

# 2020

## Christian Grandparenting Network

# TOP 10 BLOG POSTS



*Representing Christ to the  
Next Generation!*

CHOICES HAVE  
CONSEQUENCES

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DISCUSSING THE BIBLE  
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# Choices Have Consequences

By Cavin Harper  
July 3, 2020

*" He thought to himself, 'What shall I do?'"*  
-Luke 12:17a

It's true – choices do have consequences. In Jesus' parable of the rich fool, the man in this story chose not to involve God in his decisions. Notice how he responds to the wealth he accumulated: "He thought to himself;" "This is what I'll do...;" "I'll say to myself..." Did you catch all the first-person pronouns? Not once did the rich fool ask God what he should do with all his newly accumulated wealth. He chose not to inquire of God in his choices. In doing so, he forgot that God is always involved whether we want Him to be or not.

Growing up I remember my father telling me, "Son, the boy who only does what he wants to do and not what he ought to do will never become the man he was meant to be." How do we teach our grandchildren to make choices in life that are about doing what we 'ought' to do because these are choices that will determine the kind of man or woman God wants them to be? We teach first by the choices we make. If we go through life making important decisions without involving God, what message do we communicate about the importance of God's wisdom in life? The rich fool thought he could choose his course without God's input, but God had other plans.

We talk a lot about freedom in this country, especially at this time of year. Yet freedom is not about choosing to do whatever I want to do. It's choosing to what is right according to God's good and perfect will. It's choosing to spend wisely during our retirement years and using the resources God has given us well. How we spend our time and resources will reveal whether God is involved in our choices or not.

In the end, God will always be involved. The question is whether our choices deliberately acknowledge His involvement or not. Selfish choices lead to destructive consequences. Loving, Spirit-led choices lead to life. It's your choice...and what you and I choose will speak volumes to our grandchildren about our heart that will very likely impact theirs as well.

# Reading and Discussing The Bible with Grandchildren

By Josh Mulvihill  
August 11, 2020

God instructs grandparents to teach grandchildren the truths of Scripture. Deuteronomy 4:9 states, "Teach these things to your children and children's children." In Psalm 78:5 God commands grandparents to teach multiple generations to obey God's commands.

Throughout church history the primary method to teach and disciple young people has been called family worship. Family worship is the means of introducing children to the truths of Scripture and preparing children for the Christian life. The practice consists of reading the Bible as a family, prayer, and praising God through music. If you have not developed the habit of regularly reading and discussing the Bible with your grandchildren, then this is a high impact priority for you to implement.

Consider a few practical thoughts:

- Read the Bible, not someone's thoughts about the Bible. The best devotionals make the Bible the primary source and keep the gospel central to each section of Scripture. Marty Machowski has written *The Long Story Short* and *Old Story New*, which is a Bible reading plan with discussion questions and prayer. My book, *Preparing Children for Marriage* contains fifteen Bible studies that you can use with grandchildren on marriage, dating, purity and sex.
- Read the entire Bible to children. The pattern of Scripture is to teach children the deep truths of Scripture. For example, children were not excused when theologically weighty topics were covered in the Colossian or Ephesian church. Children were present to be told to obey parents; and therefore, were taught everything contained in these two books.
- Read briefly. Remember, they are children. The younger a grandchild is, the shorter their attention span will be. Don't expect your grandchild to study the Bible like an adult. Try to keep your family reading concise and to the point, but meaningful. Ten minutes is a good amount of time to begin.

Your goal is to explain the Bible passage clearly and biblically, engage grandchildren in the process, and help them apply God's truth to life.

## Teach Grandchildren the Core Truths of Christianity

Grandparents should teach grandchildren of all ages the core truths of the Christian faith with a zeal and consistency that follows the pattern of the Bible. In 2 Timothy 3:15 we read of Timothy, "From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writing, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." Psalm 71:17 says, "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds."

The pattern of Scripture is for children of all ages to be taught the core truths of the Bible so that they will be firmly rooted in Christ and established in their faith (Col 2:7). The following topics should be taught to children of all ages:

### *Big Picture of the Bible*

The Bible is not a random collection of people or events. It is a unified whole with one main storyline pointing to, revolving around, and fulfilled in Jesus. There are four major parts of the Bible: creation (Gen. 1-2), rebellion (Gen. 3), salvation (Gen. 4 – Rev. 20), and re-creation (Rev. 21-22). As you read through the Old Testament, help grandchildren see how it points to Jesus and his covenant of salvation. Jesus himself did this, "And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, he explained to them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures" (Lk. 24:27).

The primary aim of the Bible is to glorify God, and this happens in salvation and judgment found on every page of the Bible. Read and reread the stories of the Bible to your grandchildren with this in mind. Familiarize them with the main stories, people, and events of the Bible, but not in a way that detaches them from the overall storyline of Scripture. We should call our grandchildren to obey Jesus Christ and can use the heroes of the faith as models to imitate, but let our teaching not dissolve into moralistic instruction separated from the gospel of Jesus or the glory of God.

Teaching the big picture of the Bible accomplishes two things. First, it answers the big questions of life that every young person will ask such as, "Where did I come from? What is the purpose of life? Who am I? What went wrong in the world? Why is there pain and suffering? What is the answer to all the problems? What happens after I die?"

Second, it trains young people with a biblical view of life so they have the ability to detect and reject the world's big lies. When you teach creation, it will help to refute evolution and atheism; rebellion contradicts relativism (God determines right and wrong); salvation in Christ counters all other world religions; and re-creation addresses the problem of evil (we have hope).

### *Core truths of the Christian Faith*

The Bible's word for core truths is the word doctrine. Doctrine is simply a word to describe what the Bible teaches. Paul challenges young Timothy to "watch your life and your doctrine closely" (1 Tim 4:16). Every grandchild needs to understand the core truths of the Christian faith to grow into a man or woman with convictions to follow God.

The two most critical doctrines for grandchildren to learn center on the Word of God and the Son of God. It is a mark of successful grandparenting to teach grandchildren the inerrancy, authority, and sufficiency of the Bible. It should be a high priority for all grandparents to train grandchildren to embrace the supremacy, exclusivity, deity, and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

In addition, we must repeatedly, with greater depth as grandchildren age, teach topics such as the character and existence of God, God's design for marriage between one man and one woman, biblical manhood and womanhood, Christ-honoring sexuality, stewardship of time, talents, and treasures, and wise choices based on godly character.

### **An Example**

One grandparent, who is worthy of closer examination, is Lois. Lois was the grandmother to Timothy and played an important role in his spiritual life (2 Tim. 1:5). The apostle Paul suggests that Lois taught Timothy the Scriptures from an early age, which became foundational in his following Christ (2 Tim. 3:14-15). Lois is a godly grandparent worthy of imitation. Grandparents might consider three principles for teaching grandchildren:

1. Early instruction (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Research reveals that upwards of 80 percent of individuals become Christians before age twelve. The early years are important years because children are most moldable at this stage of life.
2. Frequent instruction (2 Tim. 3:14). Paul tells Timothy to continue in his firm belief in Christ. Firm belief results from a lot of little conversations over a long period of time that are reinforced at different ages and stages of life.
3. Biblical instruction (2 Tim. 3:15). Notice that Timothy is taught the Bible from a young age. There is no substitute for Scripture-based teaching as it is the means God uses for salvation of the young.

### **Key Tools**

Donald Whitney has written a concise and practical book called *Family Worship*. I like this book because it can be read in under an hour and provides a quick overview of family worship in the Bible, in church history, and covers the three primary components of family worship. If you would like to develop the habit of regular, consistent family devotions, then this is the book to get.

*The Bible's Big Story* and *The Whole Story of the Bible in 16 Verses* will help you teach your grandchildren the big picture of the Bible centered on Jesus Christ. *The Bible's Big Story* can be read in one sitting with grade school aged children and touches on the main people and themes of the Bible. *The Whole Story of the Bible* is perfect for teens and would make a great gift or could be read and discussed over a period of time.

There are many good resources to teach children and youth the core truths of the Christian faith. For children I recommend *The Gospel for Children* and *What Does the Bible Say About That?* For teens I recommend *Bitesize Theology* and *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*. These books will help you teach the basics of faith in an age-appropriate way.

# Sharing Our Faith Story

By Sherry Schumann  
September 9, 2020

Grandparents love to shop for their grandchildren. While there's nothing wrong with purchasing strollers or cribs, dance shoes or soccer balls, the greatest gift that we can give our children can't be purchased online or picked up at a big-box store. It won't break, corrode, deteriorate, fray or rot. It costs nothing, except time and commitment on our part. The greatest gift is a legacy of faith.

There are three ways to pass a faith legacy: sharing our testimonies, giving the spoken blessings, and praying daily. In this article, we will talk about what it means to share our testimony.

## What is Our Testimony?

According to the first letter of John, "Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony within him" (1 John 5:10). This testimony is Jesus within us. It includes our witness of the Gospel Message or the Good News of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. It also includes our family heritage, salvation stories and faith journey.

Author Ken Canfield writes, "Everyone's life is a story. Each of us has received incredible blessing and overcome daunting obstacles." It is a story that was, is and will continue to be written, edited, and published by God. It's a story meant to be shared with future generations.

## Why Do We Share Our Testimony?

We share our testimonies for the following reasons:

- Scripture warns us not to hide our testimonies from our grandchildren but to "tell the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might and the wonders that He has done" (Psalm 78:4-8).
- If we don't tell them our faith stories, they will become "a stubborn and rebellious generation" (Psalm 78:8).

Can you imagine the impressive stories, which Joshua told his descendants? Stories about spying on the inhabitants of Canaan, watching the walls of Jericho fall and stepping from the desert into the Promised Land. Tragically, these stories were never passed down. After Joshua's children "had been gathered to their ancestors, another

generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what He had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals” (Judges 2:10-11).

- We have a responsibility and the desire to present our grandchildren “mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:28) when we reach heaven’s gates.

## **Where Do We Share Our Testimony?**

Let’s turn in our Bibles to the first chapter of Acts where we find our Risen Lord. giving instructions to His disciples. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:9). These instructions weren’t intended only for the disciples; they are intended for us, as well.

Christ calls us to be witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth. This includes New York City, Boise, Dallas, Havana, Cape Town, Mumbai, Cebu and wherever our families live.

Whether we are local or long-distance grandparents, estranged or charged with the responsibility of raising our grandchildren, we are called to share Jesus to the best of our ability with the generations coming after us.

## **When Do We Share Our Testimony?**

Are you familiar with Moses’ directive to talk about God’s commandments and decrees “when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:7)? There wasn’t anything special about these activities; they were part of the Israelites daily routine.

If Moses had been talking with grandparents living in the twenty-first century, he would have told us to talk about the Lord when we are sitting at the kitchen table, standing at a soccer match, driving down the road, talking via FaceTime, sending a text message or simply “doing life” with our grandchildren.

## **What are Different Ways to Share Our Testimony?**

We’ll examine the four parts of our testimonies—Gospel Message, family heritage, salvation story and faith journey—separately.

### *Good News*

The holidays provide the perfect time for us to teach our grandchildren about Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection. For example, we can encourage our grandchildren to learn and tell the Christmas story in their words, using an inexpensive Nativity scene or creating their own. We also can plan a baby shower for Mary or a birthday party for Jesus, complete with a homemade cake.

“Resurrection eggs” are an excellent tool for teaching about Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter. While these plastic eggs can be purchased online, I recommend making homemade ones. (See below.) One of my family’s favorite Easter traditions is enjoying yummy resurrection buns and talking about the significance of the empty tomb. (See below).

### *Family Heritage*

Everyone wants a connection or sense of belonging; therefore, it’s important for us to share stories about our family heritage. Our grandchildren need to know about our parents and grandparents, childhood home, accidents and illnesses, education, experiences, livelihood, and family’s faith traditions. They also need to know what it was like growing up without cell phones and computers, why we got married, what it was like being a parent to their mothers and fathers and why being a grandparent is so special. Anecdotal stories are a wonderful way to convey this information.

### *Salvation Story*

Our grandchildren often catch us off-guard with their questions about God. Not only do they surprise us; they only give us a narrow window of opportunity to answer questions like, “Is Jesus real?” before they dart to another topic.

In her book, *Pass the Legacy*, Cathy Jacobs recommends getting prepared now. She suggests considering the following questions and jotting down a one-paragraph answer for each:

- What was your life like before you came to know Christ?
- What happened to change your life?
- How is your life different now?

(For those of you who grew up in the church, you may want to answer describe the moment Jesus became real to you.) These three paragraphs form the “bare-bones” version of your salvation story. I suggest that you practice telling this story to another grandparent and listening as they practice theirs.

### *Faith Journey*

Our faith journey includes stories of answered prayer, lessons learned, Godly-coincidences and examples of God’s mighty hand working in our lives. A great exercise to help us remember these stories is to create a timeline of our spiritual journey, using the following steps:

- Draw a horizontal line across a blank sheet of paper.
- Place a dot on the far-left corner of the line and write “God knew me before He made the world.”
- Move one inch to the right of the first dot. Place another dot and write Birth, plus the date and year you were born.
- Place a dot on the far-right corner and write “Eternity.”

- Proceed to fill in your spiritual timeline, placing a mark to represent times when you have experienced transitions and/or transformations. Be sure to include the date or year and place the marks relative in time to each other. Don't forget to include things like your baptism, first job, wedding day, birth of your children and any moments closest to Christ.

There are numerous ways to record and share these memories with your loved ones. I recommend the following:

- Write a spiritual memoir for a specific period of your life. (There is a difference between an autobiography and a memoir. An autobiography includes everything on your spiritual timeline, whereas a memoir only includes a portion of the timeline or specific event.)
- Keep a prayer journal. Include your requests, the answers you receive and dates for each.
- Create "Ebenzers" by gathering stones, shells or other collectable items, which you can write on with marker. For every answered prayer or wondrous work of God, write a word or Scripture verse, which will remind you of this specific event, on one of the stones. Showcase your Ebenzers in a glass vase and use them to share your faith stories with your grandchildren.
- Create a Blessings Jar filled with thank-you notes to God.

### **How Do We Share Our Testimony?**

We share our testimonies respectfully and sensitively, being aware of our grandchildren's physical, emotional, and spiritual maturity. We also share with Holy Spirit boldness, knowing that God doesn't call us to be spiritual lawyers, responsible for proving that Jesus is Savior and Lord. He simply asks us to be witnesses, to tell our God-story, and leave the results to Him.

### *Resurrection Eggs*

Directions: Number plastic eggs 1-12. Add the following objects to each egg.

- Egg #1: Oyster cracker (or bread) – Matthew 26:26
- Egg #2: Silver coins – Matthew 26:14-16
- Egg #3: Purple cloth – Matthew 27:28
- Egg #4: Thorns – Matthew 27:29
- Egg #5: Rope – Mark 15:15
- Egg #6: Cross – John 19:16-17
- Egg #7: Nail – John 19:18
- Egg #8: Sign that says, “This is the king of the Jews.” – Luke 23:38
- Egg #9: Sponge (with vinegar) – Matthew 27:48
- Egg #10: Cloves or spices – Luke 23:5-6
- Egg #11: Rock – Matthew 27:59-60
- Egg #12: EMPTY! – Matthew 28:55-56

### *Recipe for Resurrection Rolls*

1. Allow a package of frozen or homemade yeast rolls to rise overnight (Holy Saturday).
2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees the next morning (Easter).
3. Wrap each roll around one large marshmallow.
4. Dip the wrapped roll into melted butter
5. Roll in cinnamon and sugar, coating well.
6. Place on a greased cookie sheet.
7. Bake in the oven until the marshmallows have evaporated, and the rolls have browned.
8. When the rolls have cooled, give one to each of your grandchildren. Examine the hole left by the evaporated marshmallow, which represents the empty tomb. Talk about the significance of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

# 5-minute Devotional: God is Our Refuge

By Terri Sherrow  
October 12, 2020

Do you ever feel anxious, stressed, or scared? When there are situations with our family, friends, community, job, or school that make us anxious, we often try to take these burdens on ourselves. This is not how God wants us to live. It is His desire to be near to us with help and comfort, for us to seek Him for strength and refuge. God wants us to put our faith and trust in Him. Psalm 46 assures us that God is with us during times of trouble and the storms of life. When we seek Him as our refuge, He is our shelter and our security. Turning to Him in any situation will give you the confidence and assurance that you have nothing to fear.

## Read

Psalm 46:1-11

## Discuss

- How does God want us to call on Him during any time of need? (Read Hebrews 4:16)
- How is God our refuge? (He is our shelter where we can flee for safety, protecting us with His grace.)
- How is God our strength? (When we feel weak and defenseless, we can rely on God's strength as our own.)
- What does it mean in Psalm 46:10 to "be still"? (To spend time with God, to read and study his Word, and to quit holding on to things that separate you from Him and His grace.)

## Pray

Praise God for being our refuge and strength.

*Heavenly Father,*

*You are the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, in all the heavens and on the earth. How great is your faithfulness, guiding me daily as I turn to you to make wise decisions without fear. I pray that you guide me with the strength in your grace, power, and glory. Thank you for being the God of many nations and the God of a single, solitary person – me! Amen.*

# The Art of Asking Questions: A Grandparent's Guide

By Deborah Haddix  
October 26, 2020

One of the most powerful tools any grandparent can utilize is that of asking questions. This simple act reaps many benefits.

Asking questions of your grandchildren shows your interest in them and draws them into a conversation. Your questions can help you learn more about their personalities, daily life, struggles, and feelings. Additionally, the conversations that flow naturally from your questions help strengthen your grandparent-grandchild connection and build stronger relationships.

Question asking is a powerful tool. However, like anything else, the better we understand this tool, the more effective its use.

## PRACTICAL WAYS TO DEVELOP THE ART OF ASKING QUESTIONS

### **Be Present with Your Grandchildren.**

You're asking questions because you want to connect with your grandchildren and deepen those relationships. This isn't going to happen if your grandchildren feel like they are part of an inquisition.

Create a safe and comfortable atmosphere by "doing" something together as you talk: go fishing, work a jigsaw puzzle, cook dinner, or take a walk.

### **Do Your Homework. Then Ask Questions that Connect.**

Listen when your grandchildren talk. It's so easy to tune them out. But when you make the effort to listen, you will hear all kinds of things about their school day, their friends, and situations that are causing them angst. These are the things to ask questions about later.

#### *Other Homework Tips:*

Listen, as well, when their parents are sharing things with you that your grandchildren are going through. These are things to note and ask your grandchild about.

Keep a pad of paper and a pencil by the phone. When you talk with your grandchildren, write down the things you want to remember for following up on in the future.

Set reminder alarms on your phone to help you remember to ask your questions in a timely manner. (For instance, follow-up before or after a major test or cheerleading tryout.)

## **Get to the Heart of the Matter.**

Just as there's a place for "small" talk, there's a place for "small" questions.

Use one or two "small" questions to ease into deeper matters, but don't waste your entire time together discussing the obvious. You want to ask questions that reveal something to you about your grandchild.

"Small" questions, typically:

- Elicit a "yes" or "no" answer.
- Don't require much thought to answer.
- Do not reveal anything new about your grandchild.
- Have obvious answers.

Examples of "Small" questions:

- "What's up?"
- "How ya' doing?"
- "What about those (insert name of favorite sport's team)?"
- "How was your day?"
- "What about this weather?"

## **Fit Your Question to Your Grandchild.**

I have eleven grandchildren—eleven individuals, eleven unique personalities. They don't all respond well to the same type of question. A few of my grandchildren are great with me jumping right into the heart of a matter. Others need a little warm-up time. There are a couple who are willing and able to respond to my questions right away. Then there are the ones who need some space (quiet time) to process the question before offering a response.

It's okay to have a stockpile of questions. However, it's important to know how to take those questions and reword them or modify your "asking" technique to make the most of your time with your grandchild.

## **Ask Open-ended Questions.**

Rather than asking, "Do you like school?" Ask, "What do you like most about school?"

You won't learn much by a "yes" or "no" answer, but responses to open-ended questions can lead to enlightening conversation and provide a glimpse into your grandchild that you might not otherwise get.

## **Better Yet, Ask for Stories.**

Even better are questions that allow your grandchild to respond with a story. This is much more comfortable for them, and the story will reveal things to you that no “answer” ever will.

### *Ask, then wait.*

As mentioned previously, some children need time to process the question, their response, or how they think you might react. Always give some wait time.

### *And... listen well.*

A big part of developing the Art of Asking Questions, is to learn to listen well.

## **Listen with Your Ears and Your Eyes.**

Give your grandchild your full attention. This means putting your phone away and removing all other distractions. Show them their importance by keeping your eyes on them while they speak.

## **Use Appropriate Body Language.**

Lean in! Smile. Nod. Let your grandchild know that you are listening through body language that communicates just that. They're not going to be very interested in future conversations with us if our body language shouts, “I'm not listening!”

## **Focus on Understanding.**

How many of us are guilty of thinking about how we are going to respond WHILE our grandchild is speaking to us? When we do that, we are not really hearing what is being said. One of the best things we can do to develop the art of asking questions is to learn to focus on hearing and understanding our grandchild rather than planning how we will respond. Listen for what is spoken and what lies underneath.

## **Learn to Rephrase.**

One way to help with focus while listening is to rephrase what your grandchild has said. Rephrasing shows that you are listening. This can be done at an appropriate time during the conversation or when your grandchild has finished speaking.

Another rephrasing strategy that helps you move beyond the spoken word to a place of understanding is to say to your grandchild, “What I think I hear you saying is....”

## **Listen – without fixing, without preaching.**

One common mistake grandparents often make when their grandchildren share something with them is that they're too quick to try to solve the problem.

Unless you are specifically asked, don't try to fix the problem or give advice. If you are asked for advice, keep your words short and to the point. And, this is so important, do not preach at your grandchild. They get enough of that from other adults in their lives. You need to be a safe place. Remember, if you have lived an authentic life of faith before your grandchild, they know how you feel. Resist the urge to preach. Instead, bathe both your grandchild and the problem in prayer.

The Art of Asking Questions is a skill worth honing. Ask a well-crafted question, and you can open up a closed-mouthed grandchild and gain insight into their life. Listen well, and you can learn to hear so much more than simply the words that are being said.

When all the pieces are in place, deep, rich relationships can be built.

# Grandparent Boundaries

By Sherry Schumann  
November 2, 2020

"Grandma, don't leave me," my two-year-old granddaughter wailed.

I started the car engine, ignoring my inclination to rush back into the house. Instead, I blew her one last kiss and pulled from the driveway.

What kind of grandmother could leave her granddaughter under these circumstances? The answer is simple: one who believes in healthy boundaries for grandparents.

My granddaughter wasn't being mistreated, harmed, or neglected. She and I had enjoyed a lovely time, gathering shells at the beach and satisfying ourselves on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches before returning home for the afternoon. When her mother lovingly but firmly announced that it was time for a nap, I kissed my granddaughter good-bye and slipped out the front door. That's when her dramatics began.

If I had returned, I would have overstepped my boundaries, undermining her mother's authority and reinforcing my granddaughter's attempt to postpone her nap.

Most of us are respectful of physical boundaries, which define our property lines. Boundaries such as split-rail or chain-link fences. Are we aware of the intangible boundaries surrounding our personhood or the personhood of our grandchildren and their parents? In order to experience healthy grandparent boundaries, we need to know what our role as a grandparent is, and what it is not.

Sadly, we live in an age when the role of grandparents isn't clearly defined. Society is ambiguous, the Church remains uncharacteristically silent, and resources are limited. In order to find a well-defined job description for grandparents, we must turn our attention to Scripture.

Deuteronomy 4:9 states, "Watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." Psalm 78:1-8 commands us to tell the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord and to teach his commands to the fourth generation. In simple terms, our role as grandparents is to pass a legacy of faith to future generations.

When we assume false roles or responsibilities that do not belong to us, we trespass against the parents of our grandchildren, against our grandchildren or against ourselves. The following scenarios provide examples of each:

### **Trespass #1: Grandparents Who Co-Parent**

Kathleen insisted upon giving her grandson a pacifier when he came to visit, contrary to his parents' wishes. Now she's devastated, because her son and daughter-in-law, exhausted from arguments about the blue binkie, refuse to bring the baby for a visit.

The breakdown in Kathleen's family began when she failed to respect her son and daughter-in-law's authority as parents. Decisions about child rearing, from pacifiers to potty training, bedtime to discipline, belong to the parents.

A grandparent who crosses the boundary and begins to co-parent creates the proverbial three-legged race, leaving the grandchild confused about the person who is in the position of authority. The question becomes, "Who's raising this child?" Eventually, the child will use the confusion to his advantage, manipulating situations to get what he wants.

Our role as grandparents is to walk as allies and help the parents of our grandchildren become the best parents they can be. (Cavin Harper, *Courageous Grandparenting*, page 35)

### **Trespass #2: Grandparents Who Enable**

Betty Lou's grandson wants to attend an outdoor concert with his high school buddies, but he is scheduled to work delivering pizzas. Betty Lou, in her misguided attempt to be a loving and sympathetic grandmother, forges a work excuse for him. With the stroke of her pen, she not only commits a crime, she gives her grandson permission to do likewise.

"Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come," Jesus warns. "It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of the little ones to sin" (Luke 17:1-2).

### **Trespass #3: Grandparents Who Buy Love**

Dave and Brenda enter Walmart's check-out line, their shopping cart laden with expensive toys and electronics, candy and clothes, everything on their grandchildren's Christmas list and more. They flash a credit card without considering the cost; after all, nothing is too good for their grandchildren.

With each scan of a barcode, Dave and Brenda buy into the cultural lie that God created us to be an open wallet or a “fun factory” for our grandchildren.

We cannot help but ask if Dave and Brenda are buying their grandchildren’s love—and at what cost? Are they unintentionally teaching their grandchildren a monetary value can be placed on love and self-worth?

#### **Trespass #4: Grandparents Who Are Taken for Granted**

Tom heaves a sigh as he lifts the last bag of groceries onto the kitchen counter. He and his wife have been running a rent-free boarding house since their daughter and her two children moved home. Tom and his wife share the responsibilities—cooking meals, cleaning house, doing laundry, and caring for the little ones—while their daughter chats on Facebook. Tom suspects she is pregnant again.

Tom believes his daughter is taking advantage of their hospitality. He thinks she should assume household responsibilities or find a job and pay rent. His wife, however, fears if they make these demands, their daughter will leave with the grandchildren.

Tom and his wife are being offered a mulligan. If they failed to teach their daughter responsibility when she was a child, they now have the opportunity to fix their mistake. They need to ask her to share the workload, pay rent or both. They need to model and establish boundaries for the sake of their daughter, themselves, and their grandchildren.

God seeks honest, hard work from all of us. “Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense” (Proverbs 12:11). “A sluggard’s appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied” (Proverbs 13:4).

#### **Conclusion:**

Establishing healthy boundaries is vital for the health of our families. As grandparents, we need to honor and respect these boundaries by avoiding the temptation to co-parent, enable, or entertain our grandchildren in excess. The only time we have permission to cross these boundaries is when our grandchildren’s physical, spiritual, emotional, and moral safety is threatened.

A few years ago, I spoke on the phone with a faith-filled grandmother. She was a Messianic Jew whose family didn’t believe in Jesus. Consequently, her son and daughter-in-law asked that she quit talking with their children about the Lord.

When she asked for my opinion, I recommended that she respect their boundaries. I concluded our discussion with the following statement. “While they can tell you not to talk with your grandchildren about Jesus, no one can tell you not to talk with Jesus about your grandchildren.” After all, the gift of prayer has no boundaries.

# How to Do A Bible Study with Your Grandchildren

By Larry McCall  
November 9, 2020

“But I’m not a Bible teacher! I’ve never been to seminary!”

Take heart, my fellow grandparent. By God’s grace, the Lord could use you to have memory-making, life-shaping Bible studies with your grandchildren. Let’s break down this idea of how to do Bible studies with your grandchildren into manageable steps by asking the traditional journalism questions: “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why” and “how.” But, if you don’t mind, I’d like to begin with . . .

## Why?

Sometimes grandparents never venture into seriously engaging their grandchildren in Bible study. They may assume, “Well, that’s not my job. That’s the parents’ job.” You’re right, it is the parent’s job (Ephesians 6:4), but it’s not only the parents’ job. It’s the job of grandparents, too.

Throughout God’s Word we find reminder after reminder that members of the older generation are to be teaching the coming generations the words and ways of God. From way back in Moses’ day, we find verses like Deuteronomy 4:9, “Make them known to your children and your children’s children.” Did you catch that “and”? We are to be teaching not only our own children, but our “children’s children” too! And, what about all those Psalms? Psalm 145:4 says, “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts”. Psalm 78:4-8 is similarly gripping.

## Who?

We grandparents are involved, but when are our grandchildren old enough for a Bible study? I suggest that we start teaching the Bible to them from an early age. It can be a matter of simply sharing a verse and praying the content of that Scripture over a grandchild.

As grandchildren get older, the depth of our Bible studies will grow with them. Eventually, grandchildren will be old enough to read the Bible for themselves and engage in conversations on a passage’s meaning and application. Those conversations can have a life-long impact, by God’s grace.

## What?

Are you like me? If I'm not sure what to do, my tendency is to do nothing – or at least to procrastinate until I have a little more confidence that I'm doing the right thing. But, if we keep procrastinating about studying the Bible with our grandkids, we're missing wonderful opportunities to show them how the Word of God can shape their lives for eternity.

Thankfully, if you are inexperienced in studying the Bible with children, there are resources that can guide you step-by-step. For example, my wife, Gladine, and I have been doing a weekly Bible study with two of our grandchildren using David Murray's manual for kids called *Exploring the Bible: A Bible Reading Plan for Kids*. This resource walks the student through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation with fairly easy "fill in the blank" sections to guide the learning process. Each of our grandkids has a copy as do my wife and I. We can work on it together, page-by-page, or the grandkids can work through it on their own and we can discuss what they've learned. Look online for biblically sound materials that would be appropriate for your grandchild's reading ability.

## Where?

If you have grandchildren who live near you, it might be fairly easy to set up a regular time each week to sit with them over an open Bible in your own home or in theirs. Thankfully, these days geographical distance does not prohibit us from having Bible studies with our grandkids. Even if they live some distance away, it is possible to set up a regular video call for your grandparent-grandchild Bible study. Most of us are fairly comfortable with using this technology, but if you are not, don't give up too quickly. Ask your adult children and/or grandkids to help you learn how to use the available technology so that you can enjoy the blessing of studying God's Word regularly with the coming generation.

## When?

Let me encourage you to set up a regular time for your Bible study with your grandchildren. We have found doing this weekly, encourages accountability for all of us. We've communicated with our daughter and son-in-law about when the best time might be in their weekly schedule. Every family's schedule is unique. Some of our grandchildren are homeschooled, giving us more time options to consider. But other grandchildren attend a brick-and-mortar school, giving fewer options.

Nevertheless, it is worth the effort to find a time that works, even if it's not weekly. Talk to your adult children about what works best for their family. If your grandkids are old enough to have some say in their own schedule, get their input, too. Then, set the agreed upon time as a "repeat" on your calendar.

## How?

Without making it too rigid, we've found ourselves following a basic pattern in our weekly Bible studies with our grandkids. We like to "meet" with our grandkids individually, even if our meeting is via a video call. We always begin with excited greetings followed by questions regarding how they have been doing since the last time we talked. We're happy to hear what's been happening in their lives and even show us something they've been working on.

Then, we try to draw their attention toward God by asking how they've seen answers to prayer regarding last week's prayer requests. (We keep a notebook, so we don't forget!) Then we each share praises and requests, including struggles we may be facing and appropriate confessions of sin. After that, we each take a turn praying for one another. Those can be really sweet times – not only praying for our precious grandkids but hearing them pray for us!

After prayer we ask how their Bible study has been going. If we're using a study manual, we open to the most recent pages. If we're working through a Bible passage, we will turn there. By the way, with older children, working through a book of the Bible can be a great way to get them in the habit of daily Bible reading. We like using a study Bible, having the study notes available if we get stuck in our understanding of a particular passage. We seek to make a reasonable amount of progress in that week's Bible study, depending on the age of the grandchild and the time we have available. When our time is drawing to a close, we summarize what we've been learning together and end with expressions of love and excitedly talk about our next "meeting."

What a privilege we have as grandparents, to tell the next generation the wonderful works of God so that they would "set their hope in God" (Psalm 78:7). Let's get started.

# Cheer Up!

## Let's Be Glad All Our Days

By Bev Phillips  
November 16, 2020

Lifespan developmentalists generally agree that middle adulthood spans the ages of 40-65 years, and late adulthood goes from age 65 until death. Since the average age of a first-time grandparent in the U.S. is 47, this means many of us will be grandparents for half of our adult lives, both as middle-agers and senior citizens. Do you find that a cheery thought?

Many adults are looking forward to and planning for their retirement. This idea has been increasingly stressed in recent years as lifespans and the costs associated with the second half of life increase. With cultural unrest, serious worldwide health problems, and economic instabilities all on the rise, it may be difficult to maintain a positive outlook. Might we be deemed "Pollyanna-ish" (i.e., pretending all is sweetness and light regardless of circumstances) or even ignorant and uninformed about reality if we exude a cheerful demeanor in the midst of stressful, painful situations?

*"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

-1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NIV

Let's look at God's perspective: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NIV). Even in the midst of the pandemonium of 2020? Yes! We can thank God no matter what happens because He is the sovereign King who has not lost His dominion, His power, or His loving care for each of us. Our cheerful trust expressed in gratitude to Jesus is the mark of those who belong to Him.

What is the source of this joyfulness? Psalm 90:14 answers that: "Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days." (NIV). The joy, cheer, and contentment which is the core of our influence as grandparents will emerge out of our own relationship with Jesus. The impact of our own personal faith life – revealed in such daily activities as early morning devotional times, a happy spirit that expresses joy in songs, and a sweet demeanor in the face of physical challenges of aging, will leave a permanent imprint on our grandchildren's lives.

If this cheerfulness challenge seems too difficult in these trying times, remember that this is a lifelong assignment and effort. Most importantly, we are not alone; what God calls us to do, He will help us to do. Now isn't that a happy thought to hold onto?

# 10 Gifts Grandparents Can Give Their Grandkids That No One Else Can

By Deborah Haddix  
December 21, 2020

Studies have shown that the giving of gifts can develop and strengthen relationships. Evidence also indicates that gift-giving helps us feel a greater sense of happiness. In fact, neurologists suggest that our brains are wired to derive pleasure from giving.<sup>1</sup> If all this is true, why then do so many grandparents find gift-giving to be such a source of frustration and contention? The struggle is real.

Just last week, I listened as once again a grandmother friend shared her pain in feeling that her gifts for her grandchildren paled in comparison to the expensive, extravagant gifts they received from their other grandparents. Her solution? Spend more money!

But is that the answer? A quick internet search showed that the average grandparent spends about \$200 per child on holiday gifts. I don't know about you, but with eleven grandchildren that is certainly out of my reach. Trying to out-do or even keep up with those numbers would certainly put me into gift-giving debt. It would also take every bit of fun right out of something that should bring me joy.

Rather than trying to impress our grandchildren or out-spend the other grandparents with money we don't have, perhaps the answer is to gain a new perspective by clarifying our focus.

Why do we give gifts to our grandchildren, anyway? We give gifts to show our grandchildren that we love them. Gift giving expresses our feelings and communicates value. It builds connection and deepens our relationship. And we do this best when our gifts come from the heart not the wallet.

## CONSIDER THESE 10 GIFTS THAT YOU CAN NATURALLY GIVE:

### Gift #1 – The Gift of Intentionality

*"... and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord."*

-Ephesians 5:10

If you want to give your grandchildren a gift from the heart, give them the gift of intentionality. Instead of simply letting the days happen to you, determine to make a difference for the sake of your grandchildren. Intentionality isn't something you can buy in a quick over-the-counter exchange, it requires commitment, a plan, and diligent follow-through.

One of the most precious gifts of intentionality you can give to your grandchild is the gift of your presence. Make the effort and schedule a special outing, observe a weekly dinner, or call via Facetime.

However you decide to do it, be all there during your time together. Put away your phone, ask well-thought-out questions, and listen. Listen both for the spoken responses and what is unspoken.

## **Gift #2 – The Gift of an “I Get To” Attitude**

*“Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.”*

-Proverbs 17:6

How many of us approach our grandparenting with an “I have to” attitude? “I have to” pick my grandson up from baseball practice. “I have to” watch the grandkids this weekend. “I have to” come up with a gift for my granddaughter’s birthday.

This attitude is certainly no gift for our grandkids.

Grandparenting is a gift to us from God. Let’s receive it that way, and in turn, offer a beautiful gift to our grandchildren. An “I Get To” attitude is loving, humble, considerate, and relationship building. It brings joy to the giver and the recipient.

## **Gift #3 – The Gift of Unconditional Love**

*‘Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.’*

-1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Grandparents can give their grandchildren the very precious gift of unconditional love. Wrap your grandchild in a love that does not fluctuate according to his or her words and actions. Not a fan of tattoos or piercings or “strange” hairstyles? Look beyond it and love your grandkid anyway.

Have a special needs grandchild, one who is defiant, or from an unwanted pregnancy? Offer them the gift of unconditional love by treating them as the image bearer of God that they are.

Rather than holding grudges and trying to “fix” people and situations, unconditional love offers forgiveness, even when unwise choices have been made.

Unconditional love is flexible and does not insist on its own way.

## **Gift #4 – The Gift of Intentional Talk**

*“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”*

-Ephesians 4:29

Words are powerful, and in the hands of a grandparent, they can become a gift of incomparable value.

Think about it! You have so much to share with your grandkids. One of the ways you can use the gift of intentional talk is to help your grandchild get to know God.

Use your words to give testimony to the goodness and greatness of God, declare His power and His wonders, recount His mighty works, share the glory of His kingdom, and proclaim His attributes. Add to those words, your family God-stories. Dig into your family history and share how God has worked. Tell your own personal God-story.

Another very important way to give the gift of intentional talk is to use your words to build up your grandchild. Look for ways to speak words of appreciation, affirmation, and sincere praise, and speak them often. This one gift has the power to add life to your grandchildren while pointing them to Christ.

## **Gift #5 – The Gift of a Nourished Soul**

*“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children.”*

-Deuteronomy 4:9

The condition of our soul greatly impacts our “grandparenting.” It is a fact that we cannot give to our grandchildren what we, ourselves, do not have.

One of the greatest gifts a grandparent can give to their grandchildren is a soul that is nourished through time spent with God in Bible reading, prayer, and any of the other spiritual disciplines.

A nourished soul will be filled up to pour out and exude a love for God that is contagious to our grandchildren.

## **Gift #6 – The Gift of Prayer**

*“Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your [grand]children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street.”*

-Lamentations 2:19

Yes, other people can give the gift of prayer to your grandkids, but no one can give it in quite the same way!

The regular, consistent, specific prayers of a grandparent are one of the greatest investments that can ever be made – and with very little or no money involved. Consider, a grandparent’s prayers help God accomplish His purpose in and through the lives of grandchildren, can stop Satan’s schemes and powers toward grandchildren, and helps equip grandkids to stand fast in the faith. Additionally, one of the wonderful things about this gift is that it also blesses the giver abundantly.

When grandparents pray for their grandchildren, relationships are strengthened, generational and distance gaps are diminished, uncontrollable burdens are released to God, and we are drawn closer to God. A grandparent’s gift of prayer has eternal impact.

## **Gift #7 – The Gift of a Strong Marriage**

*“Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.”*

-Malachi 2:15

A strong marriage is a treasure for your grandchildren. Prioritize it. Teach your grandkids what to look for in a spouse, how to love their spouse well, and how to fight for their marriage.

Let them see your playful moments and share openly with them about the difficult times. Don’t just preach it; live it, day in and day out. Model the marriage you pray they will one day have. Prioritize it and protect it.

The Bible teaches and research shows that divorce has a spiritual impact on children and increases the odds that they will walk away from Christ. A grandparent’s strong marriage is a gift of major impact.

## **Gift #8 – The Gift of a Gospel-Shaped Life**

*“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.”*

-1 Corinthians 9:22-23

Our grandkids are growing up in a culture of chaos and confusion. That fact scares us, sometimes to the point of anxiety, fear, and even hopelessness.

Instead of sitting by wringing our hands, we can offer them the gift of a Gospel-shaped life. For their sake, we can proclaim God as Creator, share the truth of the Bible with deliberation, and model the giving of honor and thanks to God.

Through the decisions we make, the way we spend our time, and the things we occupy ourselves with, we can be vessels that carry the Gospel to our grandchildren.

## **Gift #9 – The Gift of a Biblical Worldview**

*“Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”*

-Colossians 2:6-8

Gift #9 goes hand-in-hand with the gift of a Gospel-shaped life. There is no denying that our grandkids are growing up in a post-Christian culture. Help them navigate the maze of opposition and competing belief systems by giving them the gift of a biblical worldview.

Root your grandchildren in the Bible. Read the Bible and engage in discussions about it with your grandchildren. Teach them the big picture of the Bible, the essentials of the Christian faith, and how to obey God’s commands.

Help them apply God’s truth to their lives and train them to defend their faith. It is a precious gift to see the world through the lens of the Bible.

## Gift #10 – The Gift of Legacy

*“A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous.”*

-Proverbs 13:22

Every grandparent WILL leave a gift of legacy to their grandkids. The question is, “What will that legacy be?” Will it be a legacy of materialism, un-involvement, or self-absorption? Or, will it be one of investment, involvement, and connection?

The gifts we choose, and our reason for giving them, will help make the determination. To leave a legacy of deep love and care and support and encouragement, gifts for our grandchildren need to express our feelings and communicate great value. The gifts must come from the heart.

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# Parents of Our Grandchildren Need Our Prayers

By Lillian Penner  
December 28, 2020

Our grandchildren's parents have a great responsibility for parenting our grandchildren in these uncertain, unstable times in which we live. In today's broken world, we see the fragile family unit, living amid a busy environment filled with moral and spiritual battles. Young families are busy with their jobs and find many distractions in their marriage and parenting responsibilities.

Jeff Keaton, president of Renewanation, writes in his article, *The Battle Is Hot, But Hope Is Not Lost*, "The worldview divide is now so wide that it's hard even to have a sensible conversation or debate around issues like the role of government, education, abortion, transgenderism, etc. What we are seeing is the devolving of a truth-based, Judeo-Christian culture and the evolving of a non-truth based, secularized culture."

In John 10:10, we read where Jesus said to his disciples, "The thief comes to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have abundant life." The enemy is determined and relentless to distract and steal our grandchildren, and their parents' faith as our media-driven culture has pushed the boundaries of right and wrong. The movies, music, TV, video games, and Internet are desensitizing our grandchildren. They face legal recreational marijuana, other drugs, sex trafficking, alcohol, sexual identity confusion, homosexuality, pornography, premarital sex, and more.

Grandparents need to intentionally pray that parents will not be distracted and overwhelmed by the influence of a culture hostile to the Truth. The enemy is watching for vulnerable spots and the unguarded doors of each of our hearts. Stand in the gap, praying for the spiritual, emotional, and physical protection of those who are under attack. It's imperative to pray God will give parents wisdom and time management in their monumental task of guiding our grandchildren in the ways of the Lord.

To pray effectively, we need to know the frustrations, fears, concerns, and expectations parents have for our grandchildren. Ask them, "What are the issues you are dealing with, and how can we pray for you?"

When I don't know how to pray for my grandchildren and their parents, I ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for me. The Holy Spirit knows their needs, so I ask him to intercede for me according to God's will, according to Romans 8:26. This keeps me from giving God my plan of answering my prayers and comforts me to know I can put my concerns in God's hands instead of carrying them myself.

Often, my prayers are not answered on my timetable. In waiting, God does amazing things in my life and the lives of my grandchildren and their parents. However, God will acknowledge our intercessory prayers and answer them at just the right time.

According to God's Word, praying for our grandchildren and their parents should be a high priority for grandparents. Therefore, pray that your grandchildren's parents will experience the abundant life Jesus offers and pass it on to their children to follow Jesus.

## PRAYER FOR MY GRANDCHILDREN'S PARENTS

*Dear Lord,*

*I want to thank you for the parents of my grandchildren.*

*I pray you will help them to value my grandchildren in the same way You value them.*

*I pray they will commit to the responsibility You have given them to teach their children to love You and live according to your parenting manual: God's Word.*

*May my grandchildren see their home and family as a "safe place."*

*Help them to be fair and understand my grandchildren as You understand us.*

*Pour out your Spirit upon them as they parent my dear grandchildren.*

*May God bless them richly as they parent with a purpose.*

*In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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