

GRANDPARENTING
MATTERS



DISCIPLING YOUR *Grandchildren*



**Great Ideas to Help Them Know,
Love, and Serve God**

DR. JOSH MULVIHILL

WITH JEN MULVIHILL AND LINDA WEDDLE

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FOREWORD

It was the death of a saint. As my family sorted through my grandma's little apartment, I came upon a book. It was Grandma Mason's well-worn Bible, old and tattered—verses underlined, thoughts scribbled in the margins, page corners folded down to mark tear-stained favorite passages. It sat on the table beside her rocking chair. The oak floor was grooved from years of rocking in that one place. The tabletop's finish had long since been rubbed off by her repeatedly reaching out to pull that cherished book to her lap. How fondly I remembered that a grandma's lap is like none other in the world.

Inside the brittle, cracked cover were pages of notes written by an obviously unsteady hand. Among others, there were decades-old papers marked "Prayers for Wess." I am the son of her daughter Marge and son-in-law Ken, who were missionaries in West Africa. Grandma's prayers for me traced my childhood in Africa and chronicled my every sickness, sorrow, and success, right up to my becoming president of Compassion International in 1993, just before her death. Through tear-brimmed eyes, I read the story of my life as told through Grandma's heartfelt prayers. I had never seen them before, and she never spoke of them, but I came to realize that my life's path—every challenge and choice, every struggle

and victory—had been hidden in my Grandma’s heart and poured out in prayer daily before her precious Lord.

Being a grandparent is not only a great privilege, it’s a sacred mission. Whether your grandchildren live a world away in an African village or right next door, you have a calling that is an opportunity to change the world for your grandchildren, and even through your grandchildren. Nobody can take your particular, special place, and through your love, faith, guidance, and blessing poured into your grandchildren, they, and the world, can be blessed for eternity.

In my world travels with Compassion International, I rejoice when I see communities where the extended family is still intact and the whole village joins together to raise the children. In such places, grandparents play a natural and strategic role in the life of a family. Far from being marginalized, they are at the very center of village life. The older they become, the more they are respected and revered. Their wisdom and experience are valued, and they are called upon to pour into the next generations. Their children and grandchildren then return that love and care as their elders age and eventually need attention themselves. I know, for I grew up in such a place.

Can that loving, full-circle dynamic take place in the Western world of today? I am convinced it can. I’ve seen it, and you hold in your hands a strategic and creative guide to bring it about in your life as a grandparent, or as a parent who wants to more fully invite Grandma and Grandpa into the life of your son or daughter. God never intended for parents to go it alone. Being a loving grandparent is a relationship at the very heart of discipleship!

In my book *Just a Minute*, I make the point that the spirit of a child is soft and pliable, like moist clay. It takes “just a minute” and very little effort to make an impression on a child’s life that could then set and last for eternity. As Graham Greene said, “There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in.” If God places a child in your path for even one moment, it may well be a divine appointment. As a grandparent,

you might be the one who says or does the right thing at the right time to launch the life of your grandchild. For my book, I asked people, “Who believed in you before you believed in yourself?” Time and again, the answer, whispered through tears, was, “It was my grandpa,” or “It was my grandma.” Much of the book could have been stories of grandparent heroes. Like you.

My prayer is that as a parent or grandparent, you will devour this important book cover to cover (or as I did, jump about from topic to topic, idea to creative idea) and prayerfully resolve to be actively involved in the little lives God has entrusted to you in your unique role. What an amazing opportunity we have to joyfully invest in this calling! May God bless you as you bless the children of your family and His Kingdom.

—Dr. Wess Stafford

President Emeritus, Compassion International
author of *Too Small to Ignore: Why the Least of These
Matter Most* and *Just a Minute: In the Heart of a Child,
One Moment Can Last Forever*

INTRODUCTION

Grandparenting is an incredible privilege and a serious responsibility. We hope this book helps you gain a new vision for the important role God has given grandparents and that it encourages you to make a commitment to actively and intentionally disciple your family. Every grandchild will live forever in heaven or hell, and we must not lose sight of this fact. Grandparenting in light of eternity helps us eliminate the vanities from life and focus on what matters most. Grandparents have a God-designed role discipling children and grandchildren. This book will help you fulfill that purpose. We wrote it to provide ideas to help you intentionally pass on to your family a heritage of faith in Christ.

What Makes This Book Unique?

It is written by a man and two women. Men and women grandparent differently, so having both perspectives is helpful. Grandfathers tend to gravitate toward activity and adventure that includes a ball, a tool, or danger. Grandmothers tend to gravitate toward a conversation over coffee, cooking together, or a shopping trip. Of course, these are generalities, so they may not fit your personality or preference. But that is why it is helpful to have the perspective

of both men and women in these pages. There is something for everyone in this book.

It is grandparent tested and parent approved. *Discipling Your Grandchildren* was written by a grandparent and two parents. Understandably, books about grandparenting generally are written by grandparents for grandparents and rarely include the perspective of adult children. I'm not minimizing the value of these books. Many of them are written by friends and are great books. However, grandparenting is multigenerational. It relies heavily upon the cooperation and permission of adult children. Gaining the perspective of grandparents about grandparenting is needed, but it is only fifty percent of the equation. Grandparents know that you can only do what your adult children allow you to do with grandchildren. In the day of the autonomous individual, grandparenting restrictions are the ugly underbelly of grandparenting and the great frustration of many godly grandparents who want to invest more deeply with their family. That is why this book is unique. The ideas in it are not new to us; they have been implemented in our families and homes. They are grandparent tested, parent approved.

It is biblically based and application oriented. *Discipling Your Grandchildren* is the seventh book in the GRANDPARENTING MATTERS series with Bethany House Publishers. This book builds on the robust biblical foundation of *Grandparenting* and the scientific research of *Biblical Grandparenting*, which were the result of multiple years of PhD study. *Discipling Your Grandchildren* augments the other books in the series, with the goal of helping you apply discipleship to everyday life.

Meet the Authors

Discipling Your Grandchildren is written by three authors, each with different perspectives, life experiences, and strengths.

Linda Weddle has a degree in Christian education and is a certified early childhood educator. She has written thirteen books, in-

cluding *How to Raise a Modern-Day Joseph*, and more than 2,000 short stories, articles, devotionals, and radio scripts for Christian organizations. For twenty-five years she worked at Awana as senior writer and program developer and taught workshops across the country. Since she was a teen, Linda has worked in just about every area of children's ministry, including many summers when she and her pastor husband team-taught at various camps. The camps gave her the opportunity to do one of her favorite things—tell stories to children that reflected their everyday lives, and in doing so, teach them biblical truths. Linda has two children, both serving in ministry, and six grandchildren. She has a blog for teachers and parents that can be found at groundthemforlife.com.

Jen Mulvihill is a music teacher and homeschool mom to five children. She is married to Josh, and together they are passionate about training children and families to know and love Jesus Christ. Jen considers it a privilege to be able to spend her days at home as a support to her husband and children. In her spare time, Jen can be found leading the homeschool band, which she launched in 2015, sewing, tending to her chickens and farm cats, and tackling a DIY project at their hundred-year-old farmhouse in Victoria, Minnesota. Jen's favorite things include growing deeper in relationship with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, encouraging other moms in the trenches of parenting, and laughing out loud with good friends over coffee.

Josh Mulvihill serves as the executive director of church and family ministry at Renewation, where he equips parents and grandparents to disciple their family and coaches church leaders in children, youth, and family ministry with a focus on biblical worldview. He is the author or editor of seven books on grandparenting, including *Biblical Grandparenting* and *Grandparenting*, as well as the author of *Preparing Children for Marriage* and *Biblical Worldview*. Josh helped launch the Legacy Coalition, provides leadership to the Christian Grandparenting Network, and serves on the board of Awana. He was a pastor for nearly twenty years and has a PhD in family ministry from The Southern

Baptist Theological Seminary, where he did his dissertation on Christian grandparenting. Josh's primary ministry, and greatest joy, is being a husband and father. Josh is married to Jen, his college sweetheart, and they are blessed with five children. You can find Josh on the web at GospelShapedFamily.com.

Why Did We Write This Book?

To help grandparents prioritize the spiritual growth of grandchildren. A few years ago I (Josh) had the privilege of interviewing Christian grandparents all over America about their role as a grandparent as part of my PhD dissertation. I discovered that many Christian grandparents desire to help grandchildren grow in Christlike maturity, but there is a disconnect between stated priorities and the way grandparents use time with their grandchildren. I found that grandparents spoke about the importance of the spiritual growth of grandchildren; however, it commonly was not reflected in how they operated as a grandparent, revealing that the spiritual life of a grandchild was not as important as they claimed. We've written this book to help grandparents align their grandparenting practices with stated spiritual priorities and biblical principles. This book will help you prioritize the discipleship of children and grandchildren and make the most of every opportunity you have to shape faith and teach biblical truth so that your family knows, loves, and serves Christ.

To encourage grandparents to partner with parents to disciple children. Grandparents are needed more than ever. Raising children to know, love, and serve Jesus in today's secularized culture is a daunting task. Children need the intimate influence of as many godly individuals as possible in their life. Parents never were meant to bear the full weight of raising children. They are given the primary role, but God created grandparents to partner with parents to raise children to lifelong faith in Christ. Grandparents strengthen families, provide a safe place, are a last line of defense, and offer godly wisdom that is often lacking in other places in a

child's life. There are millions of Christian grandparents in the United States. With a biblical vision and resources, we can transform families, churches, and society.

To equip grandparents to apply biblical principles about grandparenting. More than ever, families need to know what the Bible teaches about grandparenting and put it into practice. You won't find a formula for grandparenting in this book. We will not provide pragmatic approaches encouraging you to find what works for you. Our goal is greater than helping you become the cool grandparent and have fun with your family. Our ideas have a greater purpose. We wrote this book to help you apply the biblical methods of family discipleship from Deuteronomy 6 in everyday life.

Biblical Methods to Disciple Children

In the book *Grandparenting*, I explore eight biblical methods of discipleship for grandparents, which I will briefly introduce you to because the ideas in this book provide ways to implement these methods. Familiarize yourself with them so that there is context around why we emphasized certain topics or chose specific ideas for this book.

Asking questions. A key biblical method for growing the faith of future generations is question asking. Use questions to create serious spiritual dialogue, build a strong relationship, and discover what grandchildren believe. The spiritual practice of question asking is seen regularly in the Old and New Testaments. God commanded families in the Old Testament to practice traditions, eat specific foods, and erect stone pillars for the purpose of generating curiosity so that young people would ask questions that would encourage spiritual growth. Jesus mastered the art of asking good questions and used this method regularly.

Blessing. A spoken blessing is an opportunity for a grandparent to share his or her deep affection and desired future for a grandchild. A blessing is valuable because it creates a time and way to communicate affection and affirmation. Scripturally, we see

blessings modeled by God as a common practice in the Old Testament and a repeated pattern of Scripture.

Intentional meals. God commands parents and grandparents to commit wholeheartedly to teaching the truths of God’s Word to future generations and to “talk of them when you sit in your house” (Deuteronomy 6:7). What better place to practice “when you sit in your house” than around the table? A quick glance through Scripture reveals the value of food in the homes of God’s people as a means to strengthen family relationships, celebrate God’s provision, and as an opportunity to teach the Bible.

Prayer. God has given grandparents a solution to problems and challenging family situations. It’s found in Philippians 4:6: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Prayer is the greatest answer. It is the first line of defense. Prayer is a wonderful gift to grandparents and an essential method to reach and disciple your family.

Communicating wisdom. A recurring theme from the book of Proverbs is that young people are prone to making poor choices and need the guidance of older, more mature believers (Proverbs 7:7). Proverbs teaches that young people need wisdom for everyday decisions such as choosing godly friends, sexual purity, honoring God with money, and a strong work ethic. The wise man in Proverbs 4:5 says to the young person, “Get wisdom; get insight.” God has placed grandparents in the lives of grandchildren to help them make wise decisions. In order to do that, grandparents must know God’s Word and know their grandchildren.

Reading and discussing the Bible. God instructs grandparents to teach grandchildren the truths of Scripture. Deuteronomy 4:9 (AMPC) states, “Teach them to your children and your children’s children.” In Psalm 78:5–6, God commands grandparents to teach multiple generations to obey God’s commands. Throughout church history the primary method for teaching and discipling young people has been called family worship. Family worship is the means of introducing children to the truths of Scripture and

preparing them for the Christian life. The practice consists of reading the Bible as a family, prayer, and praising God through music.

Telling God-stories. In Psalm 78, God instructs older generations to tell younger generations about the work of God and His nature so that young people set their hope in God and keep His commands. One method of discipling grandchildren is to provide a testimony of God’s work in our life through provision, conversion, and His countless blessings. The Bible utilizes this method to encourage future generations to praise God: “Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord” (Psalm 102:18).

Sharing the Gospel. God places the responsibility of communicating the Gospel on all Christians, and this is true for grandparents with grandchildren. Children benefit from hearing the Gospel again and again from many sources. Children need to hear the good news of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection at every age and stage. There is no such thing as hearing the Gospel too often, as children are prone to forget the Good News and be captivated by a gospel replacement. The child who hears the Gospel from parents and grandparents is blessed.

What Is Discipleship?

Jesus defined discipleship in two words: “Follow me.” A disciple is a learner whose goal is to become like Jesus in character and help others do the same. Discipleship is the entire process of coming to faith and growing in spiritual maturity as a follower of Christ.

Discipleship is an invitation to orient our affections, thinking, and actions to align with God’s. Discipleship is the process by which an individual who has received new life takes on the character of Jesus and commits to living in obedience to God’s commands. What we love, how we think, and how we live are all components of discipleship.

Paul’s list in 2 Timothy 3:10–11 is a multifaceted picture of discipleship. Paul states, “You . . . followed my teaching, my conduct,

my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings.” We can generally measure discipleship by assessing these areas of our life and the lives of our children and grandchildren.

- *Conduct*: Can we say to our children and grandchildren, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ?” Do we have anything to hide?
- *Character*: Do we practice what we preach? How are we displaying the fruit of the Spirit in our home?
- *Teaching*: Do we teach Christ crucified and the whole counsel of the Word of God?
- *Purpose*: Are we living a life of self-indulgence, or a life of service to Jesus?
- *Suffering*: What is our demeanor when we face a trial?

We hope this book helps you intentionally disciple your family. Intentionality means *action by design*. It is the preplanned implementation of God’s instruction. Intentionality involves an understanding of desired outcomes and an awareness to look for opportunities toward that end.

Overview of the Book

Discipling Your Grandchildren is organized around eleven topics that most grandparents experience with children and grandchildren. There are ninety-six different sections, with hundreds of ideas designed to help you be an intentional disciple-making grandparent. Each chapter contains a list of ideas, concisely explained, often in bullet-point format. We want to provide as many ideas as possible, so you won’t find an introduction to each chapter. We jump right in with an idea.

The ideas in this book are not random or purposeless. They are a means to a greater end. Of course, disconnected from the biblical

purpose of discipleship, they become just another activity with a grandchild. We encourage you to read the ideas with discipleship in mind and utilize them toward that end.

There are two ways *Discipling Your Grandchildren* can be read. Read it from beginning to end, or skip around and use it as a reference tool. However you utilize this book, we hope it is one that you will come back to again and again. Feel free to mark it up, dog-ear pages, and keep notes about which ideas you have implemented with each set of grandchildren.

It is our prayer that God will work through you to bless your family with a heritage of faith in Christ that lasts for generations to come. We hope this book helps you disciple your children's children and build strong family relationships that bring glory to God and impact the world for Christ. If you are a grandparent, then God has called you to the ministry of grandparenting. May you joyfully commit to this important task and faithfully invest in discipling your family.

1

What Does the Bible Say about Grandparenting?

Five Characteristics of a Disciple-Making Grandparent

Christian grandparents need to take a few moments to ask, “What does the Bible say about grandparenting?” “What is the goal?” “What am I trying to accomplish in the lives of my children and grandchildren?” For many Christian grandparents, the answer is to be a loving friend, an encouraging voice, or a supportive help. These are all good things, but they are not the primary goal that God provides in the Bible.

Many parenting and family experts label their stuff as “Christian,” but it is nothing more than secular ideas given a Christian veneer using biblical expressions and words. There are a growing number of books for grandparents, and many of them adopt the latest trends and buzzwords and try to blend them with Scripture. The resulting marriage produces bitter fruit.

There are also books on grandparenting that claim to be biblical, but are only loosely based on the Bible's teaching about grandparenting. Resources that disregard the clear teaching of the Bible about grandparenting for other sources provide the wrong kind of guidance. The best books focus on essential biblical principles, not the creation of a grandparenting model or system that works right out of the box. The result is a list of steps and how-tos that quickly supersedes the more important biblical principles.

What we desperately need is an understanding of the biblical principles of grandparenting and a commitment to obey God's Word in this area of life. If Christian grandparents consistently applied a few simple principles that are clearly communicated in God's Word, it would yield a far greater return for Christian grandparents than any revolutionary model or trendy method.

I have written extensively about the biblical principles of grandparenting in the books *Grandparenting* and *Biblical Grandparenting*, but I will provide a few principles here to provide a foundation for the ideas in this book and commend those books to you for additional reading.

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

The most common passage of Scripture utilized for family discipleship is Deuteronomy 6:4-9. The Christian community often limits the application of Deuteronomy 6 to parents, but based on the context of Deuteronomy 6:1-2, it has a broader application that includes grandparents. Moses gave the community a charge to love the Lord and diligently teach young people the commands of God. Moses states the commands of God are for "you and your son and your *son's son*" (Deuteronomy 6:1-2, emphasis added). The reference to "son's son" means that Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is not only for parents but also for grandparents. From a biblical perspective, grandparents have a critical role with the next generation that is centered around the transmission of faith.

Deuteronomy 6 helps us remember that discipleship is not one more thing to add to an already busy schedule. Discipleship is not a separate activity we do with a child. It is integrated into all of life. Discipleship can happen while playing catch, cooking dinner, watching a movie, driving in the car, reading the Bible, or working in the garden. According to Deuteronomy 6:7, the following portions of each day present great opportunities to disciple children:

- Mealtime: “when you sit in your house”
- Travel time: “when you walk by the way”
- Bedtime: “when you lie down”
- Morning time: “when you rise”

Discipleship is what we do as we go through our day. The biblical pattern is for the truth of the Bible to be transferred through everyday activity when we get ready for bed, eat a meal together, ride in the car, fold laundry together, engage in late-night talks, and have fun together. Grandparents who think that they can compartmentalize life by assigning a certain number of hours per week to spend on grandparenting have a philosophy that is contrary to the spirit of Deuteronomy 6. It is also a recipe to become a distant or disengaged grandparent. Most Christian grandparents I’ve met want to make an eternal difference in the lives of their children and grandchildren. The Bible tells us how to do that. Before we provide ideas to help you implement Deuteronomy 6 and disciple your grandchildren, let’s examine a few biblical characteristics that lay the foundation to be a disciple-making grandparent.

Disciple-Making Grandparents View Grandchildren as a Blessing

The Bible clearly teaches that grandchildren are a blessing to be embraced, not a burden to be avoided. The Bible tells us that it is a blessing to *know* our grandchildren. Psalm 128:6 states, “May you see your children’s children.” The ministry of grandparenting is to

be received as a blessing. The grandparent who has a poor attitude toward grandparenthood in general or a grandchild specifically is at odds with God's plan.

Every grandchild is created in the image of God and is therefore His sovereign plan for your life. Every grandchild is to be highly valued regardless of gender, race, health, or personality. Every grandchild is to be received with love and embraced as God's good design for your life. If you struggle to receive a grandchild as a blessing, pray that God would soften your heart and change your attitude. Ask God to give you His love for a grandchild. Some of us need to release our plans to the Lord and choose to trust God's sovereign plan for our life even when life turns out differently than envisioned.

We must allow the Bible to shape our view of grandchildren. The Bible tells us that it is a blessing to *have* grandchildren. Proverbs 17:6 states, "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged." That significant statement speaks to the incredible value of grandchildren. Interestingly, it is not wealth, health, career accomplishments, or social status that the Bible says are the crown of your life. That honor goes to grandchildren. A crown bestows honor and represents a high position in life. Your attitude and actions should reflect the value given to grandchildren by God in Scripture. Grandchildren are the blessing God has given you. Grandparenting gives life meaning. One sure way to experience misery is to neglect a blessing that God has given us. Grandchildren are a good gift from a good God who are to be embraced.

Disciple-Making Grandparents Understand the Biblical Purpose of Grandparenting

My research discovered that only about one in four Christian grandparents has clarity about the purpose of grandparenting. Many Christian grandparents operate as companions who emphasize emotional support or provide a helping hand but have a limited spiritual impact on family. A high percentage of Christian

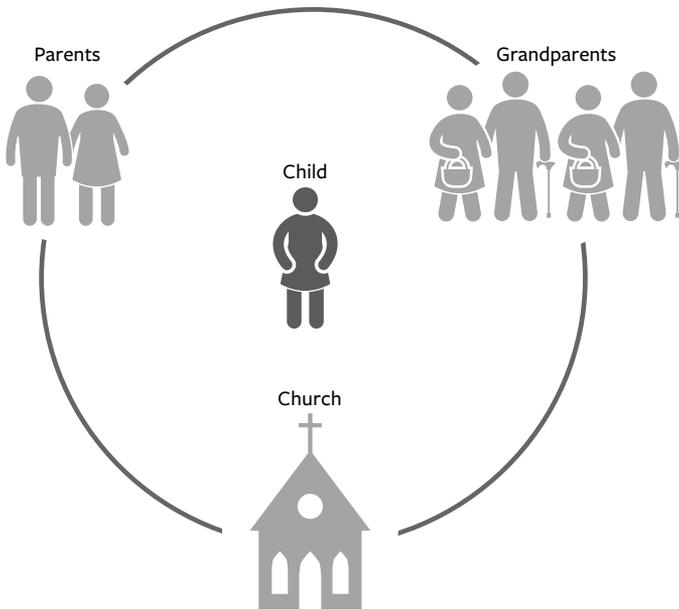
grandparents have unintentionally adopted an unbiblical role due to strong cultural messages, and the result is a disconnected family, loneliness, and overburdened children. If cultural messages are absorbed, then grandparents are placed at the periphery of family life where it is difficult to maintain close family relationships and significant discipleship of children and grandchildren. It is important to recognize and reject the cultural messages that encourage grandparents to live an independent life from family through noninterference and emotional autonomy as well as those that focus on indulgence of grandchildren by spoiling them and being their playmate. Discipleship is very difficult if independence and indulgence are central to one's grandparenting philosophy.

The Bible teaches that God designed grandparenting for the purpose of multigenerational family discipleship. Colossians 1:16 states, "All things were created through him and for him." Grandparenting was created by God and for God. This is an important point for all Christian grandparents to understand because everything God creates, including grandparenting, he creates for a reason. If God created grandparenting, the natural question that arises is why? God must have a purpose for it.

God designed the family as the first and most important means of discipling children. God created a multigenerational approach to discipleship, which includes two parents (a man and a woman) and four grandparents, as well as the church family. Due to divorce on demand, death, single-parent homes, and the sexual revolution, this picture is increasingly uncommon. Grandparents are God-designed teachers, models, mentors, shepherds, and sometimes surrogate parents who fill the gap created when brokenness touches our home. God gave you grandchildren so you can make disciples of all nations, beginning with your family. Discipleship is not easy work, but it is your purpose, and it is more satisfying than anything retirement can offer.

God created parents and grandparents as partners working toward the same goal, with different but complementary roles. Grandparents have been given a sacred trust in grandchildren,

Discipling Your Grandchildren



who are to be shepherded with care. Biblically, grandparents are disciple-makers who are to pass on a heritage of faith in Christ to future generations. Grandparents are fellow laborers created to point grandchildren to Christ and help raise them to spiritual maturity.

God designed parents as the primary disciple-makers in a child's life and He created grandparents as a secondary but important influence. If parents are raising children in the Lord, then grandparents support and encourage parents to fulfill the task God has given them and reinforce the work of the parent by investing directly into the spiritual life of a child and grandchild. In this case, you are discipling the disciple-makers. If parents are not raising children in the Lord, then grandparents need to lovingly encourage parents to take seriously the responsibility God has given them. Parents who are not actively discipling present an opportunity for grandparents to invest more heavily by stepping into a more prominent disciple-making role in the life of a grandchild.

Disciple-Making Grandparents Bear Spiritual Fruit

Psalm 92:12–15 paints the picture that we are to produce spiritual fruit for all of life. The psalmist uses the image of a palm tree to make his point: “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our Lord. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, ‘The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him’” (NIV).

Date palm trees bear hundreds of pounds of fruit well past 150 years of age and are a picture of what God expects from grandparents in the later third of their life. The psalmist teaches that righteousness in old age results in the continued production of spiritual fruit.

Psalm 92 shouts a truth that all grandparents need to hear: Age does not impair fruit-bearing capabilities. It enhances them. Psalm 92 reminds grandparents that the latter years of life ought to be spiritually productive years for the purpose of declaring the nature of God to others. American culture attempts to convince grandparents that you have little to offer. Nothing is further from the truth. This passage speaks against the American ethos of retirement and reminds grandparents to be fruitful disciple-makers to their dying day.

Grandparents need to reject the narrative that the purpose of old age is a life of leisure and self-indulgence. The example of the palm tree suggests that a fruitless existence is not a category the Bible recognizes. God’s expectation for palm trees is also true for grandparents: To live is to bear fruit, even in old age.

Grandparenting fruit, in part, is measured by faithfulness to God’s commands. If we measure success based on what grandchildren do or become, we have set ourselves up for disappointment. We can only control ourselves, not how our children or grandchildren respond. Sometimes children or grandchildren who grow up in good Christian homes abandon Christ. Other

times, God graciously transforms the lives of grandchildren whose families were a mess and parents were failures. In general, grandparents who follow biblical principles will see a positive effect on their family. God uses faithful grandparents as instruments in the salvation and sanctification of family members' lives. However, a grandchild's salvation is a matter that is settled between them and God, so we must diligently commit to praying for and impressing the truths of the Bible on a grandchild's heart.

Disciple-Making Grandparents Focus on Their Own Spiritual Life

The Bible teaches that the first priority for a grandparent is *who* before *what*. God tells grandparents, “Only be careful, and 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 their children after them” (Deuteronomy 4:9 NIV). In *Grandparenting*, the following point is made:

What we do is a result of who we are. The condition of your heart determines every aspect of your life, including what you do as a grandparent. That is why it is safe to say that grandparenting is a matter of the heart. Most writing on grandparenting focuses on methods. The idea is that if you aren't getting the right results, you must be doing the wrong things. But family literature that focuses on the external will never bring about lasting change. The starting place must be on your inner life—your thoughts, your motives, your values, and your beliefs.¹

The Bible teaches that the real issues of life are spiritual and are matters of the heart. That's why God is concerned with *who* a grandparent is before *what* a grandparent does. Disciple-making grandparents, the ones who make an eternal difference, are those who are serious about their own spiritual condition by grieving over their own sin, hungering for Christ, and continuing to grow in spiritual maturity. Grandparents who passionately pursue Christ

and live a God-honoring life present a strong apologetic that will not go unnoticed and will become a powerful instrument that God can use for the salvation of a grandchild.

God's command to watch ourselves closely has many implications. It is a call to be holy and live in obedience to God's commands. It suggests that our walk with Christ is the most important aspect of grandparenting. It is a reminder that no matter our age, our heart can grow cold and our affections can be misplaced. It is a warning not to make the same mistake as the Israelites, who forgot the work of God. It is an exhortation to fight the good fight of faith and finish the race strong.

Disciple-Making Grandparents Teach the Bible to Grandchildren

The Bible prioritizes teaching as the primary method of helping future generations know Christ and grow in maturity. Let's explore a few passages that command grandparents to teach the truth of God's Word to young people (emphases added):

- “*Teach* them to your children and to their children after them” (Deuteronomy 4:9 NIV).
- “Fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your sons’ son. . . . You shall *teach* them diligently to your children, and shall *talk* about them when you sit . . . walk . . . lie down . . . rise” (Deuteronomy 6:2, 7).
- “He commanded our [fore] fathers to *teach* to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children” (Psalm 78:5–6).
- “Older women . . . are to *teach* what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands . . .” Older men, “*urge* the younger men to be self-controlled” (Titus 2:3–6).

Grandparents are to use the Bible to shape who a child becomes and how the child lives. This is the pattern and command of Scripture. Grandparents in Deuteronomy were commanded to teach the law of God (Ten Commandments) to children so that future generations would develop an understanding of right and wrong. Grandparents in the Psalms were given a mandate to tell future generations about God's character and His work, and to teach God's laws so that children would not rebel against God. The grandparents of Titus 2 shape future generations by providing character training and guidance about how to be a godly mother and wife.

There is no substitute for living in a manner worthy of the Gospel, but also let us commit to verbally teaching biblical truths to the next generation so that they may develop a deep, lasting, Scripture-rooted faith that makes a difference for Christ in the world.

Discipleship is a slow process of small interactions over the course of a long time. It doesn't feel spectacular to read the Bible for ten minutes with a grandchild or discuss matters of faith spontaneously for a few minutes, but over time the collective impact is significant. If you invest a mere thirty minutes a week to disciple a grandchild and do this from birth through eighteen years old, you will have invested 28,080 minutes (468 hours) discipling a grandchild.

God's method for growth is spectacularly slow. The massive oak tree in my yard has been growing for more than 150 years. It grows at a rate that is slow and indiscernible. The God who slowly grows a strong, beautiful oak tree is the same God who grows a child's faith. It is the ordinary opportunities and the biblical conversations, ten minutes at a time, week after week, that God uses to shape the hearts and minds of children. We may not see immediate results, but we can pray that God would use the moments to help a grandchild know, love, and serve Christ.

Let us avoid the temptation of instant discipleship or thinking that everything we do with a grandchild needs to be momentous

and memorable. Some things will be. There should be some “wow” moments! But there will be many more mundane encounters. There is beauty in both. Whether momentous or mundane, I encourage a commitment to a long habit of reading the Bible, discussing it with a child, integrating God’s Word into daily activities and interactions that you will find in this book, and intentionally capitalizing on the opportunities we have—of whatever frequency that may be. Spiritual maturity is fueled by everyday interactions with godly people. Some are planned and some are spontaneous. This book will help you capture those everyday opportunities to intentionally disciple your children and grandchildren.