FOREWORD BY KORIE ROBERTSON

ROMANDPARENT GRANDPARENT

How You Can

Lead the Way,

Light the Road,

Launch a Legacy



CHRYS HOWARD



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ROCKSTAR GRANDPARENT

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SNEAK PEEK SAMPLE ONLY

Dedicated to the ones we love: Rebecca, John Luke, Sadie, Chase, Macy, Asa, Ally, Will, Maddox, Aslyn, Bella, Rowdy, Aevin, and Riley

Thank you for reintroducing us to the joyous sound of a ukulele and piano, for helping us put the latest apps on our phones, for teaching us how to properly take a selfie (and the importance of lighting), for showing us what biblical journaling is, and for coaching us on the delicacies of Raising Cane's and Chick-fil-A.

When we started our grandparenting journey, most of these things were not a thing at all. But because of you, we are challenged to see the world with new eyes and embrace the activities that define your generation, as well as instill in you an appreciation of ours. Our prayer is that we leave you a world that is better than we found it, a legacy that is full of unconditional love, and a faith that will carry you through the ups and downs that come with a life well lived.

You are loved more than you know and prayed for as much as you deserve.

Much love, 2-mama and 2-papa



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Foreword

Back in the early days of Duck Commander, well before *Duck Dynasty* was even a glimmer in a Hollywood producer's eye, Willie and I began going to Las Vegas every January for the big outdoor industry trade show. We would help set up the booth and, along with the rest of the family, stand there and hope people came by to buy our family's duck calls. This trip was more than just a work trip for us, though. We'd leave the kids with their grandparents (our family calls them 2-mama and 2-papa) for the week and head to Vegas, baby. For young parents, this was an extended date we looked forward to every year!

One year I'll never forget: Our daughter Bella, who was just a little over a year old, came down with a stomach virus the night before we were to leave on the trip. Why does it always seem to happen like that! I remember feeling bad for her and, I have to admit, a little bit sad for myself that I wouldn't get to go on the trip. But 2-mama came over, picked her up, and said reassuringly, "You go ahead—she'll be fine." And I went. Sure enough, Bella was over the sickness in a day or two and wasn't scarred for life that I had left her. Because she had a rockstar grandma loving and caring for her, she was more than fine! Another year, both John Luke and Bella were diagnosed with the flu just days before the trip, and again 2-mama said, "Go. They'll be fine." And I went, and again they all survived.

My mom's amazing like that; not only was she the kind of grandparent who could take on sick children like it was no big deal, but she



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also gave me the priceless encouragement, assurance, and confidence that my kids were going to turn out all right and that I was doing a good job as a mom. I know that she loves to be with her grandkids, but taking care of sick babies isn't the most fun thing for anyone. Somehow she made it seem as if it was and allowed me to take special trips with Willie that helped strengthen our marriage and led to a little television show that a lot of people seemed to like. It was on one of those trips to Vegas that the idea for *Duck Dynasty* was born.

There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to being a rockstar grandparent. For example, 2-mama is not the typical bun-in-her-hair, flour-on-her-apron grandma. She's the kind who's always up for a tennis match (you'd better bring your A game or she'll take you down) and the kind all your friends want to hang out with at her house. She throws the best parties and is the glue that holds our family together because she makes sure to celebrate the birthdays and little accomplishments of those she loves.

One of the things that makes 2-mama a rockstar is how she delights in each of her grandkids. They love for her to watch them do their thing, and she has a special way of bringing out the best in them. Ask any of her grandkids and they will tell you that 2-mama's last words as they leave her house are always "Be a good example." They take this advice seriously, and they live that way, in large part because of the example she has set for them.

Not only does 2-mama show her grandkids how to follow God



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with all their hearts, how to love their neighbor, and how to live life to its fullest, but she also teaches them the little things—you know, those things that result in an eye roll when a parent says them. Things like "Sit up straight," "Chew with your mouth closed," and "Put your napkin in your lap." When 2-mama says those things, the grandkids actually seem to appreciate it. A rockstar grandparent has magic like that.

I've watched 2-mama get back out of bed at midnight when a teenage grandkid comes over for help with geometry. I've seen her on her hands and knees cleaning up every kind of mess or spill you can imagine, driving seven hours one way for a volleyball game, moving to Los Angeles for three months during *Dancing with the Stars*, and holding pets she doesn't even like (she's not really a pet lover, but for her grandkids, she can pretend with the best of them).

I plan on being that kind of grandma, and I've actually got some exciting news. Willie and I just found out we are going to be grandparents soon! Rebecca and her husband, John Reed, are expecting! My mom first taught me everything I know about being a woman of God, a kind friend, a faithful wife, a loving mom. And now I get to learn from her how to be a rockstar grandma.

I have been watching all along. I hope to have the kind of relationship with my grandkids that she has with my kids. The kind where they know my door is always open, where they can count on me to be their biggest cheerleader, where they can tell me anything, where, when tough times come, they will always have full confidence in my love for them. I'm definitely taking notes.

Our son John Luke was the first grandchild in the family. He had the honor of bestowing on Mom the name 2-mama (I'm sure she'll tell



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you that story later in the book; it's one of her favorites, and mine too). It fits her perfectly. I don't know how I would have raised our kiddos without her! She's a rockstar grandma in every sense of the term.

After reading her words of wisdom, you will be too.

—Korie Robertson

Introduction

f you have picked up this book, *congratulations*! Either you're a new grandparent, you're about to become one, or you've been one for a while and you're having so much fun you want to learn more. Trust me—you are in one of the most exciting times of your life. Well, once you get past the fact that you're now old enough to be a grandma or grandpa, *then* the excitement can set in. Chances are you are a part of the baby boomer generation, like I am. If you came along a little later, know this about the folks a few years older than you: we have reluctantly gotten older, and at fifty, sixty, or seventy years of age, we look in the mirror each day and wonder how we turned into our parents, or we look at our peers and wonder how they got so old. Surely we're not that old!

Because I am smack-dab in the middle of the boomers, I will often refer to my generation in this book, but don't let it stop you from reading if you're not one of us. You are close enough if you have grandchildren—plus, there's a lot to learn from our far-out and groovy generation. We, the baby boomers, were born between the years of 1946 and 1964. My youngest sister was born on the same day the



Beatles made their American debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. That date was February 9, 1964, which makes her one of the youngest in this boomer generation. It's hard to believe, but that one show set a record with seventy-three million viewers. Seventy-three million! What could a television network possibly do to get seventy-three million viewers? Well, back in those days, they didn't have to do much. We had only three channels. Remember that? With only three choices, odds were in a network's favor that they were going to get plenty of viewers. Still, no one expected the Beatles to draw a crowd of that magnitude.

Sadly, I was not one of those seventy-three million viewers. Nope, I am forever aware that I missed one of the single most iconic events in American history because my family was busy welcoming baby boomer number six. It was on February 10 that I realized how deprived I had been. I got on the school bus, eager to share news of our precious new bundle of joy, only to be met with excited screams and squeals about the "Beagles." That's exactly what my little ten-year-old ears heard. Apparently a new rock band named the "Beagles" had exploded onto the American music scene, stealing my thunder of having a new sibling. Oh well, it didn't take long for me to get the name straight and join the rest of the world singing "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and screaming for the Beatles.

While my little sister is among the last of the baby boomer generation, Phil Robertson, my co-grandparent and star of the reality show *Duck Dynasty*, was born in 1946, making him one of the first in the generation. It's been interesting to watch this eighteen-year span through the lives of my little sister and Phil Robertson. The eighteen-year difference makes baby boomers very diverse. In fact, if you were to

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read the facts surrounding Phil's birth and that of my little sister, you would think these two people couldn't possibly be from the same generation, but they are. Here are a few more facts.

The label *baby boomer* was given because so many babies were born during the economic boom following World War II. Historian Landon Jones described the trend by saying that almost exactly nine months after World War II ended, "the cry of the baby was heard across the land." In fact, more babies were born in 1946 than ever before. And so began the baby boom. The boom finally tapered off after 1964 but not before leaving around seventy-six million³ of us to make our mark on American history.

Along with the baby boomer label, we've been dubbed the TV generation, the rock-and-roll generation, and the buy-it-now-and-use-credit generation. Yes, yes, and yes! We are guilty of being the first generation to sit too close to a new invention called television. Our moms were happy to put us in front of shows like *The Mickey Mouse Club* and Captain Kangaroo, so we happily obliged them, thus becoming the first generation to be influenced by the media. And yes, we're guilty of listening to rock and roll on our transistor radios and giant stereo systems in our living rooms or blasting out our neighbors from our car radios. This led to other firsts, such as great dances like the Jerk, the Mashed Potato, and the Frug. (The Frug? Seriously?) Okay, I'm not so sure the dances were that great. Maybe we should have stuck to the classics, which would have made our parents happy, but that was not the goal of this generation. We were determined to be different. The beehive hairdo was out, and long and straight hair was in. The mellow music of Frank Sinatra was a thing of the past. We wanted it loud, or if it was soft, we wanted it full of deep meaning. And about those credit cards—we certainly are guilty of using and abusing that luxury. But hey, it sounded like a good idea at the time, right?

But we're not a lost cause by any means. Here's one description I read about us that I love. Apparently we're the first generation to use the word *retirement* to mean "get going" instead of "slow down." In other words, our generation is up and moving in ways past generations were not at our age. We're more likely to go skydiving or join a tennis league or travel the country than sit in a rocking chair. In fact, a study from Bankers Life found that "41% of baby boomers still in the workplace expect to work beyond age 69—or never retire." This same study revealed that of the baby boomers who are still working, six out of ten work because they want to. Some of the reasons cited were to stay mentally sharp, to be physically active, and to have a sense of purpose. Yep, that's us.

What is wrong with us boomers? you might be asking yourself. Why can't we just sit back and relax and leave things to the next generation? I can't answer that question for you, but I can for myself. I just don't feel as if I'm done yet. There's more to see and more to accomplish, and with each day, my time to see and do is drawing to an end. The fact that our generation wants more for ourselves, physically and mentally, means we are increasing our chances of living longer, and that gives us more time to do the things we love. Still, we're very aware of the brevity of our lives on this earth. We might wear skinny jeans, text, work out, or ride a motorcycle, but we know we're not young anymore. Our bodies ache, and it takes us longer to text than a four-year-old, but we're not done yet. We still feel the need to be significant members of modern society.



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So, grandparents, you might still be playing in a band like Paul McCartney or competing in tennis tournaments like Chris Evert, or you might be a strong player in the workforce like Donald Trump, but now you also hold one of the most important titles you will ever hold, and that's Grandma or Grandpa.

According to the website Grandparents.com, 1.7 million new grandparents are added every year with an overall number of 70 million grandparents in the States today. Wow! And from the posts you put on Facebook, it's clear you think you're the *only* grandparents in America! I'm just kidding. Keep posting those grandkid pics. I'm going to. It's part of who we are. That same website says that 75 percent of us are online users. There's no grass growing under our feet. We're going to figure out how to stay connected, aren't we? Even if we have to get our grandkids to connect us and tell us for the tenth time how to use Twitter! (Yes, true confessions from this social media grandma.)

So here we are. We may not look or act like grandparents of the past, but we are the grandparents for this newest generation. As I said earlier, you might be a grandparent to a newborn, or like me, you may have a grandchild in his or her twenties (how did this happen?). In any case, this is the generation we are charged with affecting. A generation who hasn't been officially dubbed anything. A generation who faces challenges we didn't even know could exist. So the question is, How can we accomplish this? As connected as we try to be, relating to this "wired" generation will be challenging.

This younger generation will never know the fun of snuggling with siblings while wearing pajamas at a drive-in movie. Many won't know what it's like to play outside until dark and hear Mom yell, "Dinner's ready!" They won't experience watching a good western like *Bonanza*

with the whole family in one room. Many of our grandkids will never know the joy and trials of sharing a room with a sibling. No, this new generation has choices and options—too many, that's for sure. Too many TV shows, too many pairs of jeans, too many sports or other activities. They are a generation of excess.

Is there a place for us grandparents in their excessive world? You bet there is! Grandparents are the glue that will hold this world together. My mom is eighty-seven years old and is the reigning matriarch of our family. Until age eighty-four, she worked full time. She is on Facebook, dresses like a movie star, and attends as many grandkid and greatgrandkid activities as her busy schedule allows. One day she told me her goal in her later years is to remain relevant. I told her she has achieved that goal. Born in 1931, Mom is part of what has been dubbed the silent generation. The silent generation includes babies born from 1925 to 1945. Some of the descriptors I discovered for the silent generation include enjoy reading, love big-band music, loyal, self-sacrificing, and cautious. My mom has all these traits. But she didn't follow the rocking-chair grandma mold that defines many of her peers. She spent what others consider retirement years active in work, church, and community life. She set the stage for her children as we entered our own grandparenting years. She showed us that a world of possibilities still awaits us even after our children are grown and gone. I have five siblings, and we constantly tell Mom to slow down so we can! So, baby boomers, we can't take all the credit for debunking the rocking-chair grandma mentality. My mom single-handedly took on the challenge.

One thing our generation loves to boast about is our music. We proudly declare it the best! Join me as we take a look at some of the



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songs that influenced our generation. Each chapter will be introduced with a song from our era. I know it's an eighteen-year span, but you'll get it. I'm sure you didn't realize that many of our generation's favorite songs addressed our grandparenting years. As you were rocking out to the top twenty hits, you weren't thinking about your life as a grandparent. And there's no doubt these artists didn't realize they were speaking about being a grandparent either, but they were. Okay, there was that one song we all sang and loved, and it really was about being old, but we couldn't imagine being *that* old. Sing it with me: "Will you still need me . . ."6

Good job! Seriously, that song was great, but losing our hair or knitting a sweater or anything that went along with old age was not a serious threat when we first heard that song—yet! Those things were so far in the future that we laughed about them. We're still laughing. Only now we're laughing because they all came true. I want to say thank you to all the great musical geniuses who helped our generation put our feelings into words. Those words are still influencing our lives.

Yes, this generation of long-haired, self-centered, bell-bottomed, barefoot, spaced-out, rocking teenagers has finally grown up. Hopefully we've also grown out of the negative monikers we were given and are proud to be called Grandma and Grandpa. Or is it Nana and Papa? Or Honey and Pa? Or Mimi and Pops? Or Gigi and Big Daddy? Here we go again, being our rebellious selves! Did anyone seriously think we would be happy with the titles Grandma and Grandpa? Nope. Not us. We're way too young for those names!

I realize that I've said a lot about baby boomers and that the premise of the book rests on baby boomer songs, but I'm aware that many



grandparents are a few years short of being a boomer or may have been born a little before this generation. Don't let that stop you from reading this book. It's full of hints, tips, and advice that are good for grandparents all of ages and in all stages.

So, Nana and Papa or Honey and Pa or Mimi and Pops or Gigi and Big Daddy, hang loose and enjoy the world of grandparenting. Trust me—it's a far-out, neato, and groovy place to be! You're well on your way to being a rockstar grandparent to some very special children.

Hugs, Chrys



Turn! Turn! Turn!

his popular song was written by Pete Seeger in the late 1950s and made famous by a singing group called the Byrds in 1965. (The Byrds, the Beatles, the Monkees, the Who, the Kinks—good grief! What were we thinking?) As Pete Seeger explained it, he received a letter from his publisher telling him he couldn't sell Seeger's protest songs (shocker—a protest song in the '60s!) and asked him to come up with something he could sell. Seeger said he got mad (again, shocker, right?) and then wrote the melody to "Turn! Turn! Turn!" in fifteen minutes.¹ That's pretty impressive, even if the lyrics were already supplied for him.

Here's another interesting fact about that song. When you go to Wikipedia, you will notice it says music by Pete Seeger and lyrics by the book of Ecclesiastes. I know Wikipedia isn't the best source of information, but this fact is correct. The lyrics of this song are straight from Ecclesiastes. Pete Seeger, in order to produce words that were not protesting something, turned to the Bible and came up with a number one hit song.

As it turns out, the words in Ecclesiastes 3 were perfect for our generation of deep thinkers (we thought we were anyway). But the truth is,



these words are perfect for every generation. In His wisdom, God knew that each generation would have to come to terms with the word *turn*. There are many definitions of this word, and like many American words, we use it in several ways. We learn to "take turns." We're asked to "turn over" something. We say "turn on" the light or TV or oven.

One definition of the word *turn* that I like for the purpose of this chapter is the following: "an opportunity or obligation to do something that comes successively to each of a number of people." That seems to be the definition God was referring to when inspiring the words in Ecclesiastes. Each successive group of people, in various times of their lives, will have the opportunity to take a turn at a number of different events and activities.

Let's look at the idea of taking turns. You learned to take turns when you were somewhere around two years old. You know the scenario. Your three-year-old sibling jumped in front of you to get on the slide, and your mom calmly grabbed your sibling and said, "No, you have to take turns. It's little sister's turn now." And you happily got to go in front of that big sister or brother. All was well until you were the one held back so someone else could take a turn. Right?

Some think this is the beginning of sharing, but sharing is another concept we learn. Sharing implies that you work together; taking turns means to totally hand over the reins of something to someone else. This song is a great reminder that we have a season and, when our season is over, it will be time to turn things over to someone else.

A few years ago I traveled with my granddaughter Sadie Robertson to an appearance. While there, I ran into a sweet young lady who, at one point, attended a church in our city and knew our family. She had



a troubled life as a child but as an adult found peace and hope in God. She asked whether she could bless me and pray over me. Of course I said yes. Her words touched my heart in a profound way. She said that the hard work my husband and I had done in the kingdom, the plowing and tilling, would be the foundation for our children and grand-children to serve God. Then she said, "Your ceiling will be the floor for the lives of your grandchildren." Wow! All the things we worked for, prayed about, achieved, aimed at, conquered, cried over, and fought for are laid down as the floor for our grandchildren to build on! I have thought about this, and its implications for life, over and over. The picture became very clear on a special trip we took.

For Christmas in 2017, my husband, Johnny, and I decided to take our entire family to Israel for a tour of the Holy Land. (I'll refer to this trip a few more times in this book because the experience was like no other. If it's not on your bucket list, add it . . . right now!) It was such a blessing to walk with my kids and grandkids where Jesus walked; it's something they will never forget. One of the most interesting things we witnessed was how civilizations were built on top of each other. Through years of excavating, layers of different civilizations have been discovered. In other words, one civilization's ceiling became the floor of another civilization. I was able to see a physical example of what that sweet lady was telling me about the legacy Johnny and I were leaving to our grandchildren.

As each generation (or civilization) works and toils to build their lives, they are setting the stage for the next generation to build on top. There is a section in Jerusalem where we were able to look down a large hole and see the remnants of three civilizations. Talk about taking turns!



A civilization was built on top of another until centuries came and went, leaving the new civilization no clues of what lay beneath them.

Isn't this true of our lives? I have no idea what specific things my great-grandparents did on a day-to-day basis, but I do know—because it has been handed down to me—that they loved God. I'm fairly confident they didn't attend anything that resembled a major youth rally like Passion, which Louie and Shelley Giglio so masterfully put together. I can also say with confidence that they didn't attend a summer camp where they played games and swam in a big pool. No, these types of things didn't exist. But I'm pretty sure they attended church when the church bell chimed, they fed the hungry, they cared for the sick, they went to the church potluck, and they tucked their kids into bed at night and prayed over them.

You see, the layers of spiritual civilizations will look as different as physical civilizations do. We, as a society and as individual people, grow and change; our methods change, but our message does not. In every civilization, in every generation, the message is still to love God and love and serve others. As long as we continue to lay that foundation, it will become the floor for the lives of our children and grandchildren. Then it will be their turn to light up the world with God's message.

One other way I can see this scenario is by looking at our homesite. Our family home is located on an old homestead. When we built our house, we found markings that let us know another family at one point lived on our land. I love to walk under our huge oak tree and think about the other families that took their turn living on this property. I imagine someone else's children running in the field and horses or cows grazing in the pasture. But today it's our turn for this property. Our

house sits pretty close to where we imagine the original home sat, but it's air-conditioned and much larger than that home. We have a barn, possibly like our predecessors, but ours is home to workout equipment instead of hay and farm equipment. We have two cars that come and go daily on a concrete driveway that took the place of the dirt drive they would have traveled on. There's a swing set and a volleyball net set up for the grandkids to enjoy. During our turn we hope we are making it better for the next family to take their turn. Making things better should always be our goal as we use the resources God gives us.

But there are always two questions to answer when it's time to take turns. First, am I ready or willing to allow another to take his turn, and second, what if there's no one to take over after me? Those are two very good questions. In fact, even at two years old when we are first confronted with taking turns, we have to decide whether we are going to obey our parents and let the other child have a turn or whether we are going to rebel and jump on that slide before the other child gets there. Hopefully, with some prodding, we all come to the right conclusion that taking turns is beneficial for everyone.

Taking turns establishes in us the ability to let go of ourselves and let others take priority. Isn't that the true nature of Christianity—laying aside our desires for the desires of another? Philippians 2:3 tells us to "do nothing out of selfish ambition" (NIV). The New Living Translation says it this way: "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves." The very act of Jesus dying on the cross for us is proof that God values others over Himself. That was, of course, the ultimate sacrifice.

Remember the little JOY acronym? Jesus first, others second, and



yourself third. You probably learned that in Sunday school when you didn't want that superfast kid in your fourth-grade class to get to the water fountain first. Perhaps your teacher lectured the class with the JOY acronym. Still, it wasn't easy. Putting others first is a lifelong battle with our flesh. It seems life would be easier if everyone would do everything the way I want things done. Right? Yes, but that's wrong. As we grow and mature in the Lord, we finally understand that putting others first actually gives us a better version of self-satisfaction. Letting others have a turn takes maturity to another level because no one likes to give up what feels good and comfortable.

On to question number two—what if there's no one to take over after me? Or what if she can't do it as well as I have done it? What if she messes everything up that I worked so hard to achieve? What if she *doesn't* leave the world a better place? The what ifs could drive you crazy, but they're totally contrary to what the song "Turn! Turn! Turn!" and the Bible tell us. God designed us for a specific time and place. Our finite minds can barely fathom God's plan and how He manages the entire earth and the bazillion people who have occupied it. I had three kids who kept me hopping like a frog on a steamy Friday night trying to get away from the likes of frog hunter Jason Robertson. Now I have those three kids, their spouses, and fourteen grandkids to keep up with. It's enough to make me want to holler uncle. My calendar looks as if I'm the president of the United States or the head of a major corporation instead of a busy grandma. How does God do it? How does He manage the sun, the moon, the stars, and millions of people? Because He's God, that's how. It's what He does. And we don't even have to worry about it.

Like it or not, your turn as a parent is over and your kids are now in charge. I know that it can be a scary thought. My daddy was a wise



man, and he always told me no one was irreplaceable. In our lifetime, we have seen amazing men and women come and go. Remarkable, brilliant minds like Steve Jobs; unforgettable acting talents like John Wayne; funny men like John Ritter and Robin Williams; amazing voices like Whitney Houston; and on and on. All these men and women held a big enough place in this world that many wondered who would replace them. And then someone did. Their turns were over. New voices, new ideas, new jokes—something new replaces what we thought was irreplaceable. This is God's design.

In a five-year span, my husband and I lost three of our parents. My dad and both of my husband's parents have now gone on to their heavenly home. There was a time when I couldn't imagine living without a parent. You might have felt the same way before you lost your parents. Perhaps, like me, you have woken up many mornings thinking you need to call Mom or Dad, but Mom or Dad isn't there anymore. That's when you realize his or her turn is over. Now it's your turn. Nothing more clearly defines a turn than for someone to be gone completely.

Yes, "to everything there is a season." We will each take our turn at being a child, a teenager, a mom or dad, and then a grandparent. It's the circle of life that is so beautifully displayed in the movie and play *The Lion King*. We took our grandkids to the musical production on Broadway. It made me want to hold one of them up in the air and shout for joy. Sadly, most of mine outweigh me now, making that impossible, but you get the point. Handing down the legacy of your family to the next generation is one of life's most glorious callings.

Consider again the words of the song. Right after "To everything there is a season" comes this phrase: "and a time to every purpose under heaven." Finding our purpose. "Whoa! That's heavy," as we used to say

in the '60s. For many, reaching this stage in life brings confusion and uncertainty about their purpose. Many have invested so much in their old lives that a new one feels not only unfamiliar but also unwanted. To add to the confusion, words like *baby wipe warmers* make you wonder how you ever raised your own kids.

My grandpa loved puzzles. I can still see him sitting in front of a one-thousand-piece puzzle, studying the front of the box, memorizing



It's your turn to be the wise one; the experienced one; the tried, true, and tested one. what the puzzle should look like when he finished it. He told me the secret to putting together a puzzle is to find the corners first, then work on the straight edges. Once the corners were in place and the borders secure, I could start on the inside. He didn't know it, or maybe he did, but he was teaching me about life. I was learn-

ing that in order for me to put the pieces of my life together, I had to first find my corners. I had to find what mattered the most to me and lock those things in. Then I had to build from those foundations and secure the boundaries I needed that would frame up my life. That's called defining your purpose.

Your life is like a one-million-piece puzzle. The good—no, great—news about this stage of life is that your corners are probably pretty secure. You've raised your family, worked forever, and established yourself in your church and community. Gone are the days of wondering what you'll be when you grow up or how you'll handle the death of a loved one or the loss of a job or the betrayal of a friend. Chances are you've experienced similar scenarios in life and conquered them. But there are still a few pieces missing from your puzzle. Your puzzle needs your



grandparenting years to make it complete. Like that missing piece you find under the couch, your grandparenting years are the pieces your life puzzle has been waiting for. And trust me—this part of the puzzle is the fun part. With all your boundaries firmly in place, you can now put that last piece in and glue it together.

Oh, I'm not saying there won't be surprises and disappointments. Life doesn't stop being real when you become a grandparent. You are just better equipped than you were when you became a parent. You've lived a few years and seen a few things.

Many years ago I read an essay about the end of our lives and how great it is that our grandchildren see only the end and not the beginning. I've thought of that many times as I watched my parents in their grandparenting and great-grandparenting roles. I understand the premise, for sure, and know there are things we all did in our youth that we wish we hadn't, but still, it would have been fun for my children to see my parents when they were young and vibrant. John Luke would have played racquetball with my dad, and the girls would have bowled or played tennis with my mom. That would have been fun. But as much as I love fun, life isn't all about the fun things. It's about the fruitful things—the things that are intangible.

It's funny how, by definition, intangible things are things we cannot hold or grasp yet it's the intangibles we hold on to with the firmest grip. When it was time for my parents to stop playing racquetball and hang out in the bowling alley, they never stopped the most important things in life, such as being kind, loving unconditionally, and whispering prayers of hope, peace, and joy.

In your grandparenting role, you are no less important than you have been at any time in your life. It's just a new time. It's time to look

at what you've accomplished and see what your next step is. It's your turn to be the wise one; the experienced one; the tried, true, and tested one; and the one who can pass that wisdom, experience, and tested-ness (okay, maybe not a real word, but you get it) on to the next generation. Our future generations depend on you and me! There's much to teach them. After all, without us, who would show them how to play marbles, belt out "Hey Jude," and tell a Laffy Taffy joke?

There is a time for everything,

and a season for every activity under the heavens:

a time to be born and a time to die,

a time to plant and a time to uproot,

a time to kill and a time to heal,

a time to tear down and a time to build,

a time to weep and a time to laugh,

a time to mourn and a time to dance,

a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,

a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

a time to search and a time to give up,

a time to keep and a time to throw away,

a time to tear and a time to mend,

a time to be silent and a time to speak,

a time to love and a time to hate,

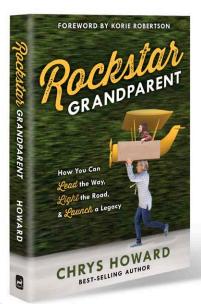
a time for war and a time for peace.

-ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8, NIV



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