

Foreword by  
**TONY EVANS**

# CHAMPIONSHIP GRANDFATHERING

— *How to Build a Winning Legacy* —

**CAREY CASEY**

WITH NEIL WILSON



The book you are holding in your hands is the best book Carey Casey has written. Period. He was created with this message in his heart because of the legacy he carries. It's just now as a grandfather that he is able to say it. One line on page 11 says it all: "But what shines for me in the lives of my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents is a persistent practice of dignity, of rising above difficult circumstances, and of quietly striving for a better life for those coming later." As a grandfather of eight, I needed to be reminded of these truths and the countless others that permeate this book. Grandpa, read Carey's book and allow it to wash over you with grace, love, and encouragement. A *Championship Grandfathering* movement is right around the corner! And my brother Carey Casey is at the tip of the spear!

**DR. GARY ROSBERG**

Cofounder, America's Family Coaches; author, *6 Secrets to a Lasting Love*; speaker, radio broadcaster, and marriage and family advocate

Being a grandfather of three is among the highest callings, blessings, and responsibilities God has given me. Carey Casey's *Championship Grandfathering* is a strong gift, equipping me and all grandfathers in this vital role. Carey's experiences as a grandfather—and as the great man of faith he is—come alive in these pages. Having served beside Carey on the board of the National Center for Fathering and seen him be a grandfather, I am grateful to have this daily reminder of his stories and instructions as I attempt to be the best grandfather God would have me be.

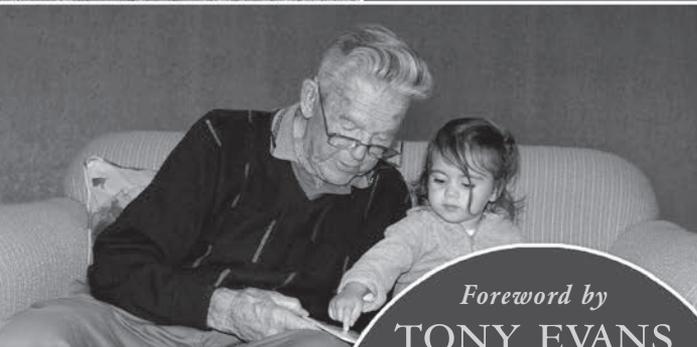
**LEE PARIS**

CEO, Meadowbrook Capital; board chairman, National Center for Fathering

Carey Casey continues to show us the way through stories and practical examples. This book helps us to be champions as grandfathers.

**DR. WAYNE “COACH” GORDON**

Founding pastor of Lawndale Community Church and Chairman of  
the Christian Community Development Association



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Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.  
Carol Stream, Illinois



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A Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data can be found at [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).

ISBN 978-1-58997-874-4

Printed in the United States of America

23	22	21	20	19	18	17
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

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## FOREWORD

DECEMBER 25, 2012. Our family was together on Christmas morning, just hanging out, having fun. Gifts were still wrapped and under the tree. Pillows and blankets were scattered around the living room, and grandkids ran around in their pajamas. Someone turned on some holiday music with a good beat, and I just did what came naturally. I danced!

My daughter turned on the video camera app on her smart phone, and then she kept encouraging me: “Go, Papi. Show us what you’ve got.” For a minute, I got caught up in it. I’m no Gregory Hines, although I might surprise you. She uploaded the video on YouTube, so now it’s there for the whole world to see. She labeled the video “The Dancing Grandfather.”

As I watched that video, at first I was embarrassed. I certainly don’t come off as a dignified biblical scholar and respected pastor. But then, maybe there’s no better portrayal of who I am. The moment was so *real*. I was in my element, celebrating the birth of Christ with the people I love the

most, and when the music came on, it only made sense that the joy inside me would come out.

I get that way quite often when my grandkids are around. Few things put that spring in my step like having my grandkids nearby; they energize me in the best way. Their parents know they can bring the grandkids over anytime, and Lois and I will welcome them with open arms. Those youngsters always seem to bring out the best in me.

To a large degree, that's what this book is all about—that joy of relating to and investing in our children's children. I can't explain it, but it sure is rewarding and fun, and I hope reading these pages will help you celebrate that.

Of course, as my friend Carey rightly points out repeatedly in this book, the goals of a grandfather should be much bigger than just being a happy, dancing playmate for his grandkids. Like every other area of life, we should have a *Kingdom* focus with our grandchildren.

Training and shaping children to follow Christ is difficult in today's world, and when we reinforce the good things our children are teaching our grandchildren, that can be powerful in their lives. We often have different ways of explaining the simple truth of God's Word. We have stories about His faithfulness and mercy through the years. We have our own ways of living out Christ's calling to service and ministry. Through it all our grandchildren are watching and listening and taking mental notes, whether they realize it or not.

Our role modeling is so important. I hope my grandchildren think of their parents first if they ever ask, "What does it mean to live out the fruit of the Spirit?" But I also hope they see and remember how I was *patient* when I may

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have had a reason not to be, how I showed *kindness* to people in day-to-day life, how I *loved* people regardless of how they treated me, how I danced with *joy* on occasion, and so on.

I have often spoken and written about how parents need to instill those *Kingdom* virtues in their children—wisdom, integrity, faith, resiliency, purity, and service. That’s up to parents first and foremost, but grandfathers can support and complement them in important ways.

I continue to be excited about the influence of Carey and the National Center for Fathering on fathers and families. You would do well to get your sons and sons-in-law plugged into their helpful insights and resources for dads and granddads.

I have eleven grandchildren, and their mere presence provides me with regular and very clear reminders that I am leaving a legacy. Like Carey, I am certainly not a perfect dad or granddad, but I have tried to be purposeful about how I invest myself in my offspring. They are your greatest legacy, and I hope you will find ways to make them one of your top priorities. There is no better way to spend your later years of life.

I am humbled at the ways God has blessed my children and grandchildren. They all are treasures in their own ways. And yes, they all bring me a lot of joy! Out of all the different reasons people might know me, “The Dancing Grandfather” is surely one of my favorites. And by the time this book is published, I will pick up an even better title: “The Dancing *Great-Grandfather*.”

*Tony Evans*

PASTOR AND AUTHOR



## A CALL TO ACTION



IF YOU'RE A DAD, there's a good chance you will be a grandfather someday.

Statistically, more than 90 percent of all Americans over age sixty-five whose children have reached adulthood have grandchildren. And most men who become grandfathers do so by age fifty. If you're like me, that sounds young. If you are already a grandpa, you might wonder what someone else has to say about the role.

Whether you're anticipating stepping into this new role or are already enjoying it, welcome to this great privilege and responsibility. When you're handed the ball called "Grandpa," don't drop it. If you have it, hang on to it.

Grandfathering, like fathering, is another important job

without a manual. Most of us didn't have any obvious training before we were presented with a child born from someone we clearly remember as a child.

Sure, there might have been people in our lives who provided a pattern for our own grandparenting efforts, but most likely we didn't pay attention to *how* we were trained. Or maybe our own grandparents were absent or disconnected from our lives, so they didn't offer much of an example.

Whatever our starting point, we probably didn't choose to become grandfathers the same way we chose to be dads. We were intimately involved in the process of fatherhood, but grandfatherhood is a possibility and title we are handed with little say-so on our part. Even so, the moment your excited son or daughter says, "Dad, you're going to be a grandpa!" or calls at midnight babbling, "Congratulations, Gramps!" you are changed in an instant, no matter how you've prepared for the moment.

I'm hoping you've made some great memories between your children's birth and his or her graduation into parenthood. In fact, I pray you've been a Championship Father. Now it's time to figure out what it takes to be a Championship *Grandfather*.

In 2009 I had the honor of authoring a book called *Championship Fathering*. That book was and continues to be a statement about the purpose of all we do at the National Center for Fathering, an organization I have been privileged to lead. I was delighted when Focus on the Family, the publisher of the original book, asked us to write this book about the next phase of life for fathers. Apparently, Focus on the Family realizes that the first Baby Boomers—the largest generation

in US history—started turning 65 in 2011.<sup>1</sup> It seems likely that more and more of us are entering grandparenthood.

In preparation for this book, I reread *Championship Fathering*. If you haven't read it yet, let me encourage you to do so. I want to impress upon you that if your shortcomings and failures as a father are driving you to be a better grandfather, don't overlook the unfinished work of fathering. You may have added a new title to your portfolio, but you haven't been released from significant duties in the lives of your children. You'll still be Dad beyond your last breath. Much more on this later.

While revisiting *Championship Fathering*, I was surprised by how often I included asides to grandfathers or acknowledged that the principles shared in that book would apply to their grandchildren. We'll expand on those principles and map out some strategies in the pages to come. But for now, here at the beginning, let me call you to action as a grandfather.

As you read this book, you might discover that you're already doing many things right as a grandpa and have already responded to that call! I know that every grandfather I talk to is potentially a source of great wisdom for me. We need to share our discoveries with each other and definitely encourage each other along the way. Never hesitate to say to a grandfather who's doing something right, "Way to go, Grandpa!"

But I also believe that in the coming chapters you'll find a few ways to fine-tune your grandfathering "vehicle" so it runs better and safely carries your grandchildren to good places.

One of the joyful tasks I have in my family settings is

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to surround our meals and gatherings in prayer. I want my grandchildren to say, “Grandpa prayed.” So let me end this brief introduction with a prayer for you as you read this book and renew your commitment to be a Championship Grandfather:

*Heavenly Father, let each man reading this book be encouraged; let each man know with clarity what’s pleasing to You and what needs to be left behind. Lift up a fellow grandfather who’s grieving lost years or missed opportunities, and show him what might still be done. Father, we all fall short of Your perfect example both as fathers and as grandfathers, but with Your help we can do better. Please convince us of that truth wherever we find ourselves today. Thank You for Your grace that brings that truth to us. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE DAY I BECAME “PI-PA”



THE YEAR WAS 2007, but it still feels like yesterday. I’d become a grandfather for the first time, and I couldn’t wait to announce it to the world! Here’s how I described my thoughts and feelings during those days in one of my radio ministry’s “daily thoughts.”

Let me tell you, being CEO of the National Center for Fathering is nothing compared with my brand new title . . . Granddaddy! That’s right. My son Marcellus and his bride recently had a baby girl, and I’m thrilled and humbled all at the same time.

When we heard the news, one of my first thoughts was, *I have just become my father!* I’m

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“Granddaddy Casey,” just like my father was, and just like his father was before him.

The first member of the next generation of Caseys has already brought to me a renewed sense of responsibility. It’s a new and exciting challenge. But it’s an undertaking I am ready and eager to meet. My parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents prepared the way, and now it’s my job to continue that legacy for this little girl.

I also think about this birth in the larger context of our culture. Here’s what I mean: This baby girl met all four of her grandparents in the first forty-eight hours of her life! That’s becoming less and less common today. What a blessing for that little one to have two parents and four grandparents who love her and who are there to help her grow into a godly woman.

Here at the National Center for Fathering, we believe that every child needs an involved dad, and those benefits extend down through the generations. It’s a marvelous thing to be part of. I have done my best to pass a healthy legacy to my children, and now I get to watch and support them as they pass it on to their children.

Right after I found out about my granddaughter’s birth, I was driving and listening to music, and I put in a CD by Nicole C. Mullen. One of her songs spoke to my heart in a fresh new way—it brought me to tears. Her song called “I Wish” captured my number-one dream for my new granddaughter.

## THE DAY I BECAME “PI-PA”

The song paraphrases the words of the Great Commandment from Mark 12:30, and I just can't stop singing it: “Of all the things I could ever want for you, I wish this more than life: Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, your mind, and strength.”

Dad, that's the most important legacy you can ever hope to pass on to your children and their children.

Now that I've welcomed many grandchildren to the world, I read that account and chuckle. Mostly I was thinking about the changes that little baby girl brought into my life. When I said, “I've become my dad,” I realized that with the birth of a new generation in my family I was one step closer to being history!

The weeks and months that followed that birth were filled with added lessons about the way one generation flows into the next. No one stops being a dad when he becomes a granddad. You simply add a completely new set of delights and duties. Both as a father and now as a grandfather, I've come to understand in a new way what Jesus meant when He said, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required” (Luke 12:48, *ESV*). The title of grandfather comes with responsibilities, and those of us who are ushered into that office had better figure out as soon as we can what the job requires of us.

My bride, Melanie, and I now have nine grandchildren, or as someone might call them, “a small riot about to happen.”

Shunton and Christie (our eldest) have presented us with two grandkids, while our secondborn, Patrice, and her

husband, John, have gifted us with three more. But our son Marcellus started the avalanche of little ones who have filled my bride's life and mine with a new level of joy, laughter, busyness, and exhaustion! He and Stephanie have added four members to our clan.

This means that we now have two nine-year-olds, three seven-year-olds, two five-year-olds, and two three-year-olds. For the moment, when everyone is present we have an adult for every grandchild in the family, counting our youngest child, Chance, as one of the grown-ups. But when it's just Melanie and me with the nine grandkids, it's easy to see how we might feel outnumbered! I'm so glad my bride is a teacher and not at all intimidated by a room full of kids.

### Pi-Pa?

After talking with other grandfathers, I've discovered that the title given to me by my granddaughter Salem—Pi-Pa (pronounced PEE-PAW)—is not unique. I thought my creative grandchild had invented a never-before-used term to describe who I was.

Kids *can* be creative, but in this case, the name probably has to do with the way little human beings learn how to speak and what sounds come easiest to them. One woman I know was called “Gonga” by her granddaughter. It's not a term that sounds special or endearing on its own, but the source made it precious to her. Whether it's Opa, Mmmpa, Grapa, Gonga, or Pi-Pa, one thing is true—our grandchildren can call us pretty much anything they want as long as they call us!

I know parents have the right to expect their kids to talk

to them first, but I also know that having that little child recognize you as someone special and run into your arms is an unforgettable experience. Those trusting smiles, giggles, and hearty laughter bring sunshine into any gloomy day.

And let me tell you, when you have nine grandchildren at your house when you come home from work, and they stampede to hug and greet you, that’s an experience beyond words. They already know that after the first round of hugs and kisses (including one for my bride), Pi-Pa will change out of his go-to-work clothes and put on his hang-out-with-the-grandkids-at-home clothes. They may watch *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* on TV occasionally, but every time they’re at our house they are learning about being part of Mr. Casey’s neighborhood.

Grandma is the activities coordinator; Pi-Pa is the benevolent supervisor. He’s the one in whose lap you can crawl for a break, or who can be convinced to be the foundation for a game of “Pile on Pi-Pa.”

Sometimes the spotlight is on me. My bride will turn to me at the dinner table and say, “Let’s have Pi-Pa say thanks over this meal.” At those times, I’m happy to express my gratitude to God for the blessings *on* the table and *around* the table.

But mostly, I’m more like a living rock in the middle of the rushing river than someone keeping up with all that’s going on. I’m watchful but content. One of my friends calls his times surrounded by his grandchildren “happy chaos,” and I know what he means. But I’m also seeing that as my grandchildren grow older, the blur of activity is also broken up by little conversations, curious questions, and times of

quiet in which one of the grandkids shares a moment on the recliner with the “rock.” And that “rock” is happy for their company as he watches the next generation grow up.

### **Grand Changes**

Don't get the idea from what I just described that I'm not actively involved in what's happening in my house. The grandkids aren't about to let Pi-Pa sit still for long. I'm a doting granddad, fortunate to still have a significant amount of energy. And I must say, having the flow of grandchildren around has given me a new awareness of the gift of life.

Take what happened just a few weeks after our first grandchild was born. My son and his wife were visiting us with their baby girl. One morning Melanie, Chance, and I were hurrying to get ready for a busy day. Concerned about being late, I was getting on everyone's case: “Why aren't you ready? We have to leave! I can't be late!” Then, when I thought we were all ready to walk out the door, I asked, “Where's Melanie?”

“Um . . . she's holding the baby,” someone said.

“Holding the baby?” I responded excitedly. “You mean . . . she's awake?”

Suddenly my priorities changed. Surely we could spare a few minutes. And in a flash, I was right there at Melanie's side, making baby talk to my granddaughter. She opened her eyes, looked at me, and gave me a big smile.

Maybe it was gas, but I'm going with another explanation: There's a special bond—a magical connection—between a grandfather and his grandchild. You can hardly wait for the moment when the smile becomes a smile of recognition. When your grandchild knows you, something amazing has

taken place. Another generation is starting to discover who they are and where they came from.

From a grandfather’s view, there is great fascination in connecting with your own descendant. It’s motivating and energizing! Having grandchildren brings out a side of us we never knew existed. My grandchildren’s pictures are all over my smart phone, and I brag on them every chance I get. I can already tell that my grandchildren are going to accomplish great things for this world and for God’s Kingdom. Another generation means all kinds of possibilities!

If you’re a grandfather, you know exactly what I mean. It’s a special, rewarding time. And what’s even better is that our job isn’t just about making baby talk. We have a unique role to play.

Without stepping on our children’s toes as they learn to be parents, we also have a new round of responsibilities. We impart values. We see the big picture. We offer an older and wiser perspective on the world. And we should intentionally exercise this strength as we try to be Championship Grandfathers. And as I experienced, we’re more likely to put other things on hold so we can soak up all the joy of investing in our loved ones.

### **Start with a Tree**

Your grandchildren or soon-to-come grandchildren may motivate you to be the best grandpa you can be, but they can’t give you much guidance on how to do the job. In other words, grandkids don’t come with instructions. The fact that you’re reading these words means you’re interested in a little direction, so let’s get started.

First, I'd like to remind you that this isn't your first rodeo! Expect to take some of your cues from your failures and successes in fathering. But it's important to know that this additional position with your children's children doesn't let you off the fathering hook, and it's not simply a do-over with a new generation. If you don't pay attention and practice some soul-searching about the fathering job you've already done, you are most likely to repeat mistakes—something neither you nor I want to do.

Next, to begin this soul-searching, you need to consider the influence of family members who came before you. So instead of thinking about *yourself as a grandfather*, start thinking about *your own* grandfathers. What do you know about them? It's likely your grandfathers have already died. If this is not the case, you have a brief opportunity to mine gold. If your own father is alive, he can be a source of valuable information about your heritage. Conversations between generations of men in a family often don't occur naturally; they must be intentional.

One area of fruitful interaction is talking about previous generations. Asking your father (perhaps reeling from the reality that he is now a great-grandfather) about his memories of his dad and granddad may open up treasures of family stories you never knew. Even if his relationship with his father wasn't great, you can still learn about family dynamics. That knowledge can often help you understand things about yourself that may have been a mystery until now.

In the chapters to come, we'll talk about what we can learn from the past that will help us influence the next generations

in a positive, intentional way. Understanding your heritage will influence the legacy you leave behind.

Finally, one way to start learning about that legacy is by creating a family tree. As a grandfather in your family tree, your life’s branches have already sprouted leaves, better known as grandchildren.

A Champion Grandfather is aware of and appreciates his own heritage. The fact that you are alive means there’s an unbroken chain of fathers reaching back from your life to the very beginning. Every link in that chain contributed in some way to who you are. Does that mystery intrigue you?

Even if you’re only able to trace back four or five generations, you may discover some astounding facts about your heritage. The basics of creating a family tree include recording names, dates, relationships, and places. These four categories will add up to many facts, even in a small family.

You may be among the many guys who lose track of important dates, so creating this family tree might mean you’ll have to make an effort. If you have trouble remembering your anniversary or your grandkids’ birthdays, it’s time to “man up” and either fill in an electronic calendar on your smart phone or buy a journal and name it “Dates I Don’t Want to Forget.”

Your bride will probably be stunned if you sit down beside her with your phone/tablet/journal and say, “Honey, I need to make a list for myself of important dates.” You may discover she has a few generations of birthdays and anniversaries written down somewhere for you to copy.

Once you have names and dates of a couple of generations

before you, start working on a short profile of each person: place of birth, where they are buried, what kind of work they did, significant events in their lives, and any quotes, sayings, or traits that are attributed to them in the family. If you remember specific experiences you had with these people, make a note of them. Better yet, start an audio collection entitled “Things I Remember about My Family” that you can pass on to your kids and grandkids.

Let me add at this point that you may be a fortunate man. As you have conversations with your bride and various extended family members about your tree, ask if anyone in the clan has been compiling genealogical facts about the family. Someone may have done the work for you! If you discover charts that trace the branches of your family and your bride’s family, you have a head start. Be sure to thank any living family members who have already done this work.

But realize these collections of names, dates, and relationships are just the framework that needs to be filled in with as many stories as you can find. Along the way, you may be amazed at other discoveries you make.

I have a friend who was born in 1950, the first grandson on his father’s side of the family. When he was a teenager, his oldest uncle pulled him aside during a brief visit and gave him a military saber that was used by an ancestor during the American Revolutionary War. The rusty sword was still encased in a leather scabbard that was falling apart.

The oldest son in each generation of the family had been the keeper of that family heirloom. Unfortunately, that uncle died shortly after he passed on the sword, and the young man

never learned of any specific stories or history connected with that object, a mystery he is still trying to unravel.

One tantalizing tidbit of family lore is that the saber was wielded by an officer who arrived in America as a mercenary hired by the British to fight the rebellious colonists. The officer deserted to the enemy and earned his citizenship by fighting in the Continental Army. Apparently, he abandoned his original name and adopted a new American name, which the family still bears.

The teenager who received that saber is now a grandfather himself, still trying to verify that story but enjoying the idea of being related to a Revolutionary War hero.

Like many Americans of African descent, I know my family tree eventually branches back across the ocean to Africa. Visiting that continent as an adult with my son, Chance, was a reminder that the story of my family has come a long—and sometimes very difficult—way. I have come to realize that generations have subtle but profound effects on those coming after.

Because of the circumstances of my ancestors’ arrival in this country, much of my family history before emancipation is unknown. I know more about my family’s history during the time following official slavery and in the continuing decades of latent racism in our country. There are plenty of stories among my relatives of places we couldn’t go, hotels we couldn’t stay in overnight, and dehumanizing treatment received.

But what shines for me in the lives of my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents is a persistent practice of

dignity, of rising above difficult circumstances, and of quietly striving for a better life for those coming later.

I'm a product of several generations of people who understood that making good use of an actual opportunity was much better than complaining about opportunities that were not there. It's gratifying for me to watch and listen to my grown children express their pride in what their grandparents and great-grandparents were able to achieve with limited choices. They are humbled to realize how much of their life stories were shaped by people in out-of-the-way places back in Virginia, people who worked hard and built a legacy for the family.

Part of that legacy is a phrase I can still hear my dad say over and over (I always say it with his intonation, a little deeper than my natural voice): "Son, you've got to remember the importance of perseverance."

The older I've become, the more I've seen that he was passing on to me what had been passed on to him. His father and grandfather had persevered. Likewise, my dad stayed on track in the little and big things, no matter what kind of obstacles or environment he faced.

His little one-word or one-sentence sermons influenced my life because that's the way he lived. I didn't see Pop telling me one thing and doing another. He highlighted his words with actions.

The stories I've been able to share with Marcellus about his grandfathers have aroused his curiosity. I have some of my father's journals, which my sister put into my care after Pop died. When they are missing from my study, I know Marcellus has borrowed them for some research. I can hardly

tell you what it means to watch my son take an interest in his past.

Those journal pages seem at first to be covered with only “chicken scratches.” But when I take a closer look at those notations, words start leaping off the page. I hear his voice—deep, mellow, and always thoughtful.

He considered words before he said them. He wasn’t in a hurry. At times, it seemed as if he tasted the words before he said them. And he didn’t have to talk a lot to say something meaningful.

When I started reading his journals, I realized that many things he had told me were not off-the-cuff thoughts. He had made notes to himself and chosen specific words he wanted to use.

So it doesn’t surprise me that perseverance comes up often in his writings. He didn’t stumble into perseverance. As an African American man, he had a deep appreciation for the perseverance of his forefathers, individuals who led to his life, his opportunities, and a way of conduct that could preserve generations to come. And when I see my son reading his grandfather’s journals, I realize he’s not only connecting with his heritage; he’s also seeing in many ways why his father is the way he is.

Taking time to explore your own heritage will definitely give you a perspective on the generation or two immediately before you. It’s not always an easy thing. We discover that certain patterns in our parents are actually good or bad echoes of previous generations. Later in the book, we’ll talk about how we can make changes for the sake of future generations.

Sometimes digging into the past comes with humorous moments. My friend Neil had the joy of homeschooling his youngest child during her high school years. They decided that one of her ongoing projects would be family exploration. She was thrilled to discover she had a Canadian great-grandmother who had emigrated from Scotland when she was quite young.

These discoveries were made during the time that the movie *Braveheart* was released. One of the standing jokes between Neil and his daughter was watching the battle scenes and guessing which of their Scottish relatives might have been represented on the screen.

Tracing your family tree may include some dead ends or hard-to-find trails. What if you or a previous ancestor were adopted? The records might be difficult to access or completely lost. You have the choice to continue genealogical detective work or to actively “reverse adopt” the family who opened their doors to you. Accept their heritage as your own and be grateful that their family values included making room for those who had lost their family connection. They gave you a priceless gift, and that’s a legacy in itself.

### *Action Steps*

1. Create a personal family tree including at least your children; yourself and your wife; and the parents, grandparents, and possibly the great-grandparents on both sides. List names and birth, wedding, and any death dates for each.

## THE DAY I BECAME “PI-PA”

2. Decide how you will develop a short profile for each of the names on your family tree. Give yourself a month to fill in the spaces.
3. Start with your own profile. What do you want your children to remember about you? What do you want your grandchildren to experience with you? I hope by the time you finish reading this book, your list of ideas in these areas will have grown.