

PASS ON BEFORE YOU PASS ON

3 John 4

Jeanne Calmert is the oldest documented person. She lived to age 122. Shortly before her death in 1997, she was asked to describe her vision for the future. She replied, *“Very brief.”* When a reporter asked what she liked best about being so old, she answered: *“Well, there’s no peer pressure!”*

There is a story of an elderly man who was filling out an application for a retirement village. He very carefully and deliberately answered all the questions. After filling out his current address he came to the word “Zip” and printed: *“Normal for my age.”*

A young child asked a woman how old she was. She answered, *“39 and holding.”* The child thought for a moment and then asked: *“And how old would you be if you let go?”*

No matter how old you are, or whether or not you have much zip left, it’s not time to let go! If you’re in the golden years of life, you have more to give. As we grow older, our responsibilities grow with us. Listen to **Psalm 92:14–15**: *“They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and stay green, to declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”*

Today we focus on this main idea: **Before passing on, make sure you pass Faith in Jesus on by leaving a legacy because all of us – especially grandparents – can make a grand impact on the next generation.**

There is an old Egyptian saying that many of us would agree with. It goes: **“Dearer than our children are the children of our children.”**

Our Bible text today is 3rd John, verse 4, which reads: *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”*

As people of God our goal is that these words of Scripture are a reality in our families. Your greatest joy can be your

grandchildren's devotion to Christ.

In our Bible text, the children John is speaking about are not his biological children. They are people in churches John had pastored for many years. What's happening is that there is growing persecution of Christians. The Roman Emperor was Domitian who was very cruel. So some Christians were turning away from following Jesus. John wrote to encourage them to hold onto faith. ***"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."*** 3 John 4

Don't we share the same kind of concern today for our grandchildren and for the coming generations? Today is a difficult and troubled time when many believers in Jesus fall from the Faith.

And, don't we share the same kind of joy when our children and grandchildren are walking in the truth?

walk in truth ...

What truth is John talking about here? Let's remember that this John who wrote these words was Jesus' youngest disciple. He was with Jesus from the very beginning of His 3 year ministry. John was one of the 3 who saw Jesus in all His heavenly glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. John was the one in the Upper Room who was so close to Jesus that the two could whisper to each other as Christ gave us the Last Supper. John was 1 of the 3 whom Jesus took with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus' sweat became drops of blood as Christ prayed on the night before His arrest and crucifixion. John was the only disciple who stayed at the foot of the cross all the way until Jesus died. This John was the one who ran into the tomb on Easter morning and saw the empty grave cloths Jesus left behind when He rose from the dead.

John was with Jesus every step of the way, hearing it all, seeing it all, believing it all. He heard Jesus say that He is ***"the Way and the Truth and the Life."*** John 14 The "Truth" is Jesus! To ***"walk in truth"*** is to have unshakable faith in Christ, the Son of God and our Savior!

To *“walk in truth”* is to live guided by the Word of God in all things. To *“walk in truth”* is hard to do these days. There are so many ideas bombarding us about who we are, and how we treat other people, and what’s right and what’s wrong. It’s hard to grow up *“walk[ing] in truth”* nowadays.

To *“walk in truth”* means turning away from the wrong, evil ideas and actions in our world around us, and turning away from the evil inside of each of us called sin. It’s turning away from sin, confessing to God our own sin and evil, asking for God’s forgiveness because of what Jesus won for us when He lived the perfect sinless life we can’t and don’t, died to give His life to pay for all our sins, and rose again to guarantee forgiveness in His victory over sin, and guarantee that all His words are indeed the truth. To *“walk in truth”* is to turn *from sin*, turn *to Christ*, and *trust Jesus* as the one and only Forgiver and leader of our lives!

So, here is a big question: **What in your children and grandchildren bring you the greatest joy?**

Its so easy for us to focus on their achievements in school or in sports or in the world of work. Sure, we rejoice when our children or grandchildren graduate from medical school, or rise to a responsible position in industry, or compete in an elite event. My grandkids are young enough that I find joy when they learn a new word, color within the lines, or learn to ride a 2-wheeler. Yet, is my greatest joy that they *“walk in truth”*?

Next big question: Do you tell them what gives you your greatest joy? **Do you say to them ... my greatest joy is hearing of you walking in the truth?**

If you do not say this, then begin, and say it often ... ***“We have no greater joy than to hear that our children walk in truth.”***

And, lets face it, we can’t say that we rejoice that the next generation walk in the truth, **unless we do**. We, ourselves, must live in faith in Jesus!

Most of us find it so easy to talk about everything else under the sun with our younger family members. We talk about achievements in sports or academics or in the arts. But

Christian parents and grandparents often leave out talking to them about things regarding their soul. We need to talk with them about their relationship with God.

It is all too common for parents and grandparents to replace the joy of their children walking in truth with the joy of seeing grandchildren do well in every other arena of their life ... school ... sports ... music ... the arts ... but not in things regarding their soul. It can be difficult to be honest with them about the condition of their soul.

Jesus tells us clearly: ***“What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*** *Matthew 16:26* Our conversations with young people often display our messed up, wrong priorities. We, ourselves, are more concerned with worldly things that don't last. Our own hearts are in the wrong place, and we are leading young people's hearts to value the wrong things also. Friends, this is sinful. And this sin we each must bring to Christ in honest, sincere confession.

And when you confess, Jesus' sure and certain promise is the forgiveness of your sin. This is why Jesus is the most important to us personally. He is our joy. We not only look forward to heaven, but we live with Jesus now! We can live in Christ's truth, and meaning, and purpose, and peace. Faith in Jesus brings to you riches – real riches! Riches like: hope, and love, and patience, and self-control. Faith in Jesus gives you the truth of who you are, and your place in this world.

Christ must be *YOUR* greatest joy. An important question for all of us to reflect on is this: **Is Jesus Christ your greatest treasure and greatest joy?** Is your greatest joy the salvation and devotion of your grandchildren *to Christ?*

It's been said, that **The rich man can't take his money to heaven. But a poor man can take his children to heaven.**

There can be no greater joy than knowing that your youngin's are headed towards heaven, and that NOW they live in God's blessing.

“We have no greater joy than to hear that our children walk in truth.”

Let me give you three reasons why its so important when you lead children, grandchildren, nephews or nieces, or neighbor kids, or anyone else you influence – to walk in the truth.

- **1st — The soul exists for eternity.**

Grandkids won't always have their health. They won't always have happiness. They live in the real world where they will experience heartbreak and suffering. As parents and grandparents we sometimes spoil them with gifts, and toys, and experiences that make them feel happy. But happiness is not what it's all about! It's all about their soul which lasts forever.

Since the soul exists for eternity you can communicate to them: **They can face the future with great joy.**

Jude speaks of the future of believers when he said ...
“Now to Him who is able to keep your from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.” Jude 24

Here is a 2nd reason why its so important when you lead children, grandchildren, nephews or nieces, or neighbor kids, or anyone else you influence – to walk in the truth.

- **2nd — The devil is after grandchildren's souls.** We must remember that every day the devil is after grandchildren's souls.

Jesus said: *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*
John 10:10 The enemy seeks to kill, steal, and destroy the faith of your children and grandchildren. If your impact is limited to being a playmate, you are doing little to protect your family and prepare them for a lifelong faith.

A third reason why its so important when you lead children, grandchildren, nephews or nieces, or neighbor kids, or anyone else you influence – to walk in the truth is:

- **3rd — Jesus Christ is after the souls of man.** Since the soul exists for eternity, every day Jesus Christ is after the

souls of man. Jesus came to seek and to save those that are lost ... and He's still doing this today!

Dear grandparents:

If hell craves for the souls of our grandchildren and the Lord Jesus seeks to save the souls of our grandchildren ... the souls of our grandchildren are incredibly valuable and precious.

How about saying to your children ... **"I'll always be pleased by your accomplishments and proud of you. But I want you to be aware of a joy I desire more than any other. It is the joy of seeing you devoted to Christ and living out that devotion."**

And if as teens or adults they are not walking in truth ... filled with tenderness, kindness and love ... remind them of this truth. This is gutsy parenting and grandparenting. Just be sure to speak this in love ... that your desire is to have the Apostle John's joy.

Professor Gordon Rupp, was a British historian, and he was asked how the church survived decades of persecution and communist propaganda in Russia. His answer was, *"It's largely due to grandparents."* The communists made the mistake of thinking that because the church was only full of older people it had no future. They failed to realize the tremendous impact grandparents have on the faith formation of their grandchildren. Because Russian grandparents passed their faith on to their grandchildren, there is a new revival of Christianity in Russia.

King David, as an old man, didn't just retire to a rocking chair. Instead, King David wrote: ***"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."*** *Psalms 71:18* David understood the influence he could have as an old man on the younger generations, and his earnest prayer was that God use him as an instrument to lead the young to know the love and faithfulness of our God. That can be our prayer as well!

John put it this way: ***"We have NO GREATER JOY than to hear that OUR CHILDREN WALK IN TRUTH."*** *3 John 4.* Amen.