



Living with Purpose, Resolve, and a Smile - 10 Gifts from Grandma

My grandmother lived every day with purpose, resolve, and a smile. Grandma lived with our family for nearly 12 years. She was a worn-out care-giver for Grandpa. She needed help. At the time, Mom, their only child, was still working full time. I was home raising a 5 year-old with one on the way. With the blessing of my husband, Marty, my mother helped us find a home that would meet the needs of our growing family plus my grandparents. It was less than a mile from my parents so they could be involved in her parent's care.

- LESSON: Caregiving is a team effort. No matter where your loved one's live, be involved!

Because she lived with us, I was blessed to observe, first-hand, her strengths and struggles. She gave us many gifts, of which I will share 10:

1. **The gift of beauty.** Dress for your man. She seldom left her bedroom each morning without being fully dressed and make-up on. She thought it a sad thing to see women who "let themselves go" after they marry. Even 8 years after Grandpa died, she still dressed for her man.
2. **The gift of play.** Take time to play & recreate. She & Grandpa spent 17 years as winter Texans in their early retirement years. And together they watched the Kansas City Royals on television. Even after Grandpa's death, Grandma continues to watch her Royals.
 - a. I knew she was sick when she wanted to go the ER during the middle of a Royals game
 - b. Even in the hospital: Don't bother her when the Royals are on!

- c. She loved watching her grandson play baseball through the years. She was his biggest fan!
 - i. Some of these boys he's played with for years and they remember Grandma coming to his games. Last weekend, before one of their games, one of the boys on his summer team gave a speech to the team about Grandma and passed out stickers that said, "4GG" on them. They placed them on their batting helmets in honor of Grandma.
3. **The gift of touch.** Sometimes the elderly go days without human touch. Don't let that happen! Whether it's lathering them in lotion, holding their hand, giving them a back rub, or sharing a hug, give the gift of touch. Grandma loved her hugs!
 - a. We have two little boys next door who just moved. Every time they saw Grandma they would run to her and give her a hug.
 - b. One of Mom & Dad's fondest memories happened here in this church 3 Sundays ago. It was Grandma's 1st Sunday back to church after her 21-day hospital visit. People were lined up to give Grandma hugs. She beamed and lived on that for days as she shared how special that was.
4. **The gift of a hobby.**
 - a. Oil painting – she made these in her earlier retirement years
 - b. Quilts – goal was to make each of her great grand-kids a quilt. My 10-year-old Abby has been wrapping herself up in her quilt the past two weeks to bring comfort as Grandma was passing.
 - c. Puzzles. This was something she shared with her great-granddaughter, Hannah.
5. **The gift of a smile!** Grandma lived with a contagious smile. Did you ever notice her golden tooth? That was Grandpa's favorite! Many years ago the dentist wanted to put another covering on that tooth, and Grandpa refused. He loved the golden tooth on Grandma!
6. **The gift of pets.** Pets bring responsibility and a reason to get up in the morning. Pets bring companionship and joy. Our dog still looks for Grandma...
7. **The gift of daily purpose.** Sometimes our first instinct is to do everything for the elderly. I learned from Grandma that she finds joy and purpose in helping out and using her homemaker skills. She would fold our laundry, clean the dishes, bake bread, and at Christmas time, make her Peppernuts for the neighbors and church friends.
8. **The gift of a TIME & Presence** (visitation).
 - a. Grandma so enjoyed the visits from people at church. Stan & Bill. You'll never know the joy your visits and prayers brought Grandma through the years. Thank you!

- b. When Grandpa was alive & not able to get out, one year a group of you from her church came caroling to my grandparents. Touched them so deeply. Precious memory!
 - c. Grandma enjoyed the visits from neighborhood kids. They would always acknowledge her and say, “Hi Grandma! How are you today?”
 - d. Grandma enjoyed every chance she could get out and visit others. She would make her bread and go visit June & Woody. Every week I would take Grandma over to our friend, Margaret’s house. My girls, Margaret, Grandma and I would play games, share stories, and have pampering days...She would have done it more if she drove herself, so I would have to add the GIFT OF TRANSPORTATION to my 10. Take the opportunity to bless someone who is not driving anymore with the gift of transportation.
9. **The gift of prayer.** At home we have a monitor where we can hear Grandma if she needs something. On several occasions I would hear her prayers as she went to bed. She was a prayer-warrior. She prayed fervently for her family and some relationships that needed God’s touch. She prayed for the salvation of each family member. She prayed specifically for her church, pastor, SS teacher, this country, our military, and the many special prayer requests that came through. She was a prayer-warrior.
- a. Betty Clevenger – thank you for being faithful at calling Grandma with prayer requests from the church. It made her feel included in the goings on at church and to have a time to connect with you meant a great deal to Grandma.
10. **The gift of generosity.** Grandma & Grandpa were givers of their time, talents, and treasures throughout the years. I continue to hear stories of their generosity to this day. They never wanted others to know – they just quietly gave. As God blessed them, they blessed others.

Over the past 12 years with Grandma & Grandpa, I have learned a lot about aging and the social, spiritual, and significance needs of the elderly. This has been the inspiration behind Koinonia Senior Care, a ministry that encourages families, churches, and the Christian community to be involved in the lives of the elderly God puts in their path. Whether a caregiver needs respite, an elderly person needs transportation, or a lonely widow needs fellowship, we are each called to serve and honor our elders in our family, our church, and our neighborhoods. Grandma believed in this ministry and supported us as we got it up and going. She has been my biggest fan and we dedicate this ministry to her. THANK YOU, GRANDMA, FOR THESE 10 GIFTS!