



CHRISTIAN  
GRANDPARENTING  
• N E T W O R K •



## Creating A Legacy Of Blessing

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## CONTENTS

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The Purpose of Spoken Blessing	3
The Power of Spoken Blessing	3
The Patterns of Spoken Blessing	3
The Practice of Speaking Blessing	4
Cultivating A Culture of Blessing	4
Blessings and Prayers	5
Key Components of a Spoken Blessing	5
An Affirmation of High Value	5
A Picture of a Special Future	6
An Active Commitment	6
Two Types of Blessings	6
The General Blessing	6
A Prayer Of Blessing	7
Examples of Blessings from Scripture	8
The Milestone (Personal) Blessing	8
Speaking the Blessing	9
Ceremony and Symbol	10
Summary	11

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## The Purpose of Spoken Blessing

Blessing means to “speak well of” another, to praise, to speak what is conducive to another’s welfare. In a specific sense, blessing is an intentional act whereby one speaks God’s favor and power into another’s life, thus serving as a conduit for God’s grace. The spoken blessing is intended to communicate to the one being blessed value and purpose as an image-bearer of the Creator.

Because spoken blessing usually involves meaningful touch or a symbolic gesture such as the laying on of hands, it also provides a powerful, physical means of counteracting the “curses” of the world where negative and evil messages damage and devalue an individual. Blessing imparts value to another as opposed to cursing.

God is the source of all blessing, but we have the privilege of being His channels or conduits. When we speak blessing we are communicating the love, value and purposes of God to another. We also serve as a wall of protection by calling attention to the reality that our value, peace and security in the midst of a troubled, turbulent world is rooted in, not how we perform, but who we are as God’s cherished possession, distinct from the rest of creation because we alone are created in His image.

## The Power of Spoken Blessing

You may be familiar with the rhyme, “Sticks and stones may be break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” We all know that rhyme is not entirely true – words do have power to both communicate and impart curse or blessing. Curses are in plentiful supply in our world. Our children encounter negative messages daily that impact their attitudes and feelings about themselves, and devalue life in general.

The blessing has always been one of the most powerful means of communicating value, purpose and encouragement to a child or adult. There is power in the spoken word, especially when it communicates positive messages. The blessing is particularly powerful when it is spoken with genuine love and care, and even more so when repeated over and over. It expresses messages like, “I believe in you; God believes in you; you have value and purpose; you are loved.” No one, with a handle on reality, would deny that such messages are powerful and change a life.

## The Patterns of Spoken Blessing

The first act of God recorded in Scripture after creating man was to pronounce a blessing. “So God created man *in his own image*, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God **blessed** them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...’” (Gen. 1:27-28).

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The pattern of blessing has been a part of life from the beginning. The Patriarchs employed the spoken blessing, and it came to be the most sought after asset that could be passed on from one generation to another. God blessed Abraham and told him he would also be a blessing to the nation. Isaac and Jacob were given the same blessing and gave blessings to their sons and grandsons. Jesus scolded the disciples for trying to send the children away. Instead, he gathered them to himself and BLESSED them. He also warned of severe consequences for anyone who failed to welcome (bless) these little ones or hinder them in any way.

## The Practice of Speaking Blessing

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### Cultivating A Culture of Blessing

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For generations Jewish families have practiced speaking blessing into the lives of their children every Sabbath. They have maintained a culture of blessing over the years, a culture that has blessed generation after generation and given them hope and the ability to persevere in the midst of extremely difficult circumstances. With the extensive history of blessing and the power it has on lives, it is curious why, as Christians, we have failed to adopt such a culture for our own families.

I am convinced that if we practiced the spoken blessing more frequently and consistently, there would be fewer divorces, fewer teen suicides, more confident children, more loyal workers and leaders, and far less crime. We have exchanged the culture of blessing for a culture of curses. Our culture of curses has birthed an unblessed generation with little hope, meaning or sense of value.

I challenge you to ask God how you might begin right now to exchange the culture of curses with a culture of blessing in your own sphere of influence, beginning with your family. As a grandparent or a parent, you can begin immediately using the recurring spoken blessing with your children and grandchildren, and begin to plan for those special milestones in your children's and grandchildren's lives. As long as God gives you breath, you can speak blessing. Below are some suggestions for developing a culture of blessing through the spoken blessing.

NOTE: The Asset Action Plan found in our *Living Your Will* workbook is also a way of cultivating a culture of blessing. As you invest and spend the assets God gave you for the next generation, you are pouring out blessing as a conduit of God's grace and truth for another generation. It is the principle of 'bearing fruit in old age'—that is, spending ourselves for the blessing of others in the same way Christ spent Himself for us – and in the process we will be blessed also. It is the only way to Live life with a capital "L".

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## Blessings and Prayers

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Most people tend to think of blessings as prayers, and while there are similarities, they really are different. Prayers are addressed to God as petitions or statements of praise and worship. As petitions, prayers may ask for blessing and specific requests for other people, as they often do, or they may be petitions for our self. Blessings, however, are solely about others and are spoken on God's behalf for the one being blessed.

Rolf Garborg, author of *The Family Blessing*, describes three essential elements of conversations with God that we share with our children and grandchildren. They are like three strands of a cord, which when woven together form a strong braid that is foundational to all other Christian disciplines God is developing in us. While each serves a different purpose, they powerfully compliment each other.

The three strands are: (1) Prayer *for* our children; (2) Prayer *with* our children; and (3) Blessing *over* our children. The distinguishing mark between blessing and the two strands of prayer is a matter of who is being addressed. When we offer prayers, we are addressing God. When we speak blessing, we are addressing another on behalf of God. In the spoken blessing the one speaking expresses the heart of God for that individual (a grandchild in this case) who is cherished and loved, and for whom God desires and alone has the power to accomplish the very best good in and for that individual.

## Key Components of a Spoken Blessing

There is nothing very complicated about the spoken blessing. However, there are some key components of a spoken blessing that, when properly understood and practiced, open the door for God to pour out His blessing and transform lives. Gary Smalley and John Trent first identified five components of a spoken blessing in their heralded work, *The Blessing*. I have reduced these into three essential ingredients of the spoken blessing:

1. Affirmation of High Value
2. Picturing a Special Future
3. Affirming Your Personal Commitment

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### An Affirmation of High Value

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Communicate to your child/grandchild that they are something special, and that you value them highly. Identify an obvious trait you wish to emphasize and express how you value that trait. Word pictures can be a powerful way to express that value.

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## A Picture of a Special Future

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The ability to accurately help your grandchild, or adult child, understand God's plans for their lives depends on how well you know your child/grandchild and the gifts and interests he/she has already developed. The idea is to express an expectation of success and accomplishment, not for worldly gain, but according to that which God has already purposed for them. You are saying, "I believe in you and expect you to succeed in that which God has prepared in advance for you."

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## An Active Commitment

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It's great to speak blessing to our children and grandchildren, but now we must demonstrate our willingness to stand with them and walk with them in the journey ahead. Inconsistency and lack of follow through will tend to negate any positive reinforcement you may communicate verbally.

## Two Types of Blessings

For our purposes, I have broken down the discussion of blessing into two types. The first I will simply call *General Blessings*. They are words of blessing spoken as frequently as is possible or reasonable. It may be the same blessing spoken over and over each time, or it might be several different blessings used for certain situations. These recurring blessings can be scriptures, such as Number 6:24-26, the blessing God instructed Aaron to speak over the people, or it can be original blessings you create based upon Scriptural truths.

The second type of blessing I call *Milestone Blessings* or Personal Blessings. These are specific, special blessings prepared and spoken over a child/grandchildren at particular *milestones* in their life journey. I have created my own list of milestones on the page describing the Milestone Blessing. You may wish to alter or completely change what is on your milestone list. I think you will find the milestones listed make sense and are common to most people. The point is to celebrate those milestones by using them as opportunities to speak a special word of blessing into a child's life with a party!

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## The General Blessing

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The general or recurring blessing (you may choose to do it daily, weekly or monthly) is a powerful tool for helping our children and grandchildren know, love and follow Christ with their all their heart. Through the laying on of hands and the spoken words of blessing, we become conduits for a consistent, deliberate encounter with God's transforming power and favor, and a wall of protection in which they will experience a sense of security in God.

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People often ask if children don't get tired of hearing the same blessing over and over again. Have you ever noticed the repetition in children's lives? They watch the same programs over and over; they want the same bedtime stories told over and over; they say the same prayers over and over. Repetition reinforces the truths of the blessing you speak and provides a kind of blanket of security and peace for a child. Even older children and adults never tire of hearing familiar words of blessing and encouragement when they are genuine. Do you ever tire of hearing your spouse or children say 'I love you'? Repetition is not the issue—authenticity is, so don't worry about using the same blessing repeatedly. If you prefer some change from time to time, that's okay too. It's your call. The most important thing is authenticity.

Here are steps that will help you in the establishment of this type of blessing for each of your children/grandchildren...

1. If the children are old enough, explain to them what you want to do with the blessing and why.
2. Hold them or lay one hand on a shoulder or head in a sincere and appropriate way when you speak the blessing as a symbol of your part as an instrument through which God chooses to bless them.
3. Pick a time and frequency and stick with it. It can be daily or weekly, but the key is consistency.
4. Choose the blessing you will say. It can be the same blessing every day of their life, or you can vary the blessing from time to time. (See examples)
5. JUST DO IT!!! It is never too late to start, but it is always too soon to delay.

### A Prayer Of Blessing

*Whatever age your children may be, whether they are living at home or have moved away, here is a prayer of blessing to pray over them today. It is based upon Numbers 6:22-27.*

Father, my heart is full of praise and gratitude to You for blessing me with the gift of my beautiful children. I want to say over and over again, "Thank You so much!" Your blessings leave me in awe. You have enriched my life in more ways than I could ever imagine.

Your blessing, Father, means everything. My prayer and deep desire is that my children will be blessed of the Lord. May Your blessing be upon them. As Aaron spoke Your blessing over the people of Israel, so I speak Your blessing over my children today.

Father, bless them with Your favor and kindness; keep them by Your power and strength, and deliver them from all evil; may Your face shine upon them with the light of Your radiant love; may they know

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the abundant riches of Your amazing grace; lift up upon them the smile of Your countenance; shield their hearts and minds with Your abiding peace, the perfect peace that passes all understanding.

### Examples of Blessings from Scripture

*And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." ' "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Numbers 6:22-27 NKJV*

Numbers 6:24-26

\_\_\_\_<name>\_\_\_\_\_, may the Lord bless you and keep you; may the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; may the Lord always look upon you with favor and give you peace in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ephesians 3:17-19

\_\_\_\_<name>\_\_\_\_\_, I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God, in Jesus' name.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

\_\_\_\_<name>\_\_\_\_\_, may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God the Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your heart and strengthen you in every good deed and word, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

\_\_\_\_<name>\_\_\_\_\_, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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## The Milestone (Personal) Blessing

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Few things can be as powerful and meaningful in your child/grandchild's life than a personal, spoken blessing at specific 'milestones' in their life. The pronouncement of blessing has been a part of family life among God's people from the earliest days. Prayerfully consider what God would have you speak into the life of your children that would encourage them and build them up in Christ, then write it out on the page provided. Make it your own and let it speak truth and life into your child/grandchild.

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Here are some suggested Milestone Markers you might consider as opportunities to bring a Milestone Blessing to those you love:

### ***Milestone Markers***

- Milestone #1: Birth/Dedication & Initial Parenthood
- Milestone #2: Starting School
- Milestone #3: Salvation and Baptism
- Milestone #4: Adolescent Transitions – Purity and Self-control
- Milestone #5: Rites of Passage-Childhood to Adulthood
- Milestone #6: Graduation
- Milestone #7: Starting A Career
- Milestone #8: Courtship and Marriage
- Milestone #9: First-time Parents (See #1)
- Milestone #10: Empty Nesters
- Milestone #11: Grandparenting
- Milestone #12: Sage Stage-Becoming a Biblical Elder

Each milestone occasion is unique, so make the blessing fit that occasion. These can have a powerful impact upon that child, especially if you make it a kind of rite of passage celebration and write it out for them to keep.

I frame our milestone blessings for both grandchildren and adult children in attractive picture frames and print out the written blessing on letter-size parchment paper. Now they have a lifelong visual reminder of the blessings they have received and how God has worked through those special moments. My grandchildren have theirs mounted on the wall in their bedrooms. Writing them out this way also insures that they will be brief and to the point.

## **Speaking the Blessing**

As mentioned above, your blessing can be scripture or your own words. One word of advice as you prepare your blessing. Be brief and to the point. Don't worry about all the details of someone's life or another's example. Capture the essence of what you want to say and say it so they will remember it. Use various milestones in their lives to continually speak a special blessing into their lives and celebrate those milestones in a meaningful, fun way.

While it is the "speaking" of blessing that can unleash God's power to transform a life, speaking words alone is not all there is to blessing. If we are to be effective conduits of God's power and grace, our

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lives must authenticate our words. *What our grandchildren SEE in us has immense impact on their view of GOD, their view of THEMSELVES, and their view of what is worth TREASURING.*

Furthermore, our words of genuine love and truth will have even more impact when combined with meaningful, appropriate touch. In a world cursed by the paranoia of wrongful intentions when it comes to touching one another, meaningful touch from a parent and grandparent is powerful. Our children want to be touched and hugged because they are loved and valued, and they are often deprived of meaningful touch in rest of the world in which they operate because of the fear that grips our society.

We were meant for touch. In Mark 10"16 Jesus did not simply speak blessing on the children that were presented to Him. The Scriptures says Jesus "took the children up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Laying on of hands, holding a hand, an arm around a shoulder, an appropriate hug, or a simple touch on the arm... these can symbolically convey God's love and value as you speak blessing into their lives.

With appropriate touch, our words of blessing are imbued with a power that authenticates our words much in the same way a gentle touch adds a *wow-factor* to our words when we say, "I love you." Both words and touch may be meaningful by themselves, but when knit together with genuine compassion they deeply affect the heart of the one receiving the blessing.

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## Ceremony and Symbol

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Ceremony adds a different level of impact because it gives us the opportunity to celebrate something unique and life-transforming together. The spoken blessing is a perfect opportunity to celebrate with your child or grandchild.

One couple I know have created an annual blessing ceremony (they call it a tradition) when their family gathers every year at Thanksgiving for a family gathering. They have a tradition of playing tag football after every Thanksgiving meal, and then sitting around a large campfire together where the grandparents speak a blessing over every grandchild and adult child. It is a powerful event, and one that everyone looks forward to sharing together.

When you add the concept of a visual symbol into that ceremony, it can provide a powerful reminder throughout the year – and long into life – of that moment of spoken blessing given by a loving grandparent as patriarch of the family. Here are a few suggestions of some symbols we have used over the years with our GrandCamp programs. They can work as is, or be adapted for your individual situation. Let these ideas be stimuli for creating your own personalized symbols to share with those over whom you speak God's blessing.

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- Shop at your local Christian retailer who sells jewelry (necklaces or bracelets), plaques, or other symbolic knick-knacks with a Scripture or visual reminder of your blessing.
- SymbolArts.com is one company who produces coins (can also be necklaces) that have Scriptures (Armor of God) or other images you can create for your blessing ceremony.
- Blessing Stones: find small, smooth river rock stones to decorate for each grandchild or grown child as a reminder of your blessing. Put a Scripture verse on it, their name and anything else you want that identifies with them.
- Blessing Stick: This is a variation of an old Native American tradition in which a 'talking stick' with feathers and other decorations was passed from one person to another granting them permission to speak. Decorate the blessing stick with whatever you want (see photo below) and pass it to them as a reminder of God's spoken blessing upon their life.
- The Blessing Jar: Find small canning jars that you can decorate (see photo), and place inside several strips of paper with sayings, scripture verses and other comments reminding them of their value as image-bearers of God.
- Family heirlooms: Perhaps you have some kind of heirloom (jewelry, rings, knitting needles, old tool, photos, etc.) that convey a special message of identity and blessing. You could also create something yourself (a painting, a poem, a carved figure, etc.) that might become an heirloom for future generations.



Remember, that the symbol is the objective. It is only to serve as a reminder of their high value, special future and your commitment to walk with them while you have breath. The symbol should be something that will aid in their remembering this blessing and truth God has for them.

## Summary

One more word of counsel ... be patient. Remember that you are not the "blesser" – that's God's work. While words of blessing are important to everyone, we don't all respond in the same way or at the same time. Consider the Chinese Bamboo tree whose seed goes dormant when planted. The farmer who knows about this plant realizes that no amount of attention to the seed will arouse it from its sleep. However, careful care and nurture is required during this dormancy. Even though no visible



signs of life are noticeable for FIVE YEARS, at the end of that time something extraordinary occurs. Suddenly the seed sprouts and grows into a mature tree more than ninety feet high in that one growing season.

Our children and grandchildren can be like that Chinese bamboo tree. You may do everything right, faithfully speaking words of blessing into their lives on a regular basis, only to discover that they have moved in a direction you did not expect, showing no signs of spiritual life at all. The temptation will be to try to 'fix' them by digging them up or over-tending. Be patient... God is at work, but they have to make their own decisions. Even when you see them moving in the wrong direction, don't despair. Keep speaking blessing into their lives and never stop praying. Guard yourself from a spirit of criticism or nagging. Keep on nurturing and loving. Don't try to fix things. The seed has been planted. Give it time to grow.