

ENCOURAGEMENT
for **GRANDPARENTING**
in a blended family





I HAVE A NEW NAME

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:14-15, ESV

My name changed on my wedding day, but it's not my married name that I write about, but the birth of my newest name, "Gigi". God does birth new names along with new extraordinary opportunities to love and be loved. God wants to answer all our prayers, but perhaps His answer comes in a different package than we are expecting. For me, the package was eight delightful grandchildren. When I became "Gigi" to Bob's grandchildren, I was given the full privilege and responsibility to be a grandmother to all these precious children.

God can be trusted with our future. When my name was established, the slate was clean, and with my adult stepchildren, I was allowed to be a grandmother to their children in every sense of the word. Being "Gigi" is a safe place for me within our stepfamily.

Never any hidden agenda, never any backhanded comments, never any piercing remarks—only unconditional love that is as pure as love can get.

I have an opportunity to play a pivotal role in the lives of our grandchildren in working out His purpose in their lives. I have the blessed opportunity to tell them about Jesus.

Sometimes I may get weary in responding to my other names such as "Vicki" from my husband, or "mommy" from my children, or "daughter" from my parents, or "sister" from my siblings, "aunt" and "cousin", but when I hear "Gigi" from my adorable grandchildren, it is music to my ears and refreshing to my soul.

I have a new name and I like it!

Practical application:

When your blended family drains your love tank and your energy is a bit low, go get a fill-up with some time with those special beloved grandchildren who know how to love beyond measure!





LITTLE BLESSINGS

Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him.

Psalms 127:3, NLT

The birth of grandchildren can often be the birth of a loving grandmother—even a stepgrandmother.

My daughter said she was a bit jealous at first when people asked if she was bothered that her child was not my first grandchild, since I had married Bob. I didn't consider how the words of others might negatively impact my daughter. My daughter now understands that God blessed me with a precious gift of so many grandchildren. She said I'm the only grandmother she knows who can make each and every grandchild feel like they are number one. Birth order has no meaning when every child is precious.

Stepfamilies are becoming one of the most common family structures. I became an instant grandmother to

seven stepgrandchildren when Bob and I married. I had many unnerving thoughts and feelings about my role as a stepgrandparent. Would Bob's children allow me to step into the role of grandmother? What expectations will Bob's children have? What expectations will my daughters have? I quickly realized I needed to self-define my role as a grandmother that fits my stepfamily.

The relationship I have with my grandchildren is the crown jewel of relationships, and I don't ever want it to change. It's interesting that I've been told there is no such thing as instant love. I beg to differ... for a grandmother, I discovered there is such a thing as instant love.

Love chosen is still love.

Practical application:

- *Spend one-on-one time with your grandchildren.*
- *Introduce them to a new game or skill.*
- *Joke and tease with them.*
- *Listen to their concerns.*
- *Share their joys.*
- *Spend time playing a board game or putting together a puzzle.*
- *Share your history and family traditions.*
- *Give hugs and plenty of love.*



GOOD HABITS CAN LAST A LIFETIME

*Paul and his companions ...
On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for the services.*

Acts 13:13-14, NLT

I learned from my parents at a very early age that habits are "developed" and they can be "good or bad." Often, those habits stay with us for a lifetime. I am thankful that my parents instilled many good habits that were taught by watching their living example. Going to church and honoring the Lord's day on the Sabbath are good habits that are deeply embedded into my character. It is important and rewarding to set an example of consistently living out "good habits" in front of our family members.

Our daughter told us this story. While helping our grandson pack for a weekend sleepover at our house, he was instructed by his mom to collect his church shoes and belt. As he stuffed his church shoes into his duffle bag, he muttered that he didn't need church stuff because he wasn't going to church on Sunday. With great gusto, he announced to his mom that when he woke up on Sunday morning, he was going to play golf with Big Daddy and Gigi, not go to church. His mom quickly corrected his thinking and said, "When you spend the night with Big Daddy and Gigi on Saturday night—you go to church with them on Sunday morning. Period. End of discussion." Our daughter said she gave it some thought and decided

she should call us to tell us about their conversation. She suggested that we prepare ourselves for a challenge to skip church for golf. We almost think her phone call was to deliberately speak into our grandparenting style and remind us to practice our "good habits" this weekend if we faced a test at the hands of a 5-year-old. Failure is sometimes not an option... for heaven's sake. We must not skip church to play golf under the influence of a grandchild. Naw, we wouldn't do that!

On Saturday night, we were fully engaged in bedtime prayers, sips of water, and multiple stories when the sweetest little face smiled at us and said, "I have a question. When we finish at church in the morning, do we have to eat lunch before we can go play golf?"

As a child growing up, there was never any question as to where we would be on Sunday mornings. I believe we are establishing with our grandchildren, just as Paul and his companions did, that on the Sabbath, we go to the church for the services. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." Thank you, daughter, for that reminder!

Practical application:

We challenge you to be the legacy leader of your blended family and pass on "good habits," like keeping the Lord's Day holy. Be known as a person who has good habits!



WHERE IS MIMI NOW?

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:17, NKJV

When my granddaughter Camden came to Gigi's house, we cuddled up together on the couch, looking at her baby pictures. We were playing our usual game, where I pointed to a person in the picture, and Camden, not much past three, identified those who were at the hospital for her birth.

As we opened the album cover, Camden rushed to point to the first person and said, "That's me in Mommy's tummy." I turned the page, and she said, "That's me born, and there's Mommy."

I turned another page, and I asked her, "Who is this?"

"That's Daddy and me and Mommy," she said.

I flipped to the next page and pointed to the handsome bald-headed guy (Bob) and asked, "Who is that?"

"That's Big Daddy," she answered.

"And who is that with him?" I asked.

Camden hesitated and didn't seem to recognize the woman's face in the picture. Camden whispered with uncertainty, "That's Big Daddy's friend," and then she turned to me and asked "Where are you, Gigi?" Camden seemed confused that Big Daddy was posed in a picture embracing a woman who was not me. In her mind, Camden remembered only Big Daddy with Gigi—always together. Now she was looking at a picture of Big Daddy with his arm around another woman holding baby Camden.

I asked Camden if she remembered

Mimi (her grandmother). She asked, "Where is Mimi now?" We snuggled in, and I began to tell her the story about Big Daddy and Mimi. I told her how Big Daddy and Mimi met, fell in love, and got married. They had three children—Aunt Katie, Aunt Tricia and her Daddy. Her Daddy married her Mommy, and they had a baby—YOU—Camden Rae Maday, and Big Daddy and Mimi became your grandparents.

Camden was studying the picture of this woman, whom I explained was her grandmother. Camden was too little to have lasting memories of her Mimi. I explained how deeply she was loved by Mimi. I explained that Mimi got sick with cancer, she died, and now has a heavenly home with Jesus. The story continued with telling Camden that Big Daddy missed Mimi very much. He was alone, sad, and lonely. So God sent Gigi to Big Daddy, and we got married, and now I was her grandmother too. I squeezed her tight and gave her a kiss on the forehead, and told her how happy I was to be her grandmother and how much I loved her.

Camden and I still cuddle and look at baby albums—now up to age eleven. We look through each one, highlighting the special family and friends who attended each of the births of all the grandchildren. The unexpected joy God gave me that came from this remarriage is being a grandmother to our precious grandchildren. Oh, what joy!

Practical application:

Keep an open heart when conversations about a grandparent who has passed away come up, and be willing to talk when the moment feels right



GIGI'S HOUSE

Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.

Psalm 143:10 NKJV

"Don't move into his home. Don't do it! Hear me! Just say NO!" That was sound advice; however, in our remarriage, it simply was not possible.

I hated this house. His family and friends always found subtle ways to remind me it was not my home and never would be my home. Reminders that I was living among someone else's stuff made me feel like a stranger in my own home. Many times early in our marriage, I simply felt like I wanted to go "home," back to my own house! The lingering question was, "Would his house ever feel like home to me?"

I began making small changes to his home to make it ours, including asking a friend, who was an interior designer, to come in and mix our accessories and create a new look that pleased both of us.

Happiness did come. But it took time.

A sweet surprise came from one of the grandchildren's perspectives; his house was instantly "Gigi's house" from the first day I moved in. One of our grandsons told his momma, "When I get to Gigi's house, I'm going to do what I did last time I was there for a sleepover." Then he revealed his plan. "I'm going to wake up in the middle of the night and tell Gigi that I can't sleep. She's going to make us a pizza and get me a drink box and put on a movie that we can watch in the middle of the night," he declared. "That's what I'm going to do at Gigi's house!"

Another grandchild asked if he could go to Gigi's house. "P-l-e-a-s-e," he begged. "I want to forget to take my swimsuit so that Gigi lets me swim in my underwear. Gigi always gets the ice cream out and brings a spoon for everybody. She lets us sit by the pool and eat out of the carton. No bowls for us! Gigi loves ice cream like I do. Oh yeah... and did I forget to mention, chocolate milk for everyone too!"

Practical application:

If possible, do not move into either of your homes. If this is not possible, develop some "thick" skin around the housing issue. Don't let people discourage you when they reference that you may be living in someone else's home or using someone else's stuff. Give it time, make gradual changes, invest in relationships, and you will have a successful housing transition. The house will eventually become "your home" because you are there!



ABOUT VICKI MADAY



Vicki and her husband Bob both lost their first spouse, met, fell in love and married. Now celebrating 17 years together, it was clear that God had a plan for their shared journey.

Vicki is the proud mother of two daughters, stepmother to three, and “Gigi” to 17 grandchildren ranging from college-aged young adults to energetic preschoolers fresh from “Gigi Camp.” She believes the real magic of family happens in the bonds built with those grandchildren, whether over ice cream by the pool, at the golf course, or during a week of grandkid-only adventures.

