



# *Theirlooms*

Passing Faith Stories  
to Your Grandchildren

— Tina Houser —



# *Heirlooms*

By Tina Houser

Warner Press, Inc.

Warner Press and “Warner Press” logo are trademarks of Warner Press, Inc.

*Heirlooms*

*Passing Faith Stories to Your Grandchildren*

Written by Tina Houser

Copyright ©2019 Warner Press, Inc.

All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (MSG) are taken from *THE MESSAGE*, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Scriptures marked (NASB) are taken from the New American Standard Bible® Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. [www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations marked (NIRV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader’s Version®, NIRV® Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scriptures marked (NLT) are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Requests for information should be sent to:

Warner Press Inc  
2902 Enterprise Dr  
P.O. Box 2499  
Anderson, IN 46013

[www.warnerpress.org](http://www.warnerpress.org)

Editor: Karen Rhodes

Cover Designer: Curtis Corzine

Layout: Katie Miller

ISBN: 9781684341184

Printed in the USA

# *Table of Contents*

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
A Word from Two Friends .....	6
Passing on Heirlooms .....	7
The Impact of Grandparents .....	23
Special Grandparent Words .....	29
Let the Scriptures Speak .....	43
Scriptures to Memorize .....	55
<b>Story Starters</b> .....	<b>57</b>
A Fascinating Object .....	58
A Photograph .....	60
A Phrase .....	63
Clothing .....	65
Furniture .....	67
A Shared Experience .....	70
A Significant Place .....	72
Snack .....	74
A Special Bible .....	77
An Heirloom .....	82
Hobby .....	84
Music .....	87
Note or Letter .....	90
Repeated Responses .....	93
Scars .....	95
Science Experiment .....	97
Serving .....	99
Jewelry .....	102
<b>Just for Fun Activities</b> .....	<b>105</b>

12 Socks of Christmas.....	106
Grocery Race.....	108
Magic Hat.....	110
Mystery Lunch.....	111
Pencils of Encouragement.....	112
Repose Infant Photos.....	114
Road Trip Scavenger Hunt.....	116
Flat Jesus.....	117
Countdown.....	119
Fondue.....	123

# Introduction

*Hi,*

*I'm Silly Grandma, and in some adult circles I'm also known as Tina Houser. Silly Grandma is an endearing, cherished title I carry because it was chosen for me by my grand-twins, Bowen and Kendall. You'll hear about them throughout this book, and also about Lucy who came along seven years after the twins. To be called "Silly" is by no means an insult. To a child, the word "silly" always means fun, and I hope that my grandkids always find me to be a fun part of their lives.*

*I really had no idea what grandparents were supposed to do when the twins entered the world. As I grew into the role, I watched what other grandparents were doing. One thing I noticed was that they didn't realize the spiritual impact they could have on their grandchildren. This book is my attempt at helping you, as a grandparent, acknowledge the potential that lies in your relationship with your grandchildren, and give ideas on how you can make that happen. Your faith story is the best heirloom you could leave them!*

Psalm 71:18 (ESV)

*So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.*

*In His Incredible Joy,*

*Silly Grandma*

# *A Word from Two Friends*

Upon hearing that I was writing this book, many friends encouraged me to move forward.

*“I’m really excited that you’re writing a book on grandparenting and spiritual conversations. The most influential persons in my faith life were my “Gram” and later my other grandma. They asked the right questions and encouraged me to keep a perspective that allowed me to see God at work in my life and in the world around me. My grandma was the one who threw the party for me when I asked Jesus into my heart at the age of nine. I didn’t know—really know—it was a big deal. She made sure I knew it was something to celebrate!*

*Here’s an idea: Throw a party for your grandchildren when they make a decision for Christ or are baptized. I think more grandparents need to know what an important investment they can make in their grandchildren’s lives!*  
—Lindsey Eklund

*I always emphasize my grandmother’s impact on my spiritual life. My first memory of God and the Bible was when I sat with her on her porch. She told me that God had seen me in my mother’s womb. Even before I started a relationship with Jesus, that thought became a foundational part of my life. When I learned that my mom and dad had me young, that people suggested she abort me, I did not doubt that even though I wasn’t part of my parents’ plan, I was part of God’s plan. My grandmother is so special to me. To this day I go to her when I need wisdom, encouragement, and a good spiritual talk. —Gabriela Martinez*

# Passing on Heirlooms

Before our grandkids came along, hearing grandparents go on...and on...and on...about their grandkids was a total bore and, truthfully, it seemed like unnecessary conversation to me, torture I didn't deserve. Although I don't think I ever physically did it, inwardly I was doing a major eye-roll. Everything changes, though, when you actually get to don the title of grandparent. It's an unexpected and quite rewarding change of perspective. Now, I can proudly say that I qualify to be the president of the Obnoxious Grandparents Club, if there is such a thing.

Very close to our home, when we lived in Woodstock, Georgia, was a large Baptist church with an amazing playground facility that was open to the public. It was such an incredible playground that when I did my initial online search for "best free things to do with kids in Woodstock," the first thing listed was Kidzstock at First Baptist Church. Consequently, we frequented this park often with our grand-twins.

*Normally, Kendall was the more outgoing, but on this particular day, Bowen was feeling his four-year-old confidence. My husband and I were watching them play as a team, when we noticed Bowen make a beeline toward a man we did not know. Kendall was right on his heels. Bowen stopped in front of the man, looked straight up into his face, and said, "Hi, my name Bowen. B-O-W-E-N. I'm a twin. This my sister." Then, he took off. Kendall, who had been standing right behind her brother, listening to what he said, stepped into the vacant place in front of the man, looked up at him, and then took off after her brother. Bowen then went to a woman we did not know. He stopped in front of her and said, "Hi, my name Bowen. B-O-W-E-N. I'm a twin. This my sister." When he was finished, he took off again. Kendall stepped up to the plate, looked at the woman, and again she raced after her brother without saying a word. In the next few minutes, Bowen did this exact thing three more times with his sister quietly following him. At the fifth person, Bowen recited his spiel just as he had been doing. This time, though, Kendall mustered the courage to say something. She said, "Hi, my name Kendall." Then very, very slowly she went on, "K-E-N..." followed by a long pause. When she continued, she abruptly said, "My name is longer dan his" and took off.*



We all have a name. Your name is important to God, and it's important to me. When I meet you, I have a great desire to know your name. That's also a key message you want to get across to your grandchildren. God knows your grandchild's name and that child is important to Him, no matter how young or old, no matter how intellectually accelerated or developmentally challenged they are, no matter how coordinated or downright clumsy they are.

Although the story I told you may sound a little silly, please understand that stories are important—incredibly important. Since the beginning of time, man has relied on stories to communicate history of the culture and of the family. Let's talk about stories for a few minutes.

If I had told you the story I started this segment with by saying, "There was a boy and a girl," it wouldn't have been nearly as personal as me telling you their names and the relationship they have to me. Speaking someone's name makes the conversation much more personal. So, as you tell stories, include the names of the people involved to make it much more intimate and meaningful. And, say the name of your grandchild often and with tenderness.

Through stories, you find out something about storytellers—the things that are important to them, the things that frustrate them, the hilarious things they've been involved in, the places they've been, the unique experiences they've had, the embarrassing moments they've endured, and many other interesting one-of-a-kind encounters that make up the individuals they are today.

Stories get shared over and over again—sometimes to the point of being a little obnoxious. We occasionally and jokingly say at our house that our stories should be numbered. That way, we could avoid telling the entire thing, and instead simply shout out a number: "That reminds me of #39! Hahaha!" Followed by: "Oh yeah, I remember that!" Some stories just beg to be told repeatedly. They seem to connect easily to present things that are happening and may even serve as a reminder or caution when making decisions.

Good stories get shared time after time. If you're not sure about that, think about your favorite movie. How many times have you watched it? Three? Twenty-one? Sixty plus (as one of my friends admitted)? And why

is that? It's because it has a great storyline. Or maybe because you can connect with what's going on. Or because it prompts you to take action. The story beckons you to watch again.

Stories are about unique things that have happened to you; they're not usually about your day-to-day routine and chores. Just think about a story you would be eager to share with someone else. It wouldn't be about your outing to the grocery store and what you found on each aisle that was on your list. That's too ordinary to bother sharing the details.

Through  
stories,  
you find out  
something  
about  
storytellers...



Some stories are told just one more time for a good laugh. Others are told when you're remembering a certain person and how she or he influenced your life. Some are told as a matter of cementing the history and facts into the next generation. And, some are told to make a point—as an object lesson or illustration.

*Every time there was a question about our honesty or integrity, my dad would somehow add in his personal experience of working at the corner store. When he was a young teenager, small stores were dotted throughout the neighborhoods. Many of the items you could purchase were “by the pound” and could be scooped out of large barrels—things like candy, sugar, flour, and nuts. On a regular basis, the contents of each barrel needed to be rotated and restocked. That was my dad’s job—to keep the barrels full and fresh. His boss had a rule about working with the barrels. You had to whistle while you worked. As my dad poured more nuts into the barrel and shoveled them around, he’d hear his boss shout out, “Jim, I don’t hear you whistling!” Immediately, my father would pucker his lips and blow out a tune. We always asked Dad why he had to whistle, to which he’d respond and finish the pointed story, “If I was whistling, then my boss knew I wasn’t eating any of the candy or nuts!” The boss used this simple rule to keep my dad’s integrity and honesty intact. The telling was not lost on us as we got the point of the story.*

In my family there are stories of burning down bushes, falling into sinkholes, karate chopping warm butter, and roller skating up concrete steps. Your family has stories also, ones that you listen to, smile about, and pass on to the next generation.

People are constantly searching for their stories—their history. That’s why sites like 23andme.com and ancestrydna.com are so popular and the show *Who Do You Think You Are?* draws so much interest. We have a great curiosity about where we came from and what our family story consists of. Yes, stories are important.

In Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, the writer says that we look back at the stories of Moses to “remember” (Malachi 4:4). Why do we tell stories? We tell them to remember. The New Testament refers to stories in the Old Testament to remind people to remember God’s faithfulness. I’ve been involved in children’s ministry for four decades, because I want kids to remember how the people of the Bible served the One True God, and despite their human failings, God was always faithful. We learn about people of faith so we can remember how God worked. Kids need to hear about God’s faithfulness in the lives of their grandparents, so they can remember in their own perplexing and decision-making times. The challenge for you is to learn lots of ways to start faith conversations with your grandchildren and take advantage of those moments when you can pass on your stories of faith. It’s a huge opportunity and responsibility to pass on your faith story. Grandparents, your stories are important!

You’re reading this book today because you want your grandchildren, when they are contemplating a decision, to remember YOUR story of how God was faithful in your life. You want them to remember the gospel—how God, through His Son Jesus, rescued you from being separated forever from Him, and now walks with you intimately every day. God’s story is NOT finished. Each of us continues to write it each day, even when we are old and grey.

Isaiah 46:4 (NLT)

*I will be your God throughout your lifetime—  
until your hair is white with age.*

*I made you, and I will care for you.*

*I will carry you along and save you.*

### **Why do stories matter so much?**

You can’t pinpoint why stories matter so much, because it’s for an array of reasons. Let me present you with some that really hit home to me. Absorb these few suggestions and add your own. But, let each story leave

its mark on you so you will grow in your desire to leave your faith story as a precious heirloom for those who come after you, especially your grandchildren.

Stories matter because they **draw out emotions**. Our hearts break for what someone went through. We laugh at an absurd decision and the consequences. We shake our heads in disgust. We feel a surge of envy or jealousy. We wish we could have been an eyewitness. Stories break through our outer crust and touch our emotions.

When you share a story and notice tears in the eyes of the hearers, you know you have reached their emotions. But it doesn't have to go that far. The raised or furled eyebrow, the hint of a smile, or an all-out belly laugh are evidence that emotions are being drawn out.

When the hearer of your story relates on an emotional level, he has made a deeper connection with what you are saying. You want your grandchildren to reach this emotional point. Your story will never be boring if they do. Emotions are one of the great creations of God that fill each of us with evidence of life—love, laughter, grief—that whole fabulous roller coaster.

Stories matter because **we relate to stories**. They provide us with common ground. Personal stories are full of, “Oh, I’ve been there” moments, “I’ve done that” reactions, and “I’m not the only one who ever thought about that” realizations. They connect us. Stories take people from thinking they have nothing in common to realizing they have plenty to share. Oh my! That’s what you want to achieve with your grandchildren. You yearn for common ground that will connect you to this person two generations removed, who lives in a culture that you struggle to understand. Common ground seems so distant sometimes, but your stories can bridge the gap that feels extremely wide.

When you feel at a loss to understand the things your grandchildren are talking about, especially as their culture relates to technology, intentionally spend time learning (video games, texting, video chat, emojis, shows they watch, etc.). Challenge yourself, and then commit to following through on learning something new that will help you communicate with your grandchildren. Enjoy letting them introduce those things to you, praise them for their incredible knowledge and flexibility, and then do your best to integrate what you have learned into your daily living.

Your stories of the past are invaluable, but your ability to be up-to-date (at least somewhat) and engaged in the present world carries a clear message also. You don't have to be the "hip" grandparent, but just move into the present century. Enter their world without being obnoxious about it.



Stories take people from thinking they have nothing in common to realizing they have plenty to share.

Stories matter because they **help answer questions**. When did that happen? Why did they move? Where were you when that took place? How old were they? Is that why...? How did you react? How did you get through that? What happened next?

*Just last night we gathered around the dinner table with our son and his family (three grandchildren). The conversation somehow led to a string of stories that had to do with the experimental radiation treatment I went through 35 years ago at Stanford University. After I explained the most basic details of the main story, both Bowen and Kendall burst forth with questions.*

*"How old was Daddy when that happened?" (2½ years old) "Why did they put tattoos on you?" (My mother used a ruler and marker to connect the tattoo dots each morning. That told the doctors where to place the blocks so they knew where to put the radiation.) "How long did it take?" (I went every day, Monday through Friday, for six weeks. It was a couple of hours each day.)*

*I had told them that I'd lost 27 pounds in that six weeks, so one of the questions they asked was, "Did you throw up all the time?" Yes, I did. In fact, one morning I was so sick I didn't think I could make it the half-mile from our apartment to the hospital without throwing up. So, I gave your daddy a big pot out of the kitchen cabinet to carry with him. We got on the elevator, along with a very well-dressed woman. She looked down at your daddy with a smile and said, "Are you playing with the kettle?"*

*Your daddy very matter-of-factly answered, "No. This is in case my mommy barfs." Taken aback by his answer, the lady immediately started staring at the elevator number panel. The grandkids loved that part of the story, and it answered their question. The entire experience of having total lymphoid*

irradiation was filled with God's intervention to provide for us. Through the stories, many of their questions got answered.

Stories matter because they **explain why a person is who he is**. Stories of what it was like growing up, or stories that describe a terrifying experience often help you understand "why" a person acts the way she does or "why" he has a unique perspective on one particular thing. *When our son was about eight, we regularly attended a home life group. The people who hosted the group had rescued a Doberman pincher from an abusive situation. The children of all the adults in the group played while we talked, and Roxie (the dog) would usually play along with them. For some reason, one night, Roxie sprang up and chomped her teeth around our son's mouth and chin, ripping a long slash in his face.* When we told that story to the grandkids, they put two and two together and understood why, even though their daddy loves big dogs, he absolutely detests Dobermans. The story explained why he is who he is.

Another story that helps explain why someone is who he is involves my father-in-law. *He was an unexpected addition to his family, which already consisted of seven children. Apparently, it was too much for his father, so he walked out on the family, leaving a single mom to raise eight kids. My father-in-law never knew his father, and it affected his self-image greatly. It was obvious that he carried the blame for their family falling apart, even though he had nothing to do with being born.* Knowing that part of his story helps explain some of Great-Grandpa's actions and attitudes.

Stories matter because **children LOVE stories!** We all love stories! When you have dinner with someone, sharing amazing stories makes for a wonderful evening. So, play into the natural love of stories and tell your grandkids the true story of how God took your old sinful self and made you a new creation. Wow them with stories of God's faithfulness in your life.

Your grandchildren want to hear your story. They are fascinated to hear how God has worked or is working in the life of someone they know and love. It's not always the grandparents who do the initiating, though, in order to share their story. My grandkids are constantly asking my husband and me to tell them a story. We don't usually have to talk them into it. When they were little, we used the time in the car to tell stories. That has now become the natural time to request a story. We share stories of

how times were different, and we share stories of how God has made us different because of His grace shown through His Son, Jesus.

The Bible points out examples of the “old people”—the grandparents. Even if they weren’t blood relation, they interacted as grandparents and grandchildren: Barnabas took Mark under his wing, Moses taught Joshua, Elizabeth helped Mary. In these three examples, the person in the grandparent role took the initiative to pour into these younger people. But, it’s not just the desire of the grandparents that provides the opportunity to share a story. There are also biblical examples where the grandchildren asked for the stories to be passed on. They wanted to be recipients of this faith...of this blessing...of this life in Christ. Elisha (the one in the grandchild role) asked for a double portion from Elijah. Ruth (the one in the grandchild role) said to Naomi, “Where you go I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16, NIV). Recognize that your grandchildren really do want to know your story. We all have the desire to be part of a good story, and that includes your grandchildren.

Faith stories matter because **they indicate that God did not stop moving** in the lives of His people after the “Amen” of Revelation 22:21. You don’t want to only recall from decades past, but you want to share faith stories from this past week. Be excited about what God is doing today. Understanding this will help kids grasp that we serve a real God.



Faith stories  
matter because  
they indicate  
that God did  
not stop  
moving in  
the lives of  
His people...

*On one occasion my husband was unable to accompany me on a speaking engagement, one where I had to change planes at the Minneapolis airport. It’s huge! That meant I would have to carry my computer bag and banner, along with my travel purse, through the airport. At this point in my life, walking any distance was difficult, but carrying things was super painful. Before I left home, I asked my grandkids to pray with me about this potentially difficult situation, which they gladly did.*

*The plane landed in Minneapolis and I felt all my muscles tense as I prepared to leave the*

*plane and make the trek to the other end of the airport for my connecting flight. As I walked through the waiting area, I looked up to see a pink transport cart. A little woman with white hair was the driver. She motioned to me and sweetly said, "Would you like a ride?" I hadn't reserved a ride. She didn't know who I was. But, out of this crowd of people, she made eye contact with me, like I was the only person de-boarding. I recognized that God was providing my help, and I whispered as I took steps toward the pink cart, "Thank You, Jesus." This wasn't just a regular black, seats-torn, transport cart. This one was pink, bedazzled with sparkles, and driven by a little lady who looked like the fairy godmother from Cinderella. As the cart moved its way down the corridors, I looked from side to side and people were smiling at the cart. I overheard one little girl say, "Oh Daddy, look. It's a princess." (I was real tempted to do a parade wave.) Several more times, I heard gasps from little girls and similar exclamations. Not only had God provided me a way to get through the airport without the pain of lugging all my stuff, but He created a special memory by making me feel like a princess.*

*I couldn't wait to get home to share with my grandchildren, especially Kendall who was really into the Disney princesses at the time, the way God answered our prayer. I got to share how God intersected my life that very week. It wasn't something I remembered from long ago, but it was God walking with me right now. These may be the most important stories to share with your grandchildren, so they know the God you speak of is the God of NOW.*

## **Your Spiritual Story**

In order for you to be able to tell your spiritual story, you have to know what it is. More than likely, you have never intentionally spent time thinking about all the different pieces that have impacted your story—how you came to invite God to lead your life and how God has worked in your life on a daily basis. Being intentional is extremely important. You have to think about it, and I mean more than a minute or two. Otherwise, the opportunities to share with your grandchildren will come and go...and it won't happen. You'll be thumping yourself in the forehead afterwards when you realize the door was open and you didn't take advantage of walking through it with your grandchildren. It wasn't because you were scared. It wasn't because you doubted that they would be interested. It was because you just hadn't thought it through. Without being intentional, the opportunities will go unnoticed.



Sharing your spiritual story is not just one sit-down-let's-talk time. The idea is not to bombard your grandchildren with your life story, from birth to present. It's about breaking it down so that each little piece packs a punch. Each little piece turns their eyes to Jesus, and they get one more glimpse of how their life could be different by totally submitting to Him. Every single day...or at least every moment you spend time with your grandchildren...is an opportunity to give them a little bit more of your story.

Your spiritual story is made up of many chapters, and each one can be told at a different time and in different ways. Don't feel rushed to cram it all in, but don't neglect it either. Work on creating a mindset that your goal for each time you spend with one grandchild, or all of them together, will be to intentionally point them to Jesus by sharing at least a tidbit of your spiritual story.

Your salvation story is a big important chapter and should be one that is thought through, so you can tell it the best way possible. How did God take you from a place of disobedience to a place where you recognized that He loved you so much He offered His Son Jesus as the way to bring you back to Him? How did that happen? What did it look like in your life? Granted, you could probably do a day-long seminar on the subject, but I'm afraid the attention span of your grandchild isn't sufficient for that (no matter how much you love each other).

Condensing it without leaving out the key components is a challenge. So, wrap your head around this idea: If you and your grandchild stepped inside an elevator and you pushed the button for the twelfth floor—you had a 12-story ride on the elevator together—would you be able to tell your grandchild about your salvation during that ride? What would you say? What would you include? This is your big opportunity. Make sure you're prepared and intentional about it! You don't want to crash and burn because you didn't feel it was important enough for some preparation.

It's critical for your grandkids to understand that admitting your sin, accepting Jesus as your Savior, and making Him the daily Lord of your life is a heart issue, a surrender, a lifestyle, a mindset, and a journey that happens 24/7/365. They need to know that you are involved in this continual journey with the Lord. It's not a one-time event. It's not some-

thing you have checked off your bucket list. It's a to-death-and-beyond relationship.

And if you have a questioning grandchild who has an argumentative nature, your faith story is a way to settle that spirit within him or her because it happened to you. It's not someone else's recollections you're imparting. They can't argue with what you experienced—the change you underwent because you accepted God's gift of salvation. Your grandchildren may want to argue with you about theology, what a denomination observes, or how a Greek word is translated, but they can't argue with you about what has happened—who you used to be and who you are now because of Christ.

If you're going to be intentional, that means you need to prepare. Here's a suggestion that's helped me lead many others through this process. You're going to list the events that were spiritual markers for you.

So, get yourself a big pad of sticky-back notes. On separate notes, write each time God obviously rocked your world. Include times when you were sure that God stepped in and maybe went so far as to change your life course. Do this randomly, and don't attempt to put the sticky notes in any order at this point. As you complete each one, stick it to a blank wall, the side of the refrigerator, a piece of poster board...you get the idea.



Doesn't it always happen that when you want to recall something, it seems to hide in your brain where you can't grab it? These prompting questions may help bring specific spiritual memories to the top and out of hiding. So, start talking to yourself and ask...

- How would my life have been different if I had not received Jesus as my Savior?
- Apart from my actual salvation experience, at what moment did I feel closest to God?
- Who is my favorite faithful person in the Bible? Why? This reveals who you connect with most easily and tells something about your own story. *I love the story of Caleb! He and Joshua were the only two who courageously spied out the Promised Land and excitedly recommended the Israelites move in to the land God wanted to give them. The other 10 spies were frightened by the huge people—giants—in the land. Consequently, the Israelites wandered around the desert for 40 more years. That entire time, Caleb prepared himself to take on the giants. Can't you just imagine this 80-year-old man doing push-ups and lifting weights to be ready for battle? With each curl, I can imagine Caleb muttering to himself, "I'm gonna get me some giants. Bring 'em on. You're going down, giants." When the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land, and Joshua was now in charge, Joshua gave Caleb first choice of what part of the land he wanted. Caleb could've chosen the lush lands by the rivers that would've made life easier, but no-o-o-o. He chose the land of the giants! I want to be like Caleb...prepared for the big challenges...not intimidated to stare down the giants and dare them to come against God Almighty who lives within me...not afraid of risks...placing my hope in God. I want my grandchildren to see very clearly that I possess qualities like Caleb.*
- When you had a crisis—something that turned your world upside down—when did your heart cry, “Help!”? When have you cried out for help? *There was a time when the doctors gave me no hope to walk again. I was confined to a wheelchair, fighting an out-of-control infection in my leg. Our son was six at the time and didn't see the wheelchair as part of our future. One day he stood in another room of my parents' farmhouse, about 20 feet from me, and put his arms straight out in front of him. With a serious and demanding look on his face, he said, "Mommy, walk to me." His extended arms beckoned me to try, and his insistence filled me with hope. My heart was screaming out to the Lord, "Help me!" Even though I saw no good*

*outcome to it, I raised myself to a standing position in front of the chair. Cautiously, I took one small step...and...fell flat on my face. I had tried, and because of this little towhead's faith, I tried again and again. When the next appointment came up on my calendar, I walked into the examining room unassisted!* This is part of my spiritual story, and it's one I recall when I think of times I've cried out to God for help.

Oh my, what a hodge-podge of free-thinking. It's best to do this over a period of a couple of days or even a week, because now that you have informed your brain what it should be looking for, it will recall the events at strange, unconnected times.

Once you have completed your initial brainstorming and have this huge collection of sticky notes, it's time to arrange them in sequence. As you share each of these stories with your grandchildren, you more than likely won't share them in order, but it's good for you to see the journey God has led you on so far. That journey comes alive when you put the events in chronological order.

### **How and When Do You Tell a Piece of Your Story?**

First, you need to find the right time. If your grandkids are engrossed in a movie, running through the house on a sugar high, or exhausted, it's just not the right time. If you keep these hints in mind, it will assist you in being intentional.

Some of our most special times of sharing spiritual stories have been when the grandkids spend the night. At the close of the day when we're all winding down, part of the routine is to share something about my God-journey with them. In a calm, sincere voice before reading a book they have chosen, I say, "This is one of my favorite times. Each time I'm with you, I thank God that He decided to give you to me as grandchildren. It's one of my biggest blessings. I think God said, 'Hey, I'm going to take Bowen and Kendall (say their name[s]) and make them Tina's grandkids.'" It always starts that way for us, because it invites God into our conversation.

You create a more intimate atmosphere when you sit next to them. No matter the age of your grandchild, the closer you can physically be to him or her, the better. For grandparents who have a chasm of miles that

separate you from your grandchild, please don't discount the power of Skype and Facetime. The technology may intimidate you somewhat, but my words to you are, "Get over it!" It may seem a little "artificial" to you, but it's completely natural for them, and they really don't understand why you're not comfortable with talking to a screen.

Take your time. One of the unique aspects of being a grandparent is that you don't have to feel hurried. The rush that comes with a frantic schedule just isn't there. You can take a deep breath and simply enjoy each other's company. That's when those moments of telling faith stories happen. If you know your grandkids, then you know when the "rest of the story" needs to happen (depending on the age of your kids). Because you've created a more relaxed environment, there's plenty of time to ask questions!

In these conversations, be honest and authentic. Your grandkids have enough people in their lives who are putting on fronts and pretending to be someone they aren't. They've become very skilled at spotting a fake. That should be a loud warning to you to be truthful in all you say.

Even though it's tempting to go down rabbit trails, letting one story lead you to another unrelated one, commit to being concise. You're telling this particular story for a specific reason. If your grandkids are curious enough to ask questions, then by all means entertain them, but always keep the point in view. Remember, if you're being intentional, there will be time to share the rest of your story.

A big aspect of being intentional is figuring out how to go from a casual ordinary experience or conversation into telling your faith story. Decide how each part will be told. The next section of this book gives you lots of ideas on how you can do precisely that.

You have a story. Your story is important. It's important to you, it's important to the people you meet, it's important to your family, and it is incredibly important to your grandchildren. It is a cherished heirloom you are passing on to them. An heirloom is something of great value that you pass on. God created your journey to be unique so that you could share it. When you share your faith stories with your grandchildren, they see into your soul and realize the faith you have in Jesus is of great value to you. It's worth passing on.

I have lots of stories, but the most important ones have to do with my relationship with my Savior and Lord, Jesus. Envision a 1000-piece puzzle with me. This puzzle represents how God has infiltrated your life in all these different ways. When you pull out one piece, it represents just one of the stories of your faith journey. It is just one piece to the puzzle that is your life. Each time you share one of your stories with your grandchildren, they connect the pieces, and the puzzle makes a little more sense. You give them a better picture of who God is.

The desire of my heart in writing this book is that sharing your faith stories with your grandchildren will become a natural part of your relationship with them.

I'm sure God delights in being part of the time you spend with your precious grandkids.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear God say to your grandchild the words that Paul penned? *I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois (insert your name) and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you* (2 Timothy 1:5, NLT).

You have a story.  
Your story is  
important. It's  
important to you...  
and it is incredibly  
important to your  
grandchildren.  
It is a cherished  
heirloom you  
are passing  
on to them.



