implant in the next generation is a pain that they get to miss out on, it is foolishness that they get to steer clear of. So, don't miss opportunities to plant those seeds, to share nuggets of truth with your grandkids.

So, I want to move into a little bit of application and I wanted to tell you this. I just shared a few gold nuggets. As you read through the scripture, you're not going to find a book of the Bible or a chapter or even a section that is devoted to instruction on how to be a godly, awesome grandparent. But, as you mine through the scripture, you are going to find gold nuggets throughout. I've just teased you with a few, but there is so much more there to discover. So, I want to encourage you, just as a church body and the grandparents out there, that you would begin to dig and to find guidance from God's word in your role of being a grandparent.

We ask ourselves what we will do next with what God says about helping our grandchildren win. One of the things that we are really excited about... We're not going to just stop with this message. We have kind of dived into this and Denise has really spearheaded this. We've seen the value in this message. Denise is launching a class called *Legacy* that will follow up on April 9, from 6:30 to 8:00. She's going to take some of this material and tease it out a little bit so the grandparents can get together and engage and grow in what God has to say in regard to this awesome role of being a grandparent. As you take personal responsibility of your role as a grandparent, if you want to create change, if you want to grow within your family, the first thing that has to happen is you have to open up dialogue. Communication is the key to create growth within your family.

I've put together five simple question to help that dialogue along and help give you a sense of where to go from here.

1. How can we partner with you in raising your kids? A really neat conversation I had with my mom and dad before we left on our trip was I wanted to share some of the things that we're instilling in our kids

so that they could continue to teach them while we were gone. You guys may have noticed in Corey's video that there is a strong correlation between grandparents and sugar products. It's fun to be able to be grandparents and to spoil, but I think there is even greater value in partnering with parents and becoming a team.

How can we take the things that are important to you and instill them in your kiddos? Our goal in parenting in our kids is that our kids would become mature. That's our goal that they would be mature before they leave the house. The way we define maturity is that they would be wise, self-controlled, and responsible. With Mom and Dad, we began to discuss some of the things that we'd been teaching the kids that they can help us with. One of the things we are working with our kids on is acknowledging adults, so that when an adult is speaking, they look them in the eyes, be an intent listener, and respond to them. Just getting our kids to look somebody in the eyes and respond is just this task that we have to hammer on all day long. Now, Grandpa and Grandma get to join in that, they get to hear the "Yes, Ma'ams" and the "Yes, sirs" and the "Yes, Mommy" and the "Yes, Daddy." They get to partner with us on that and that is helpful. That makes us function as a team.

2. What are you passionate about that we can help you champion in our grandchildren? One of the things that we are passionate about that we shared with both of our parents is that we want to create a really encouraging home where we're breathing life into our kids, but we also want them to struggle and we want them to feel the sting of discipline. We discipline in our family; we spank in our family. I don't know how you feel about that, but we love it. With the grandparents, instead of spanking them, we take that off their back, but we said we want you to send them to time out. And so, mom and dad and Dell and Peggy got to partner with us in that. They are not going to go an entire week without being disciplined. They are not going to go a whole week without having to struggle and to work hard to learn things and overcome obstacles. We're passionate about that and our parents... I'm so thankful that they've taken on that passion, they've teamed with us.

3. How can we support your marriage? There are no better backup singers than Grandpa and Grandma. Here's just one easy way. When you visit your kiddos, give the parents one night to slip away. "Let us watch the kids and you guys go out and have a date, be together, be in an environment where you can communicate." What an awesome blessing. We are fortunate enough to have grandparents that live close that can do that for us and we reap that benefit, but it is such a blessing. It doesn't hurt to slip them a hundred bucks either.

4. How can we pray for the grandkids? Again, especially in this church, we want to prioritize the value of prayer. This is a really fun conversation because I think it opens up the opportunity for parents to let down their guard, especially for parents of a first-time kiddo. There are all kinds of insecurities and chemical imbalances going on with a first baby. Mommies and Daddies, it is hard, for whatever reason, especially that first kid or first couple of kids, to ask for help. You just want so badly to be their mom or be their dad. You want to be able to meet their needs, so it can be tender ground, but you better believe the first-time mommies and daddies need some help and this is a great question to very humbly and tenderly ask: "How can we pray for you?" It may open up that opportunity for them to expose themselves and say we are really struggling with x, y, and z.

5. How can we invest in your family? This can look a number of different ways, but, again, it's another question that allows Moms and Dads to be honest and to accept help and partnership. I think these are also questions that can be healing. Again, there are a lot of unhealthy dynamics that happen in family and you cannot reconcile relationships without communication. Usually, those conversations are really hard and they start with a couple of days' worth of gut churning, but more often than not, they result in healthy healing. God works in families through communication.

So, how will each of us doing our part bring about a change for the whole church family? How does this body of Christ unite around this biblical role of godly grandparents? And what will the influence be on our community?

I think number one is this: We revalue heritage. Scripture says this in Psalm 71: 18: ***Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.*** Grandpa and Grandma, patriarch and matriarch, it is your responsibility to take your stand of God-given authority and proclaim the goodness and the excellence and the supremacy of Jesus Christ in your family. What an honor to hold that banner, to carry and wave the flag of Jesus Christ. In your last years, however many you may have, it is your responsibility to lay claim to the ownership of Jesus over your family.

The next thing we will do is revalue grandparents. Leviticus 19: 30 says this: ***Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.*** This is kind of a throwback and that's sad. I really had a sober moment when I ran into this. It's sad to think that the days are over of when an elderly man or woman or even a female in general would walk in the room and all the men would stand to their feet. It's too bad that those days are gone because there is such honor in that, just to say, "Whether I know you or not, I honor you. Your gray hair is a crown. What you have to offer this family, this community, this culture is highly valuable and we desperately need it."

Finally, we revalue children. This is the perfect passage to end on. In Matthew 6: 19, Jesus said, ***Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*** Isn't that beautiful? Those little grandbabies that God has blessed you with, they are your treasure, they are your blessing. You'll make time for the things that are important to you and as you spend time and influence and invest in those kiddos, they are these little spiritual canisters; there is no way that it will overflow. It's just going to keep filling up their little spiritual heart with the influence of Grandpa and Grandma. May we value that relationship. May we as a church value the role of grandparents and their investment in their grandkids.

I want to pray and specifically, I'm going to pray for families that are broken, where there is strain and difficulty, where there is a desperate need of healing. We're going to pray over our church body that God would reopen those avenues of investment for grandparents.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the office of grandparent. Thank you for your creativity and your value in the honor that you've placed over that role. God, today, we want to highly exalt that role and honor it.

I want to pray, Jesus, specifically over families that are strained, fractured, and broken. I want to ask, in the name of Jesus, God, that your Holy Spirit would do a work of healing and reconciliation. That you would tear down walls that formerly were believed to be impenetrable, that they would crumble like the walls of Jericho and that you would allow relationships to be healed, Lord.

I want to pray for grandparents that your spirit would stir them, that it would motivate them, call them to the investment in their grandchildren. I pray, Jesus, that grandkids would look up to their grandparents with sparkles in their eyes and that they would throw their arms open and run into grandpa and grandma's arms, and that relationship would be anointed with your kindness and your blessing and your high value.

It's in the mighty name of Jesus that we pray, Amen.