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## A Grandfather's Blessing

*Genesis 48:1-20*

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We had taken care of our three granddaughters for five days while their parents went on a well-deserved vacation. Now the parents had returned and we all sat around the table. The two of us talked about each child, one by one, what we liked and appreciated about each one, the great things they had done while their parents were gone, how well they had behaved, how much we loved them, and how grateful we were that each was our grandchild.

As we talked about them, our granddaughters beamed. They were receiving our blessing.

We bless our grandchildren when we show them affection with touch and hugs. We bless them by spending time with them doing the things they love—books, sports, projects, play. We bless them when we pray for them. We bless them when we tell them God values them and is at work in them.

The world of our grandchildren will be full of challenges, difficulties, disappointments. Grandparents can offer a foundation of blessing that will be a safe harbor for them when life is stormy.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Name one thing you enjoy about being a grandparent. (Yes, for now, just one!)

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Has grandparenting turned out to be similar to or different from what you expected?

Genesis 37–47 tells the story of Jacob (later called Israel) and his twelve sons. The older ones were jealous of Joseph and sold him into slavery. But in Egypt Joseph became a powerful leader, second only to Pharaoh, who organized the country's food production to deal with the coming famine. This led to Jacob and his sons being reunited with Joseph when they came to Egypt to buy food. Now at the end of his life, Israel blesses Joseph's sons who were born to him while he lived in Egypt. *Read Genesis 48:1-20.*

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1. Imagine you had been present when Jacob delivered his blessing. How would you picture the scene, including the feelings and atmosphere of the occasion?

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2. Describe the relationship between Joseph and his father.

**3.** How would you describe your relationship with your adult children?

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**4.** How would you characterize Jacob's relationship with God and why (especially see vv. 3-7, 11, 15-16)?

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**5.** While Israel's prayer in Genesis 48:15-16 is one of blessing the two boys, why do you think it is introduced with, "Then he blessed Joseph and said . . ."?

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**6.** How have you or might you bless your adult children?

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**7.** What do you see of the past, the present, and the future in Israel's blessing (vv. 15-16, 19-20)?

**8.** How do you think the faithfulness of God to Israel affected his blessing of his son and grandsons?

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**9.** Israel kisses and embraces the boys in verse 10, and in verse 14 he puts a hand on their heads. What role does touch play in blessing our grandchildren or children?

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**10.** How can Israel's blessing of his grandchildren be a model for you?

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**11.** What are other ways you have blessed your grandchildren?

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**12.** How do you think your grandchildren have been or would be affected by receiving your blessing?

*Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to each grandchild how blessed they are by God. Pray for opportunities for you to bless them. Pray that you will see and take advantage of the opportunities he gives.*

### **Now or Later**

In their book *The Gift of the Blessing*, Gary Smalley and John Trent write that there are five elements to a blessing: meaningful touch, spoken words (and written words), expressing high value, picturing a special future, and an active commitment to the one blessed.

With these elements and Israel's blessing of his grandchildren in mind, write a blessing for each of your grandchildren. If possible, read it aloud to each of them and then give them a written copy. This can be done in a family gathering or when each child is dedicated to the Lord or baptized. If it is not possible to do it in person, you could send it to them.

In your blessing tell the grandchild (or child) how much you love them, what you like about them, what you see of God's work in them now and in their future, how you pray for them, and your commitment to their future. You might include the meaning of their name and tie it to a passage of or theme in Scripture. You could also give them some meaningful object along with it to remind them of the blessing—like a cross, a bookmark, a picture of Jesus with children, or something that is relevant to their name.