



DIY GRANDCAMP

by Larry McCall

Getting Started

We were still putting things away from this year's Grandcamp when we started talking about what we could do for next year's Grandcamp. It had been a great week (actually 5 days). Though we were tired, we were happy, grateful and tired. This had been our fourth year of hosting our grandkids for five days of enjoying "Lots of Love! Lots of Fun!" to quote my wife, Gladine.

Having initially heard of the concept of Grandcamp from our friend, Cavin Harper, Gladine and I began to wonder back in 2017 what it would take to do our own Grandcamp.

Taking our grandkids to an established traditional Grandcamp involving multiple families and hosted by a trained camp staff sounded like a wonderful idea, but we were somewhat limited by time, geography, and finances. Would we be able to do Grandcamp here at our home – a "DIY Grandcamp," as it were? And so, we began praying and planning.

The first year went so well that our grandkids were begging us to do it again! And so we did, again and again and again – four years so far, each year building on our previous experiences.

Tips for Having a DIY GrandCamp

What have we learned about having a “Do It Yourself Grandcamp” that may be an encouragement for you to do something similar? Here are some highlights and tips that I trust you will find helpful:

PRAY: We need God's help. We want God's help. So, let's ask Him!

- Ask for discernment and direction: Are there particular needs in the lives of our grandchildren that we might be able to address in a loving, focused way at Grandcamp?
- Ask for unity: Our families are usually made up of a variety of personalities and preferences over all three generations. How might we all work together to make it a great Grandcamp?
- Ask for the Lord's work in the lives of the grandkids – and grandparents! Let's ask the Lord to use Grandcamp for His glory and the good of our grandchildren.
- Ask for strength! No matter the size of our flock of grandkids, their energy level – and ours – we will need God's empowerment to keep up – and to do so with joy.



Lots of love! Lots of fun!

PLAN: Though our plans are always submitted to God's sovereignty, the time to plan will make Grandcamp more enjoyable for everyone.

- Plan the “theme” for Grandcamp. We have found having a memorable spiritual theme to be especially helpful. One year we used Marty Machowski's Listen up: Ten Minute Family Devotionals on the Parables. I planned short devotionals for each mealtime and bedtime, drawing Scriptures, illustrations, activities and applications from this book. So the theme that year was “Listen Up!” It went so well that the following year we used Marty's book Wise Up: Ten Minute Devotionals in Proverbs. “Wise Up” made a great theme that year. For the last two years I've drawn from my own book Walking Like Jesus Did. So, pick a theme for the entire Grandcamp with daily “sub-themes.” You might want to plan a memory verse for the week or even daily memory verses to work on together.
- Plan the dates for Grandcamp. Talk to your kids about their family's calendar. When might make the best days for Grandcamp?

PLAN continued

- If you have grandchildren from multiple families, this will take some coordination, so it may be best to work on establishing dates for Grandcamp months in advance, if possible. We've enjoyed blocking out five days for Grandcamp (Monday morning through Friday evening), but that might be a bit much for your situation. What would work best for you and your family? Get it on the calendar and start talking it up with your kids and grandkids, watching the excitement grow with each intervening interaction!
- Plan the activities for Grandcamp. The possible activities you want to incorporate are fun to think about and plan for. If your budget is limited, don't let that keep you and your grandkids from experiencing the "Lots of Love! Lots of Fun!" that Gladine talks excitedly about. What backyard games could you plan? How about indoor activities in case of inclement weather? If you have some older grandkids, ask them to help come up with some ideas. Maybe they would even like to be in charge of a game, activity or craft project. Don't have your own pool? Might a friend or neighbor be willing to let you borrow their pool? Are there any kid-friendly activities in your community that your grandchildren would enjoy?



First pray; then, plan.

Check them out ahead of time and include some in your planning. Is there a Christian friend you would like to be a guest for an hour or so, telling their testimony? And, what ice cream shops might you want to visit during Grandcamp – or could you have a “create your own sundae” activity in your home?

Concerned about having too much planned? Why not build in “quiet time” in the afternoon for napping or reading? How about scheduling some “free time” for the kids to play together? We like to call it “cousin time,” encouraging the growth of those family relationships. And, we've enjoyed planning some winding-down time in the evenings, watching a Torchlighters (<https://torchlighters.org>) video with the grandkids before evening Bible time, prayer and bedtimes.

- Plan the daily schedule: We've found that having a planned-ahead-of-time daily schedule has been helpful not only to us grandparents, but for the grandkids, too.

PLAN continued

We've actually posted the daily schedule on the kitchen wall so that the kids who are old enough to read can see what we'll be doing that day, Lord willing. We list meals, activities and devotional theme for the day. By the way, we keep these in a file so that we can refer back as we think through the coming year's Grandcamp.

- Plan the meals: Depending on the number of your grandchildren, meal prep could feel daunting at this season of our lives. Talk to your kids about any dietary limitations of the grandkids so you can plan accordingly. We try to plan simple meals that the kids will like and their parents approve of. We've enjoyed including the (older) grandkids in our planning, asking them ahead of time if they would like to choose a meal to help plan and prepare. Fun! Keep it simple.

Involve the grandchildren as much as they are able in the prep, set up, clean up, etc. This is good training in serving one another! Oh, and by planning the meals ahead of time, the shopping can be done before camp starts, eliminating the need for repeated runs to the grocery store, taking one of you away from Grandcamp activities.

- Plan the end-of-camp "blessings:" Another nod to Cavin Harper who introduced us to the value of having planned times of "blessing" each of our grandchildren.

For each of the four Grandcamps we've had so far, we've ended the week by inviting the parents to join us for a closing dinner where they hear highlights from each of the grandchildren. Then, as the "patriarch," I ask each of the young ones to come in turn beside me as I place my hand on them and read prepared, personalized "blessings," noting God's grace in their lives, asking God's blessing for their futures and declaring their grandmother's and my commitment to walk with them on their journey as long as we have life. The grandkids of all ages have demonstrated how much they look forward to "Papa's blessing."

(BTW, I give hard copies of each blessing to the child and a second copy to his/her parents).



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Engage: By planning ahead of time our devotionals, meals and activities, we will have greater freedom to engage with our grandchildren, whether as a group or one-on-one, when needed. We don't want the activities or meal prep to be so consuming that we miss those opportunities for eye contact, meaningful conversations and just plain laughter-filled fun times. By God's grace, let's be "in the moment" with our precious grandchildren during their time with us at Grandcamp.

Rejoice! Let's look back on our time with our grandchildren at Grandcamp, thanking God for His work in each of our lives, even while we begin to pray and dream about next year's Grandcamp!

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