

## GRANDPARENTS' DAY 1998

Boys and girls, we have the joy today of welcoming our grandparents and special friends to Chapel! This is an important day, a day the Lord has made, and a day for us to **consider our heritage**.

What is heritage? Our heritage is the **inheritance** we receive from those who have gone before us, the **gift of family and nurture and influence** from our parents and grandparents and close family friends. The Bible has a lot to say about heritage and the impact our heritage has upon our lives. Look around you! The people you see are not just guests at chapel! They are part of **your heritage**, your inheritance -- the gift of family and nurture and influence that helps make you who you are as an individual. These are the people to whom we owe gratitude for influencing our lives!

The Bible talks about **generations** when it refers to our heritage. What is a generation? A generation is the people who are born and live in the same period of time. We have in this auditorium several generations represented! At least three! You students at StoneBridge all represent one generation because you were all born within the same decade and are living at the same time. Your parents are representatives of the generation **before you** because they were all born and lived near the same time. Your grandparents represent a third generation because their life spans are similar.

The Bible tells us that God deals with us generationally. For instance, Luke 1:50 says that God's mercy is on them "that fear him from generation to generation." This means that we who have godly parents and grandparents have received a heritage of mercy -- and **mercy is God's favor and blessing!** We should be so appreciative of our parents and grandparents for passing on to us this heritage of godliness because we did nothing to deserve it! It is a gift -- an inheritance -- that comes to us from the generations before us. And it's the best gift because nothing has more value to us in our lives than God's mercy!

The Bible says a lot more about generations. We sing very often here at StoneBridge, actually in our school song, this verse: "**I will make you an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations.**" This means that as Jesus works in our hearts and lives, we will be made into the highest good so that we will be a joy -- great happiness -- to the generations that come after us! He will make **you**, as you love and obey and trust Him, an eternal excellence for the purpose of blessing future generations -- to your children and grandchildren! Isn't that the best promise? to be used to make others happy and blest?

Let's **think for a moment** about our grandparents and special friends and the impact that they have on our lives. In my life, when I measure the heritage that formed who I am, I think first of my grandparents. They were a big part of my early life and I thank God for the many things that I learned from them. My grandparents were simple people who never thought of themselves as teachers, but they nonetheless were the most influential teachers in my life. Here are some of the many things they taught me without trying:

My grandfather was an affable, larger-than-life man who taught me by the way he lived some of the most important lessons I ever learned. He was never didactic or "teachy," not an educated man by the world's standards, but he was a powerful teacher. He was a storyteller who loved humor who imparted to me a love of language and words through his storytelling. He was a

builder who taught me pride of workmanship by his character and reputation. He taught me hospitality as his home was always open; there were always guests, some staying for months as he helped many cousins and family members through hard times. He was an outdoorsman who loved particularly the mountains, a great hunter and woodsman who taught me to love nature and to reverence creation. He was a giver -- always sending guests home with vegetables from his garden or fruit from his orchard, fresh fish he had caught, or anything he knew would meet a need. He taught me to give generously and with abandon. He loved music and musical instruments. Every Christmas after the noise and celebration, he would sing "Silent Night" with so much feeling it would bring tears to my eyes as a child and now I cannot hear the song, even the endless droning of it in stores from October til December without seeing him with his autoharp. You see, by his life and example, my grandfather taught me to love people, to relish life, and best of all, **how to be a family**. Important lessons!

My grandmother was a quiet and thoughtful person. She loved books and study and she liked to write. She served her family faithfully in all the motherly ways -- cooking, sewing, gardening, and always noticing and tending to the needs of each one. She taught me to sew and to bake. She taught me to be frugal and to value the important things -- hospitality, friendships, industry and diligence. She was always there with affirmation as well as practical resources, always. Her **faithfulness** was a mainstay of my life. Her faithfulness to the Lord sustained her and made an indelible impression on me. Best of all, she prayed, quietly and constantly, and undergirded my efforts and choices with prayer.

While neither of my grandparents thought of themselves as teachers, I see myself now as having been formed to a very great extent by the way they lived their lives. This is what the Bible means when it says, "**I will make you an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations.**" My grandparents have both gone to be with the Lord, but the cousins still gather and when we do, they are a very real presence among us. In these gatherings at holidays, the unspoken understanding is that we are there because of Andrew Young and after hours of fun and laughter, someone always remembers them, tells an anecdote from their long, rich lives, or repeats one of Grandad's favorite stories. This is one generation speaking gratitude for another. What a privilege to share the joy of having had such influences in our lives.

You, boys and girls, will one day be parents and grandparents. Look at your grandparents now with '**generational eyes.**' You are receiving from them a **heritage -- an inheritance** of great worth in their lives and characters. And the Lord is forming you to be "an eternal excellence, a **joy to many generations.**" You will leave your mark on the generations that come after you. The wonder and privilege is that you are providentially placed to receive and give a godly heritage! Praise God for that and be grateful and receptive of the value of your heritage!

*Carole Adams*