

A Grandfather and His Grandchildren

Robert Francis
© January 2010

There was an old man who had seven grandchildren. The grandfather loved each grandchild with all his heart, nurturing and teaching each according to their various and diverse bents and abilities.

- One grandchild was taught how to care for trees – every kind of nut tree and fruit tree, as well as trees used for wood or that simply make the earth more beautiful.
- Another grandchild was taught how to care for and gather herbs and plants from the forests and prairies for use as food and medicine.
- Another grandchild was taught how to raise all sorts of garden and field crops.
- Another grandchild was taught how to hunt large animals for meat and hides.
- Another grandchild was taught how to trap small animals and birds for meat, fur and feathers.
- Another grandchild was taught how to fish.
- Another grandchild was taught how to care for domesticated animals.

While each grandchild was taught differently from the others, each was taught to live in close relationship with all of creation. Each grandchild made mistakes, yet the grandfather was very kind and very patient. He never raised a hand in anger to any of his grandchildren.

The grandfather taught his grandchildren what they needed to know, but he was careful not to tell them everything. The grandfather expected his grandchildren to learn from observation and to think for themselves. Likewise, the grandfather did not succumb to the temptation to do everything for his grandchildren. He did not automatically fulfill all their requests, for he wanted them to learn responsibility. The grandfather wanted his grandchildren to learn to help themselves and each other. The grandfather was also careful not to intervene or take sides in the squabbles his grandchildren had with one another, for he wanted them to learn how to work through relational issues on their own. As the grandchildren continued to learn, again, they all made mistakes, but the grandfather was very kind and very patient. He loved each grandchild with all his heart.

Now, most of the grandchildren were content to listen and remember what the grandfather told them, but one of the three younger grandchildren busied himself writing down all the grandfather's instructions to him, to the best of his recollection and understanding, until he had written a large book. This book he carried to his fellow grandchildren. "My grandfather has entrusted all his wisdom to me. The grandfather's

wisdom is written in this book,” he said. “You must all accept this book as the grandfather’s word.”

Another of the younger grandchildren said, “I believe you; I accept this book as the grandfather’s word.”

Still another of the younger grandchildren said, “I neither believe you nor accept your book,” but after receiving a sound thrashing, this grandchild changed his tone. “Since you have beaten me up,” he said, “I see that you are superior to me. It follows that your book must also be superior to anything I may have learned previously. Now, I too will accept this book as the grandfather’s word.”

After this, the three younger grandchildren went out to worry and bully the four older grandchildren to accept the book. Even after much fighting, two of the older grandchildren still said they would by no means accept the book. “The grandfather has taught us what we need to know,” they maintained. “Furthermore, your superior attitude and disrespectful ways show us that you have no wisdom worthy of our notice.”

However, the other two older grandchildren agreed to read the book. “We will carefully consider everything written there,” they said. “Surely the grandfather has taught all his grandchildren. Some of his wisdom may well be contained in your book.” But these two went on to say, “You should also listen to us, for we also have been instructed by the grandfather.”

One of the three younger grandchildren said, “I will listen to what you have to say.”

The other two said, “We will not listen. All the grandfather’s wisdom is written in this book. We have the book, and you have nothing of value for us.” These two went off and soon began arguing and fighting between themselves about what was written in the book.

In all of this, the grandfather remained very kind and very patient toward all his grandchildren, for he loved each grandchild with all his heart.