It's Not Just for Kids

The little girl tugged gently on her grandpa's sleeve. He stopped quickly and gladly as he asked, "What is it?" She pointed to a small caterpillar and giggled, "Look how he walks, Grandpa!" The old man leaned down slowly, put both hands on the grass hoping his granddaughter wouldn't notice his struggle as he finally plopped down beside her.

The little inchworm was barely over an inch long, but its steady, measured gate enthralled the little girl. "Grandpa," she said slowly, "Why does he walk like that?" The old man smiled and said, "Because somebody has to measure the size of the grass." The answer satisfied her for the moment. There was a long silence that seemed to bridge the gap between 3 generations.

Finally, the little girl asked, "Grandpa, why do you seem to have more time than Mom and Dad?" Sensing a bit of sorrow in her question, the old man said, "Well, you see, sweetheart, God made a special time for grandpas and grandmas – it's called *retirement*. That way they have a little extra time for caterpillars, turtles, frogs and fun things like that." Deep down, the old man understood the pressures of jobs and mortgage payments, but he wondered just how much time his own kids spent with television, tennis and dinner parties.

"Grandpa, do you know what I love about you?" "No, what?" the old man asked with a deep smile wrinkling his leathery skin. "You always take time to look into my eyes and listen, even if I talk too long."

"It's called *patience,"* said the old man.

"What does that mean?" asked the little girl, her brow wrinkled more deeply than her age would suggest. "Well," the old man paused, "I guess it means that when you love others and your interest in people gets stronger than your love of things and events, it just seems natural to sit down on the grass and watch a little girl smile and watch in wonder as a little green caterpillar measures the lawn."

"I like patience," the little girl pondered as she grasped the concept. "Me too," her grandpa said as they shared a high five. "Why don't more people have patience, Grandpa?" Her eyes searched his face. "I think they just haven't yet learned the beauty and joy of simply relaxing with those you love." The old man was quite happy with his off the cuff answer.

The little girl grasped more than the old man realized. She said, with wisdom beyond her years, "Grandpa, I like being patient when we are together. It's kinda like sharing a clock that ticks in our hearts at the same time." The old man knew she really did understand. As he got up slowly, the little girl held his hand. They walked a long way before either of them spoke. The little girl finally broke the gentle silence, "Grandpa, I think patience is part of love."

"Me too," he said as he picked her up for a piggy back ride the rest of the way home.

As the old man walked to his own home that evening, he passed an antique store and saw a faded, cross-stitched piece framed in hand-hewn oak, ***"Love is Patient – I Corinthians 13."*** Just then he remembered a verse from his own distant youth, "Out of the mouths of babes…."

-Ray Wallace