Ministering as a grandmother

Grandmothers tend to live longer than grandfathers, and therefore have a greater opportunity to influence the next generation - gathering and imparting the treasure of wisdom and knowledge. The Apostle Paul described this process when he noted that Timothy's sincere faith was a spiritual heritage cherished across three generations: *I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois ....* (II Timothy 1:5). Old age and grey hair are not valued in our culture, but the mature years provide unique opportunities to impart the wisdom gained by a long-term perspective:



Even when I am old and grey,
do not forsake me, O God,
till I declare your power to the next generation,
your might to all who are to come. (Psalm 71:18).

According to Titus 2:3-4, older women are called to help younger women cope with the challenges that face all marriages and families:

... teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands so that no one will malign the word of God.

Like the widows commended by Paul, each grandmother can excel as she:

... has been faithful to her husband, and is well-known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds. (I Timothy 5:9-10).

As grandmothers serve well, their example can be treasured by the generations to come: *the memory of the righteous will be a blessing....* (Proverbs 17:7).





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Blessing the hands of women

A message encouraging wives, mothers and grandmothers

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I learned more about Christianity from my mother than from all the theologians in England. - Attributed to John Wesley (1707-1791)

Blessings on the hand of women!
Angels guard its strength and grace,
In the palace, cottage, hovel,
Oh, no matter where the place;
Would that never storms assailed it,
Rainbows ever gently curled;
For the hand that rocks the cradle
Is the hand that rules the world.

- William Ross Wallace (1819-1881)

We give thanks for women who have served God faithfully in countless expressions of hospitality and service - and especially for those who have ministered as wives, mothers and grandmothers. Though not everyone marries or has children or grandchildren, we can understand the Lord's plan for marriage, parenthood and grand-parenting since these ministries are central to the family (the basic unit of society). So we can apply our knowledge of the purpose of these ministries in our own situation or use that awareness to encourage and pray for others - especially in the fight against influences that threaten to undermine the family.

The key to marriage, parenting and grand-parenting is for women and men to decide to love. Our relating is to be subject to deliberate choice:

- In **marrying**, women should decide *to love their husbands* (Titus 2:4), and men should *love their wives* (Ephesians 5:28).
- As **parents**, women should *love... their children* (Titus 2:4), and men should train children *in the instruction of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4).
- In **grand-parenting** the choice is for men and women to ensure that *future generations will be told about the Lord* (Psalm 22:30).

Ministering as a wife

Wives and husbands have the privilege to testify to the relationship between Jesus and the Church. Our different roles can provide a prophetic testimony when patterned on the union of Christ and his Bride:

> *"... a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church.* (Ephesians 5:31-32).

Wives and husbands can reflect the union of Jesus and the Church when men lead lovingly (as Christ relates to his Bride) and as women respond lovingly (as to Christ our Husband). This ideal is shown by marriages in biblical times in which wives provide an example to married women today:

Sarah trusted **Abraham**, and respected him as her husband (I Peter 3:6);
Rebekah married **Isaac** having neither seen him before (Genesis 24);
Abigail gave generous gifts to **David** and became his wife (I Samuel 25);
Ruth - a woman of noble character - gained the favour of **Boaz** (Ruth 3:11);
Priscilla served with her husband **Aquila** - assisting the Apostle Paul and hosting fellowship meetings in their home (Acts 18; I Corinthians 16:19).

For three millennia women have learned about the ideals of the **Wife of noble character** described in Proverbs 31:10-31 (a poem with verses that start with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet - to assist memorisation):

> א *A wife of noble character who can find?*
> *She is worth far more than rubies.*
>
> ב *Her husband has full confidence in her*
> *and lacks nothing of value.*
>
> ג *She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life ....*

Wives can do their part, even if married to unbelieving or immature men:

> *Wives in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past used to make themselves beautiful.* (I Peter 3:1-5).

Ministering as a mother

While mothers and fathers have the opportunity jointly to train and discipline their children, youngsters are especially drawn to their mothers (rather than fathers) particularly when the children are upset or hurt. In this way mothers have a special opportunity to influence young children. One way they can enrich the thinking of their offspring is by imparting respect and honour for God, and for their father. A woman who ridicules her husband or is disrespectful to him is teaching the children to ridicule and disrespect their earthly father, and God as heavenly father. Rather, the challenge is for mothers to guide and train children in the right way:

The mother of a daughter can develop special closeness especially via shared natural inclination towards handicrafts and home-based artistry. While fathers and sons have tended towards rough activities (such as farming, hunting and mechanics) mothers and daughters traditionally incline towards the home-based arts (that are now regrettably neglected). Any daughter would be blessed to have a mother such as the lady in Proverbs 31 who excels in homemaking and home-based wealth creation - using wool and flax, providing food for her family, buying land, planting a vineyard, spinning, helping the poor, quilting, making and selling garments and faithfully instructing others.

A great example of the bond between women is in the story of **Naomi** and **Ruth**. Here Naomi taught her widowed daughter-in-law how to provide for their needs and helped her find a husband (Ruth 3). Women may also follow the example of **Sarah** as they teach "**her daughters**" - as she is known as the spiritual mother of all noble-hearted women: *you are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear* (I Peter 3:6).

The mother of a son can follow these examples, as described in Scripture:
Hannah prayed for a son (**Samuel**) and gave him to God (I Samuel 1:11);
Bathsheba sought David's favour for her son **Solomon** (I Kings 1:15-21);
Eunice encouraged her son **Timothy** to hold to the faith (II Timothy 1:5).

The un-named **Queen Mother** (of Proverbs 31:1-9) taught her son **King Lemuel** to avoid sexual sin and drunkenness, lest he *forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights*. She taught him to *speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves ....* In such ways mothers today can help train their sons in wise conduct and leadership.