

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
PARENTING AGAIN FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME
You're Raising Your Grandchildren: Now What?

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty University Theological Seminary
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

Larry D. Lamb
April 2014

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

GRADE

MENTOR
Dr. Charlie Davidson

READER
Dr. Rod Dempsey

ABSTRACT

PARENTING AGAIN FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME

You're Raising Your Grandchildren: Now What?

Larry D. Lamb

Liberty University Theological Seminary, 2014

Mentor: Dr. Charlie N. Davidson

Grandparents raising their grandchildren are a new demographic emerging at a staggering rate because the parents are either unwilling or incapable of raising their own children. The rationale for this work is derived from the challenges this author and his wife have because of parenting their grandchildren. The research for this project has the value to offer support, wisdom, hope, and perspective for those who are parenting again as grandparents. Opportunities abound to lead grandchildren in a direction where they never would have gone had grandparents resisted the selfless act of parenting again.

This project will be approached using surveys with specific questions from other grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. The survey will assist in assembling the reasons behind this new and emerging trend of parenting. The resources gathered from this project will help grandparents embrace their new role in life.

Abstract length: 142 words

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this work to Heather, my wife and dearest friend on earth. In February, 2009 we decided that with the help of our God we would take on the assignment of parenting our grandchildren, Brayden, Shane, and Amaya. Only God would know the details of the journey. Only He would be strong enough and wise enough to sustain us.

I also dedicate this work to Leslie, Aimee, and Noelle, our three daughters who have always been loved without conditions. Because of you I love being called, “Dad.”

It doesn’t take much time working on an assignment of this length to understand what “collaborative effort” means. I could not have seen this assignment across the finish line without the help of my friend, Ouida English. I also want to thank my longtime friend Steve Holloway for his expertise with anything related to computers. He’ll forget more about technology that I will ever know. Ouida and Steve’s skills, determination, and insight are proof that one is too small a number to finish this project alone.

My desire from these pages of research is for grandparents parenting their grandchildren to have a renewed hope and insight to summon their courage for life, put their arms around their grandchildren, hold them close in love, and witness their lives become sturdy for God’s purposes. When that happens all the effort and selfless devotion will be worth the expenditure of time and strength.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
The Statement of the Problem.....	1
Disappointment.....	4
Pain.....	6
Anger.....	7
Trauma.....	7
Jealously.....	8
Discipline.....	8
Legal Matters.....	14
Financial Strain.....	17
Emotional Strain.....	18
Physical Strain.....	19
Working With Agencies.....	19
The Statement of Limitation.....	21
The Theoretical Basis of the Project.....	22
The Statement of Methodology.....	24
The Review of Literature.....	25
Literature Related to Inner Awareness.....	26

Literature Related to Raising Children, Again.....	31
Spiritual Development in the Heart of a Child.....	33
Summary of the Introduction.....	34
CHAPTER ONE: HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?	
WHAT TO KNOW AND WHAT TO DO NEXT AS THE CAREGIVER.....	36
Grandparents Face Numerous Problems That Parents Do Have To Consider.....	37
CHAPTER TWO: CULTURAL FACTS THAT PROVE YOU ARE NOT ALONE:	
TRENDS THAT TELL A STORY OF A OUR SHIFTING CULTURE.....	60
CHAPTER THREE: TEN WAYS TO KEEP THE “GRAND” IN GRANDPARENTING:	
RAISING GRANDCHIDLREN AND ENJOYING THE JOUNREY.....	75
(1) Accept That This is a Big Change for Everyone.....	76
(2) Realize That Grandchildren Are Adapting and Making Sacrifices Too.....	83
(3) Talk Honestly and Openly About Family Structure.....	87
(4) Make Encouragement a Family Value.....	90
(5) Learn To Have Fun Together.....	93
(6) Make Structure and Stability a Friend.....	97
(7) Build In Time For Yourself (Or Yourselves).....	101
(8) Build a Biblical Foundation as the Anchor of Truth.....	107
(9) Celebrate Small Accomplishments.....	114
(10) Think Long-term Investment.....	118

CHAPTER FOUR: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW NOW THAT YOU'RE PARENTING
AGAIN:

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR INFLUENCE.....	124
APPENDIX A HOW OUR JOURNEY LED TO PARENTING AGAIN.....	138
APPENDIX B SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR GRANDPARENTS.....	141
VITA.....	144
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	145
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD.....	149

Illustrations

Introduction

Figure I.1 Reasons why grandparents are raising their grandchildren

Figure I.2 Things that cause grandparents to be disappointed in their children

Figure I.3 Chart showing cycle of new issues in the lives of grandparents when parenting
Grandchildren

Figure I.4 Chart showing problems that can arise when children come into their home

Figure I.5 Discipline guidelines for grandparents

Figure I.6 Serious issues grandparents face

Figure I.7 Issues grandparents should consider

Figure I.8 John Maxwell's Five Keys on Building an Attitude

Chapter One

Figure 1.1 Survey related to reasons why grandparents are raising grandchildren

Figure 1.2 Responses from survey regarding how their lives have changed

Figure 1.3 Survey results showing length of time children have lived with their grandparents

Figure 1.4 Results from survey showing ages of grandparents raising grandchildren

Figure 1.5 Value systems

Figure 1.6 Crucial areas where wisdom is necessary

Chapter Two

Figure 2.1 Percentage of children by ethnic group living with grandparents

Figure 2.2 Results showing ages of children living with grandparents

Figure 2.3 Changes faced by families

Chapter Three

Figure 3.1 Challenges to Children and Sacrifices They Must Face When Going to Live With
Their Grandparents

Figure 3.2 What to Tell Children

Figure 3.3 Ways to Create a Stable and Predictable Environment in New Home

Figure 3.4 Routine That Can Be Used

Figure 3.5 Amaya, Shane and Brayden Preparing to Make a Gingerbread House
Christmas 2013

Figure 3.6 Brayden, Shane and Amaya With Finished Product

Figure 3.7 An “I love you” Note of Encouragement

Chapter Four

Figure 4.1 Ways Grandparents Can Mold the Lives of Their Grandchildren

Figure 4.2 Things Money Cannot Buy

INTRODUCTION

The Statement of the Problem

This project is designed to enhance the awareness of the growing population of children who will not be raised by their parents, but will be raised by their grandparents. The statistics, resources, and stories all point in the same direction: For millions of children their lives will be shaped by grandparents. In this process grandparents will have their lives shaped as well.

There is a developing demographic in society that has gone unnoticed but it is now gaining momentum for all the wrong reasons. The demographic are grandparents who are raising their grandchildren at a time in life where they should be enjoying the years of having watched their children grow up. What should have been the normal transference of responsibility in their children's lives did not occur and now grandparents are settling in for the next two decades of their life to raise their grandchildren. "There is a growing consensus among social service professionals that never before in recent history have so many grandparents served as surrogate parents to their grandchildren."¹

Grandparents are giving up their life dreams for their grandchildren so that they can have a life that they otherwise would never have. To say that an act like this is sacrificial is a gross understated reality. Only an individual with a deep love for what someone else could become in life is what jettisons this act from thinking about it to real action.

The reasons why grandparents assume the role as primary caregivers comes in a variety of scenarios such as the following couple:

¹ Sandra S. Thomas, *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, (Pittsburg, PA: Dorrance Publishing, 2012), chap. 1, under "Introduction," Kindle ebook.

Sharrie and Gord Dahl thought they were finished raising children. They moved into an adults-only apartment building and were planning on living quietly into old age. Then their daughter, who had drug and alcohol trouble, committed suicide in 2003, leaving behind four children. The Dahls realized they needed to help. They obtained custody of their grandson Branden, who was eight at the time and suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), and they committed themselves to raising him as best they could.²

The demographic of grandparents now raising their grandchildren can be scrutinized down to various counties such in Brevard County Florida. Mary Ann Sterling serves as Director of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Brevard County, FL Inc. According to the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Brevard County Florida 8,500 grandparents and relatives are raising children in that particular county. In the entire state of Florida there are 345,104 children not living with their parents and only 15,000 are in Foster Care. If the remaining 330,000 went into the Foster Care System it would cost the state of Florida \$1.6B a year. According to AARP 2.5 million grandparents are raising 6 million grandchildren.³ Martha Evan Sparks, author, states: "In the United States, seventy-one percent of these grandparents are under the age of sixty."⁴

Raising grandchildren may be for a short season or it may be for the remainder of life. For some grandparents it is an easy choice to re-parent all over again while others struggle and understandably so. Raising children is exhausting and then to reset life to climb the "parenting hill" again is not always an easy choice due to the ramifications a decision like this brings.

There is more than one reason why grandparents have decided to raise their grandchildren. The reasons can be reduced to twelve and will cover the majority of circumstances. This list is

² Donna Butts and Brigitte Castellano. "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren." *Children's Voice* 2006. 10, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/203951032?accountid=12085>

³ AARP.org

⁴ Martha Evans Sparks, *Raising Your Children's Children: Help For Grandparents Raising Grandkids*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2011), chap. 1, under "Parenting Again, Like It or Not," Kindle ebook.

not to be complete and comprehensive for all grandparents but it is a beginning point of understanding. One thing is for certain; there is complexity and often trauma surrounding the decision to raise grandchildren.

Health/Military	Domestic/Financial	Other Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness Of One Or Both Parents • Mental Illness • Death Of Parent or Parents • Military Deployment/Or Death Resulting From Deployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Violence/ Children Moved For Their Safety • Substance Abuse • Parent Or Parents Incarcerated • Complicated And Painful Divorce • Financially Unable To Support Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teen Preganacy • Children To Go To Foster Care Or To Grandparents • Single Parent Requested Support

Figure I.1 Reasons why grandparents are raising their grandchildren.

Twelve Reasons Why Grandparents Are Raising Their Grandchildren

1. The parents are ill and now the responsibility rests on the grandparents.
2. The parent(s) passed away.
3. The economic structure for the parents is too low.
4. A single parent asked for support from their parent(s).
5. The parent's divorce became too complicated and too painful.
6. Domestic violence forced children to be placed in a safe place.
7. Substance abuse.
8. Incarceration by the parent(s).
9. Mental illness.

10. The grandchildren will remain in foster care or be placed with grandparents.

11. Teenage pregnancy.

12. Military service deployment or death from military service.

Writer and pastor, Charles Swindoll sums up how many grandparents find themselves when the new arrangement of parenting again occurs: “Harassed by demands and deadlines; bruised by worry, adversity, and failure; broken by disillusionment; defeated by sin, they live somewhere between dull discouragement and sheer panic.”⁵

Take any of the twelve reasons in a separate setting and what it means is that life has been altered and serious adjustments are in play for the grandparents and the grandchildren. These listed reasons bring various levels of disappointment, pain, anger, trauma, jealousy, discipline, and legal issues for a grandparent.

Disappointment

What parent does not want their children to do well? There are no perfect parents but there are responsible parents. Disappointment occurs when grandparents witness their grandchildren living in a place that is filthy, lacking food, and other necessities while the parents are buying cigarettes instead supplies to help their family. Problems surface when they are not living up to the basics of parenting. The wider the gap will prove to be greater disappointment. A question that’s obvious is, “Why keep having children if you cannot parent one child successfully?” An accurate definition for disappointment is the gap between expectation and reality. The wider the gap will prove to be greater disappointment.

⁵ Charles Swindoll, *Strengthening Your Grip: Essentials In An Aimless World* (Waco: Word, 1982), 44.

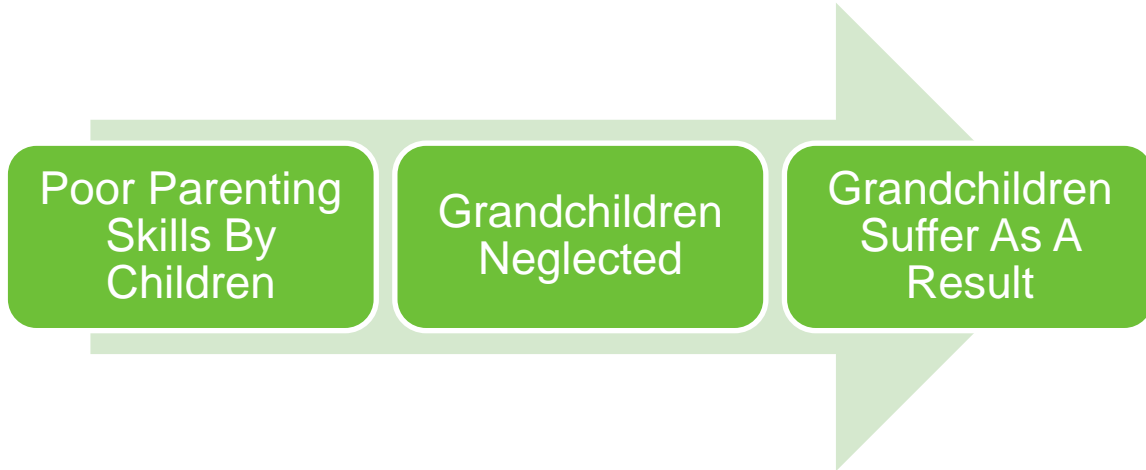


Figure I.2 Things that cause grandparents to be disappointed in their children.

Grandparents live with levels of disappointment due in part because the dreams they had for their children and grandchildren have become a nightmare because of the poor choices. Poor choices in a family seldom alter life for just one person.

The results of poor choices reach the whole family that causes pain. Leadership writer, John Maxwell, makes this wise statement about mistakes: “When it comes to success, it’s not the number of mistakes you make; it’s the number of times you make the same mistake.”⁶ Failure is repeating the same mistakes over and over. In time, those mistakes compound and a troubled life emerges. . In time, those mistakes compound and a troubled life emerges. When a troubled life emerges others who love the person are now fully invested by default.

Being an eyewitness to grandchildren living in abuse, poor conditions, filth, or neglect is firsthand disappointment that can be viewed on three levels:

⁶ John Maxwell, *Leadership Gold: Lessons I’ve Learned From A Lifetime of Leading* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 107.

1. It is disappointing to see that your own child is not being a successful parent. He or she is not parenting at a basic level of care and it is painful to witness their failure.
2. Disappointment because your grandchildren are being neglected. In most cases the children were set up for success in life and they should be setting up their children for success, but they are not. It is easy to be disappointed because your grandchildren are disappointed. The life they should be experiencing with their parents has not developed. There are strong indicators that their grandchildren are not in the environment that they had envisioned. Why? Because tragic decisions produced failing habits, which resulted in consequences that fostered large scale disappointment.
3. After witnessing poor parenting skills and seeing the effect on your grandchildren, the final level is accepting the fact that you may be headed for a place in life where you will become responsible for your grandchildren. To call this a life curve is a gross understatement. This arrangement is the opposite of how one speaker described his goal for his children: “Our goal is to produce kids who can emotionally leave home, kids who can come to love somebody else more than they love their parents.”⁷ Parents who witnessed the implosion of their children’s lives would like to have had this experience of emotionally healthy children.

Pain

It is wise to accept the fact that life has pain attached to it. No one escapes a season of pain regardless of education, socio-economic level, ethnicity, or faith or no faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus often spoke about the fact that suffering is a part of each life such as in John 16:33 “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many tri-

⁷ Dr. Jerry Lewis’s address in San Antonio, Texas, as referred to in Stu Weber, *Tender Warrior: God’s Intention For A Man* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 1993), 164.

als and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”⁸ There is a throbbing pain in watching a child self-destruct because of their decisions. It is heart breaking to have people who are loved tumble from one poor decision to another and create dire consequences for the whole family. Seldom does a family member suffer in isolation. Problems compound are and affect everyone.

Anger

Can you think of a positive example where inappropriate anger helped a conversation or a relationship? With the development of disappointment and pain in the relationship with your child anger cannot be too far behind. Anger settles in when a parent knows that their children are not getting their lives together in order to be mature caregivers for their children. Parents can even have this feeling, “Stop having babies because you will not and cannot take care of them.” When parents see their children stumble in life at first it is easy to believe that it was a one-time mistake and things will improve. When the pattern gets played out again and again with the addition of severity it is naïve to believe that a quick turnaround will happen. Clinical psychologist, Dr. Henry Cloud writes about this behavior: “The reality is that the person has not produced so far, and unless something changes, the future that you can expect is more of the same.”⁹

Trauma

When someone experiences physical trauma it means that they need immediate help. Something has occurred and it is now a crises. Self-reliance is out of the picture and outside help is necessary. For a grandparent who has a child with substance abuse problems, incarceration-

⁸ John 16:33

⁹ Henry Cloud, *Necessary Endings: The Employees, Business, and Relationships That All of Us Have To Give Up In Order To Move Forward* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2010). 99.

tion, mental illness or other challenges it means that everyone within the family is living with trauma. It is the long-term trauma by a child that may dictate the need to parent the grandchildren.

Jealously

It might not be a common discussion among grandparents who are raising their grandchildren but jealousy might be a reoccurring thought. Comparisons with other people will either make people become filled with pride because they are doing better than someone else or jealous because someone else is do better. For a grandparent raising their grandchildren and due to the difficulty of that task, comparing their experience with others can create toxic levels jealously. It is created because the grandparents who raising their grandchildren have to give unusual levels of energy, financial aid at time when the parents should be taking this responsibility. Interacting with friends who have children who have taken responsibility for their own children can often create a jealous spirit. Holding onto jealousy is neither advantageous nor healthy to the responsibility of raising grandchildren. There is maturity in accepting the responsibility that life is now about raising grandchildren and other people have challenges too.

Discipline

A parent knows firsthand the tenuous times of applying discipline to children. Some children come compliant and others come defiant. The compliant child may keep smoldering feelings within while the defiant child can be full of rebellious spirit. Regardless, discipline is one area of guidance where opting out will never be realized.

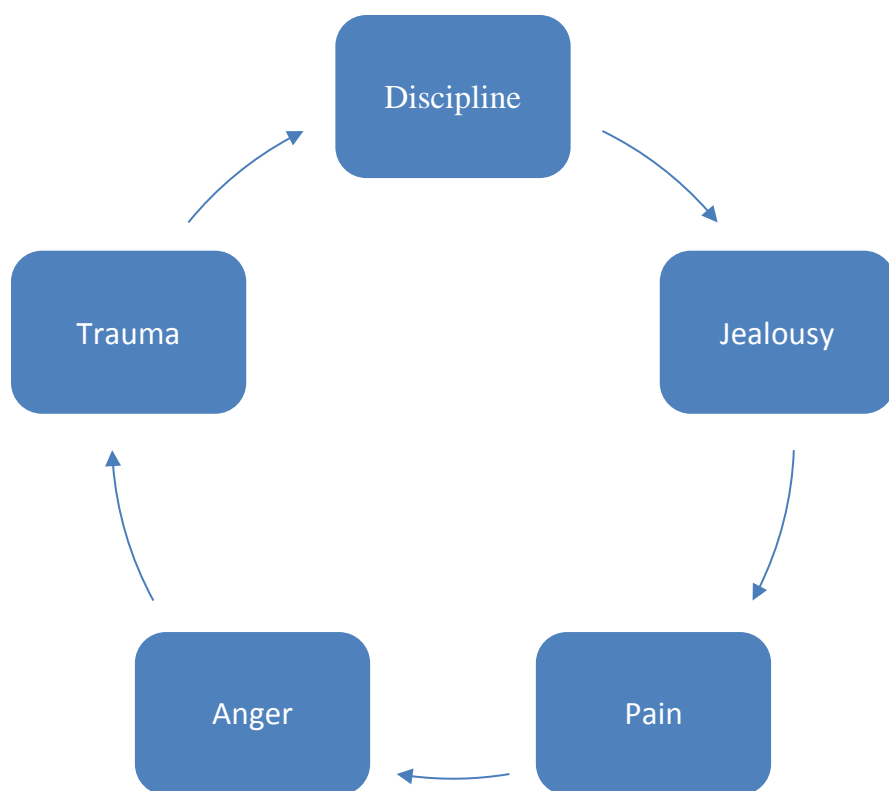


Figure 1.3 Chart showing cycle of new issues in the lives of grandparents when parenting grandchildren.

While a parent knows about discipline, a grandparent should be well versed in the ways of guidance. Elaine Williams comments on the idea that grandparents have more wisdom about discipline than they did in the past: “Grandparents have had years of experience with their own children, but disciplining grandchildren may be a greater challenge. You are not the same person as a grandparent that you were as a parent. In most instances, this is a good thing. You are wiser, more insightful, and you understand what matters in life—and what does not matter.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Elaine K. Williams (2011-08-10). *The Sacred Work of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (Kindle Locations 1838-1840). Balboa Press. Kindle Edition.

Depending on the age of the grandchildren will mean various forms of restraint. One thing is for certain according to the ancient Old Testament character, Solomon: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.”¹¹

Granted, there are people who never use an instrument to bring pain in an appropriate way to a child but according to the Bible it is helpful in the disciplining of a child. Because of appropriate pain, certain levels of foolishness can diminish carelessness as the child matures. At least that is the purpose of discipline. Discipline is something done for the child not something done against the child. Grandchildren may have their lives completely changed when new boundaries are in play. Consider Cloud’s words again: “By and large, people do not change without new structure.”¹²

One tool that may be beneficial for grandparents is the “If you, then you” principle. Grandchildren can enjoy a hobby, friends, sporting events, a Saturday afternoon movie, and video games. The “If you, then you” application goes like this: If you clean your room, or do you chores, or finished your home work, or get the yard clean up, or get your pajamas on, THEN you can go be with your friends, play a video game, go to the movies etc.

When children know that boundaries exist and that a grandparent is more than capable and willing to enforce the boundary grandchildren can rise to the occasion and respond in an obedient manner. Will they do this every time? No, but the percentages will head in a better direction when loving structure exist.

¹¹ Proverbs 22:15

¹² Cloud, *Necessary Endings*, 103.

The “If you, then you” is not love based on performance. Make it clear that following through in obedience is not a pathway to being loved, but it is an act of learning responsibility and maturity.

Grandchild: “May I play a video game?”

Grandparent: “Yes, if you get ready for bed then you can have time to play your video game.”

This may seem apparent, but everyone wins with the “If you, then you” application.

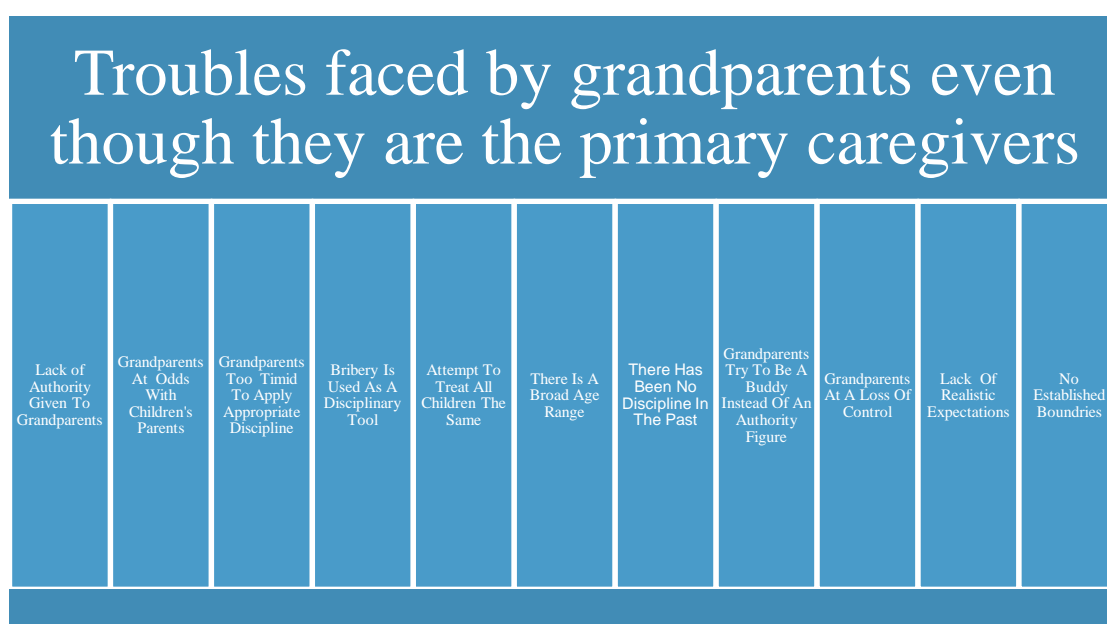


Figure I.4 Chart showing problems that can arise when children come into their home.

The more difficult task for grandparents and the discipline of their grandchildren happens when:

1. A grandparent has the responsibility of raising grandchildren but does have the authority.
2. A grandparent is at odds with the parent even though the grandparent is giving care.
3. A grandparent is too timid to apply appropriate discipline.

4. A grandparent tries to treat all their grandchildren the same.
5. A grandparent has the arduous task of raising grandchildren with a broad perspective of ages. (A five year old will need different discipline than a thirteen year old.)
6. A grandparent becomes the caregiver to grandchildren who have not been disciplined in the past.
7. A grandparent tries to be a friend to the grandchildren.
8. A grandparent attempts to bribe or use guilt to enforce better behavior. "Guilt rarely results in positive behavior."¹³
9. A grandparent yells and loses control in an argument.
10. A grandparent never established healthy boundaries of authority.
11. A grandparent fails to provide what realistic expectations are.

What can grandparents do in the area of discipline for their grandchildren, providing that they are the caregivers the majority of the time?

Be Prepared	Authority	Reward System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become Involved With Support Groups • Seek Guidance From Agencies • Read Free Information Either Online or in Library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set Boundaries Quickly • Don't Be Timid • Do Not Allow Disrespect • Let Children Know Who Has Authority • Have Consequences For Misbehavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know That Children Respond Differently To Discipline • Set Up Reward System Appropriate For All Ages • Show Visual Improvement Charts • Be Patient For Sometimes Children Have Not Been Exposed To Discipline

¹³ Andy Stanley, *How to Be Rich: It's Not What You Have. It's What You Do With What You Have* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 30.

1. Set the boundaries of what is expected in the home from an early age.
2. Use a reward system that is appropriate for younger children and older children.
3. Reread articles and books on discipline.
4. Realize that some of the grandchildren will respond differently to forms of discipline.
5. When grandchildren push the limits of wanting to know who is in authority, do not disappoint them.
6. Be patient with the process because they may come to the home without any type of discipline.
7. Use charts to give grandchildren a visual of their progress or areas of improvement.
8. Refuse to be timid.
9. Never allow disrespect to anyone in the family.
10. Attend seminars at local chapters for grandparents raising grandchildren.
11. Have consequences for misbehavior.



Figure I. 6 Serious Issues Grandparents Face

Legal matters

One of the most strenuous challenges in raising grandchildren full time involves the legal rights of caring for grandchildren. This can be a struggle to secure legal protection for the grandchildren and financial assistance for grandparents because of the erratic behavior of the parents. One of the twelve reasons why grandparents raise their grandchildren has to do with drugs, alcohol, and the results of such choices. . By taking legal action grandparents may be wondering if it will hurt the relationship with their children. Grandparents advocate Martha Evans Sparks makes this blunt comment: “Quit worrying about alienating the child’s parents. The parents have bombed out, or you wouldn’t be in this position.”¹⁴

While the safest and most wholesome place is away from the parents who are captivated by these poor choices, the legal rights still apply to the parents. They are in the “legal custody” driver’s seat. The fear for many grandparents and grandchildren is the disruption of placement back to the parents after they get treatment, get clean or sober, and then have a relapse. Children need stabilization to adjust, thrive, and have a good foundation for their future. It is not beneficial to anyone if the grandchildren are shuttled back and forth between the parents and grandparents. Without the legal rights for the grandparents as caregivers the parents and their poor life choices still dictate much of the future in the lives of the grandchildren.

The legal status of the grandparents giving care should not be left in limbo. In order for them to receive the aid offered by governmental agencies it is expedient to have total legal custody for complete care. The help will come in the form of obtaining medical insurance, prescriptions, school enrollment, social services, and other care giving aids. To gain complete authority for grandchildren it will become necessary for these new caregivers to adopt, gain full

¹⁴ Sparks, *Raising Your Children’s Children*, chap. 1 under “Parenting Again, Like It or Not.”

or temporary custody, guardianship, and even joint custody with the parents. Despite the fact that they are neglectful many parents may be reluctant to relinquishing their control, but in the majority of instances the best solution to a troubling situation would be for them to look beyond their current status and think of the welfare of their children. It might be an arduous task if drugs and alcohol cloud the parent's mind.

Without this legal protection the parents have the legitimate right to come and pick up their children whenever they believe they are stable enough or have the false notion that they are capable of parenting.

Consider this scenario for grandparents. If the parent's lifestyle choices dictate that the grandparents step in to raise the grandchildren how will they enroll in school should the parents be incapable of assisting? Schools require immunization records but if the grandparents cannot gain access to these records then the grandchildren will not be able to enroll in school. Without the proper authority to provide these required documents, life for grandchildren may prove to be just one hurdle after another.

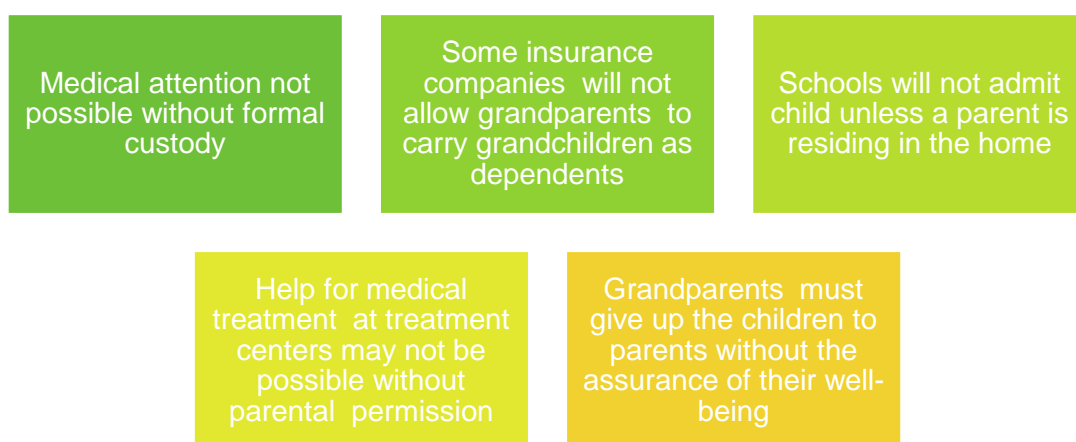


Figure I.7 Issues grandparents should think about when considering becoming caregivers.

Dr. Arthur Kornhaber, author of *The Grandparent Guide*, has listed information for grandparents to consider as they move toward the full time care of their grandchildren:

- The difficulties of obtaining medical attention without formal custody.
- Many insurance companies do not allow grandparents to carry their grandchildren as dependents.
- Many schools will not admit a child unless the child's parent is living with the grandparent; thus grandparents are denied authority concerning the schooling of their grandchildren and even transportation to another school district.
- Grandparents cannot help their grandchildren in treatment centers without the parent's permission.
- Care giving grandparents without legal custody must give up their grandchildren to the child's parents without assurance of the child's health or well-being.¹⁵

Grandparents raising their grandchildren are a segment of our population that is burgeoning and who are making significant sacrifices for a second time in their lives. "Nationwide, more than 6 million children live in households headed by grandparents and other relatives. Both within and outside of the child welfare system, these relative caregivers provide an important safety net by preventing children from entering foster care, caring for abused and neglected children, and stepping forward as legal guardians to children who would otherwise remain in foster care."¹⁶

Because of the challenges of raising grandchildren, if the parents are amiable to the full legal custody the plan of care will be smoother in part because the grandparents have the legal right to pursue what is advantageous for their grandchildren.

Should the parents want to use their leverage against the grandparents then they will be forced to choose who will raise their children. It has already been established that the parents

¹⁵ Arthur Kornhaber, *The Grandparent Guide: The Definitive Guide To Coping With The Challenges of Modern Grandparenting*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

¹⁶ Ibid.

cannot raise their children. If for some reason they will not relinquish their parental rights then the grandparents could say, "Give us legal custody or they will go into the foster care system." Only the extremely selfish parent would give up their children to foster care over the grandparent's care. It can happen and unfortunately it does happen.

Deciding to raise grandchildren is not easy but grandparents who sign up for the task do not assume it is going to be easy. The challenges of raising grandchildren will come with at least six hurdles to deal with.

Financial Strain

Adding grandchildren to the financial structure in the home is expensive. It is the simple addition of more food to purchase, additional baths, which means the water bill that comes bound in a hardback book, more meals to prepare, more clothes to buy, and potential daycare expenses. These items are the basics. This list does not include school supplies and all the expenses that circulate around that experience. If the grandparents are working then they must incur a daycare bill that will be staggering depending on the number of dependents. Some states that will pay the majority of the daycare bill while other states will not. Additional bills such as these force you to learn to go without in order to make life work for everybody. Grandparents quickly discover that it costs a lot to add people under the same roof.

Grandparents do not refuse their grandchildren because of inadequate funds. They take their grandchildren and find creative ways to make it financially. It is amazing how creative people can become when forced to provide for someone else out of love. Love makes grandparents choose sacrifice over selfishness.

Trimming costs may be as simple as:

1. Turning lights off in a room when it is not being used.

2. Getting rid of a cable bill.
3. Checking with the cell phone provider ask to bring down the month expense.
4. Look at luxury items and determine if they are absolutely necessary.
5. Make trips count to trim back on fuel costs.

These effortless tips may appear too simple. What does happen over time is more financial resources are added into the bloodstream of the budget and more funds are available for incidents that do matter.

Emotional Strain

Every grandparent who decides to raise their grandchildren will have to sort through a variety of emotions. Grandmother, Hilda Osborn wrote about her observations of taking in grandchildren to raise: “Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren deal with mixed emotions. They suffer feelings of anxiety at being cast into the role of primary parent at a time in their life when they thought such responsibilities were behind them.”¹⁷

It will be easier for some and more strenuous for others. Emotions are hard to untangle and the emotions that come with raising grandchildren is no different. As mentioned earlier, anger may be an emotion directed at the parents of your grandchildren. It’s not the grandchildren’s fault, but the parent’s fault. Be aware that emotions will have ebb and flow aspect. The one emotion that may have an unsettling effect is that this is going to be the rest of life. The constant reminder of what their children have done or have not done can be strenuous on the grandparents and can affect their health if the stress is too much. It is vital that grandparents be cognizant of how the actions of their children can affect them. Older adults can be more vulnerable to stress than younger generation.

¹⁷ Hilda Osborne, *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books Library), 93.

Physical Strain

There is a reason why God gives children to parents who are young because the work of training is demanding and they are endowed with a large amount of energy. After you get your own children raised you realize the intensity of these efforts have taken a toll plus the fact that you have aged. It is not exactly an easy time to summon vast amounts of physical energy to chase toddlers around, change diapers, get them dressed, wash and fold their clothes, give baths, do additional cleaning, try to help with fourth grade math, and cook meals. It's a challenging assignment to come home after a long and full day of work only to find that there are three to four additional hours that demand even more energy. Finally you fall into bed for a short night's sleep, and then face the same routine day after day.

Working with Agencies

One thing all grandparents raising grandchildren have in common is learning how to navigate working with agencies that will provide assistance. One benefit they have today that did not exist in past are special support agencies that offer tools to help with healthy care, schools, authority, dealing with parents, disciplinary problems, sibling challenges, and anger issues. The AARP (www.aarp.org) has an information center for grandparents raising grandchildren.

If you are a grandparent raising your grandchildren then you already know that it is a bend in the road that you never saw coming. Grandparents who travel this path share the common expressions of love, determination, and sacrifice for their grandchildren. It is not an easy assignment, but grandparents throw their arms around their grandchildren with the hope that their investment and sacrifice will pay off for them in the future.

Hope is what fuels a grandparent to set their life aside to envelop their grandchildren. If you dwell too long on what your life would have been like you may go crazy with what will

never be. That is where disappointment resides. Remember the definition for disappointment? It's the gap between expectation and reality. The greater the gap there is the greater level of disappointment.

In the pages to follow it will be helpful to know in Chapter One, Why It Becomes Necessary to Raise Your Grandchildren. The facts reveal that every grandparent has a unique story that led to their decision to raise their grandchildren.

How are grandparents going to keep their encouragement alive and fresh for the years ahead? Encouragement is the oxygen for this journey. No person has the perfect life, but for grandparents raising their grandchildren Chapter Three answers the question, How To Keep The "Grand" In Re-parenting Grandchildren? Since you're going to parent your grandchildren how are you going to make it a grand experience? The acceptance of raising grandchildren is a better fit when the reality of the situation is accepted as a fact. The final chapter, Chapter Four, describes What You Should Know Now That You Are Parenting Again and offers suggestions for grandparents to successfully navigate life at this stage.

By understanding the basic concept of this platform there is now a guide to understanding this expanding demographic. A grandparent may not see the fruit of their labor for a season just like the farmer has to wait for the crop to yield the harvest. But throughout the course of time grandparents can gain the necessary insight, encouragement, perspective, and hope for years to come.

If you are deeply discouraged because your life is different than what you expected; then you are not alone. It can be safe to say with reasonable confidence that most grandparents raising their grandchildren are living a life they did not anticipate. How could they have anticipated this unexpected change in their lives? With one phone call or one knock on the door life be-

comes different. Writer Elaine Denholtz has these words about the different approaches grandparents have: “Grandparents have different attitudes and different experiences. Different incomes and different ages. Different health problems and energy levels. So, naturally, everyone interacts differently with their grandkids.”¹⁸

It would be a prudent step for grandparents who see a long-term commitment to raising their grandchildren to get legal guidance in order to expedite the myriad of paperwork that will take place just to make sure the grandchildren are properly taken care of. By visiting www.aarp.org the grandparent can gain levels of help that otherwise they would not know about. It is helpful for grandparents to be knowledgeable of the laws in their state regarding what they can and cannot do. For those who are computer literate and have access to one they can find a wealth of information they can rely on. Of course not everyone has the ability to do this and must rely on outside help. Many times they must depend on different agencies for that needed assistance.

The Statement of Limitation

This document will slot trends and have suggestions for grandparents for the massive growth of children who will never be raised by their biological parents. This group of is swelling in population every day. Grandparents either take in their grandchildren children or watch them go to Foster Care or struggle while living in an environment with their parents who lack basic hope for a future.

There is limitation here because not all situations of the grandparent/grandchild may be dissected to complete understanding. There are obvious emotional and psychological streams of

¹⁸ Elaine Denholtz, *The Extra Parent: How Grandparents Are Helping Out, Pitching In, and Raising Their Grandchildren* (Lincoln: NE: iUniverse, 2004), chap. 1, under “Different Kinds of Grandparents,” Kindle ebook.

thought that cannot be adequately understood without a comprehensive and exhaustive research into thousands and thousands of home settings.

The notion of this demographic trend slowing is not happening. Because of raw data, the uptick of more families splintering into various directions is going happen. The survey done that guides here is only from a sampling of a group of grandparents living in a county of 600,000 people. Comparing this small county with the overall population in the United States and one quickly sees challenges ahead. The fact remains; if grandchildren do not live with their parents or their grandparents then the alternative is Foster Care homes.

These expanding populations of grandparents are stepping up to parent their grandchildren and the trend will not slow down anytime soon. Consider these statistics from the 2000 census report from the state of Colorado: In Colorado, 66,903 grandparents lived with grandchildren while 42.6 percent of those grandparents are responsible for raising their grandchildren.

- The number of grandchildren being raised by grandparents in Colorado increased from 2.6 percent in 1960 (16,700) to 5.1 percent in 2000 (55,575).
- Nationally, there were 5.7 million grandparents living with grandchildren; 3.6 percent of the American population 30 and over.
- Of those grandparents living with grandchildren, 2.4 million (42 percent) were responsible for their grandchildren.
- Among grandparents raising grandchildren, 23 percent had done so for less than a year, 23 percent for one to two years, 15 percent for three to four years, and 39 percent for five or more years.¹⁹

The Theoretical Basis For The Project

One does not have to dig too far into the New Testament to see that the life of Jesus

¹⁹ K.R. Tremblay, Jr., Colorado State University Extension housing specialist and professor, design and merchandising; C.E. Barber, former Colorado State University professor of human development and family studies; and L. Kubin, Extension family and consumer sciences agent, Larimer County.

demonstrated a selfless approach to extending Himself for the benefit of others. In Mark 10:45 a clear description of Jesus' life vision is told, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."² According to John MacArthur's commentary of the word ransom from Mark 10:45 states, that "Ransom refers to the price paid to free a slave or a prisoner."²⁰ The idea is that a price was paid for someone else. Giving up for the benefit of others is paramount. Every grandparent deciding to raise their grandchildren must come to the fact that it will require a selfless approach to living for the remainder of their days on earth. The basic premise of Christianity is Jesus Christ gave up everything so that others could have what they never would have had. Someone stepped up and stepped into the process of giving. Consider these thoughts from authors Doreen Rosenthal and Susan Moore on the idea of parenting again: "Oh no, here we go again. Not only the responsibilities of nurturing, but trying to take these on while the body ages, the energy levels reduce and one becomes the stereotypical invisible older woman."²¹

The theological side of raising grandchildren is sacrifice does for others what never would have been done, but a sacrifice was made. Followers of Christ understand that a payment for sin had to be credited to Christ's account instead of their own. That is sacrifice. Grandparents are obviously not asked to die for their grandchildren but they are asked to sacrifice extensively on a daily basis. Grandparents are going to attempt to provide a life for their grandchildren by giving themselves away in order for their grandchildren to possess a preferable life that would have been tragic.

²⁰John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005). 1233.

²¹ Doreen Rosenthal and Susan Moore, *New Age Nanas: Being a Grandmother in the 21st Century*, Newport, NSW: Australia: Big Sky Publishing, 2012), chap. 2, under "One Day a Baby Pops Out and You're A Grandmother' Learning the Role," Kindle ebook.

The idea of taking in grandchildren to raise is a major decision. In one instant life is changed for grandchildren and for grandparents. It is a decision that carries lifetime consequences. In the biblical sense of the sovereignty of God is in play. The Old Testament book of Jeremiah 29:11 states, “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”²² God knew far in advance where children are going to live and who is going to care for them. The fallback position for Christ-followers is that life is orchestrated far in advance and that God’s purposes are not a harming degree, but plans of hope and a preferable future.

The Statement of Methodology

This study is will present why grandparents are placed into the position of raising their grandchildren. The scenarios are complex. The reason grandparents arrive to this new place in life can erupt in a moment’s notice.

Chapter 1 lists reasons why grandchildren are being placed in their grandparent’s home. The reasons are neither flattering nor encouraging. Mary Ann Sterling, director of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Brevard County Florida, who is helping grandparents have a pool of resources to aid grandparents with support, answer questions, to help with filling out forms. It can be overwhelming to have grandchildren show up at the front door and the other challenges come with laws and regulations that are sure to arise.

Chapter 2 describes the new wave of grand parenting. The traditional way has grandparents enjoying the company of their grandchildren and then they go back to their parent’s home. The growing trend today is the grandchildren show up at the grandparent’s home to live with them

permanently. If grandchildren have lived in the home of their grandparents for six months or more, the probability of them being raised to adulthood by the grandparents is high.

For grandparents working to help their grandchildren in life Chapter 3 is designed to help grandparents keep the “grand” in grand parenting. The practical tools are imbedded as simple reminders that can often get lost in the daily pursuit of making life work in the family setting. In reality Chapter 3 is about possessing the right values that will help in the pursuit of helping raise grandchildren. Author Jim Bogear describes the necessity of values this way: “We all live by a set of values. If our value is helping others, we’ll look for opportunities to help. Our job is to direct our children [grandchildren] into making the right value choices they’ll follow for the rest of their lives.”²³ This chapter contains 10 practical steps to keep the “Grand” in grand parenting.

In the conclusion of this work in Chapter 4, grandparents are going to have the important job of acquiring at least three reminders of what is important along this journey of raising their grandchildren. It is more than serving meals, helping with homework, and striking the delicate balance of disciplinary structure. Chapter 4 will help grandparents look far into the future and construct a mindset that their influence will have a far-reaching affect for generations to come.

To begin with the end in view of releasing grandchildren into the world is crucial. While they are young it can be a challenge to see them off working on their own, but they will. As an example, the grandchild who is 9 years old today could be sitting in a collage classroom in only one decade from today. While a decade may seem like an eternity away, it is not.

The Review of Literature

²³ Jim Bogear, *Faith Legacy*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009), 39.

This section will review some of the literature related to this study. This review will provide an opportunity to gather a majority of the research materials needed for this project. It will be divided into several groups of literature related to the following: Literature related to inner awareness, raising children, again, and the spiritual development in the heart of a child.

Literature Related To Inner Awareness

There are many emotions that come into play when a life shockwave settles through the mind of someone. Some people fall into deep denial, others try to distance themselves from shocking news, while there are those who learn to cope and adjust to their circumstances.

A helpful resource related to understanding the inner awareness of coping with the life curve of raising children again is *The Winning Attitude* by John Maxwell. Maxwell is a motivator and life coach who inspires people to see circumstances as a way to mature to become a ground person in spite of what life gives. While his works are highly motivational a reader of his materials comes away with ideas that promote wise thinking internally. When grandparents begin the journey of raising their grandchildren the array of emotions that will surface might be, “How can I survive this”? In time possessing the best attitude possible will be a friend. The Apostle Paul in the New Testament book of Philippians 2:5 wrote about the importance of a great attitude: “You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.” ²⁴ Jesus had the perfect attitude and the Bible suggest that we have the same attitude.

²⁴ Philippians 2:5

In Maxwell's book he describes Jesus' attitude as, "selfless, secure, submissive."²⁵ People are quick to mention the phrase, "First Things First." When assuming the role of caregiver for grandchildren obtaining a right attitude from the beginning is crucial because it can set the tone of the relationship for weeks and months ahead. It is worth mentioning as a reminder that the grandchildren, in a majority of circumstances did not have a choice in the matter of living arrangements. They were told what the next steps for their lives would be. With the new living arrangement there will need to have blended into the new family the attitude of Jesus that is selfless, secure, and submissive.

Another valuable help from Maxwell's book is how to construct a good attitude. He lists five key elements to the making an attitude:

1. A child's formative years are the most important for instilling the right attitudes.
2. An attitudes growth never stops.
3. The more our attitude grows on the same foundation, the more solid it becomes.
4. Many builders (specialist) help construct attitudes at a certain time and place.
5. There is no such thing as a perfect, flawless attitude.²⁶

²⁵ John Maxwell, *The Winning Attitude* (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1993), 15.

²⁶ Ibid.

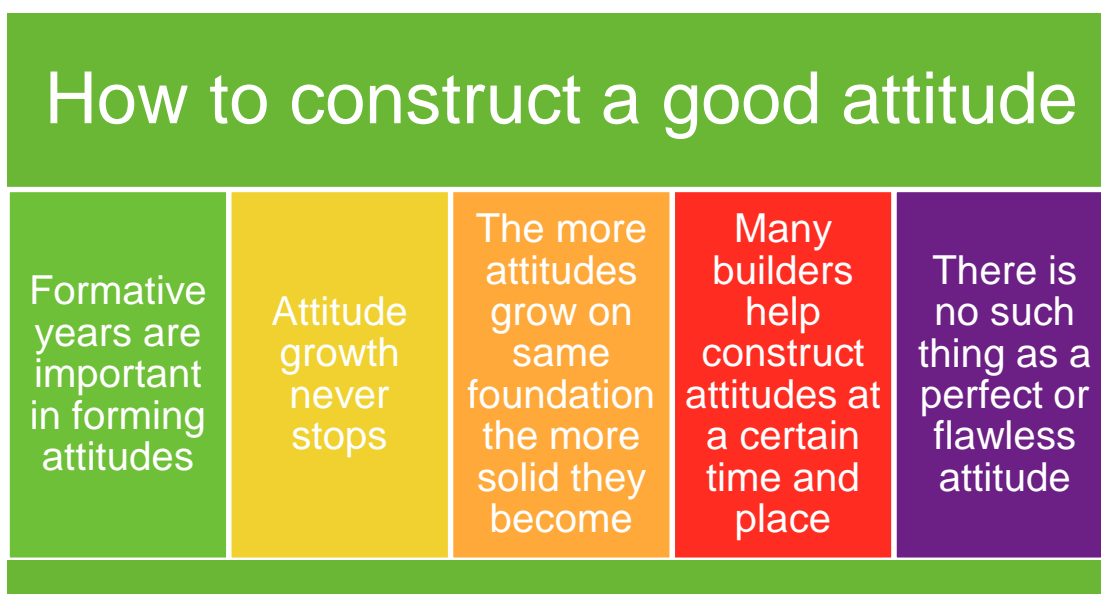


Figure I.8 John Maxwell's five key elements on building an attitude.

While many people are not where they want to be in life, have what they want to have, or have the family they thought they would have, everyone get the opportunity to choose their attitude. The book by Maxwell is a guide to coming to terms that regardless of life's circumstances choosing the right attitude is really a choice; a personal choice.

A remarkable resource that pinpoints the accuracy of healing emotions is by Tim Clinton, *Turn Your Life Around*. Dr. Clinton is the president of the American Association of Christian Counselors and has published numerous articles and books on human emotions. Dr. Clinton begins his book with Chapter One called: Ambushed and Assaulted: Coping With the Unexpected. What an appropriate response to the news that grandchildren are coming to live with you for an indefinite period of time. That is coping with the unexpected. The reason Clinton's book is helpful is due in part that he takes the reader on a wide range of emotions from anger, anxious thoughts, feeling alone, hurting, and feeling in bondage. The second half of his book guides people out from the traps of raw emotional pain to places of hope and healing.

What do people feel when they have been told life is changing? What is the home like now that grandchildren have come to live? It is true that some grandparents are welcoming the news while other grandparents will have to set their personal free time aside for the next 15 years. That is coping with the unexpected. For the grandparents who experience anger and pain with the inclusion of grandchildren Clinton offers this advice: “I should warn you that true transformation usually occurs in the middle of pain and life’s adversities.”²⁷ **In this** inner awareness section for grandparents Clinton is saying that in the middle of the adversity of having new people now living under the same roof, grandparents will be changed for the better if the attitude is right and the willingness to be changed from the inside out.

This is a classic biblical principle of being made into a different person when the right response is made from adversity. These Bible verses put adversity into perspective:

Romans 8.28

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.²⁸

James 1:1, 2

This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing to the “twelve tribes”—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings! Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.²⁹

²⁷Timothy Clinton, *Turn Your Life Around: Break Free From Your Past to a New And Better You* (New York: Faith Works, 2006), 124.

²⁸ Romans 8.28

²⁹ James 1:1,2

Joshua 1:9

This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.³⁰

Another fundamental resource to understanding inner awareness is, *How People Grow*, by Henry Cloud and John Townsend. These authors describe how people grow up in life according to the biblical definition of growth. Because this project is written from distinct worldview that is biblical and from an orthodox view of Christianity there are few issues with the premise of Cloud and Townsend when they say, “When people come to us for counseling, we wanted them to understand that the issues they were working on were growth issues or counseling issues, but spiritual growth issues. Spiritual growth, in our mind was the answer to everything.”³¹

As a grandparent delves to some inner issues and struggles the over arching issue may be solved by grasping the need to understand how they are rightly related to God. Could all of the great questions of life begin here? In the gospel of John 3:16 is perhaps the beginning point of understanding how a meaningful relationship with God begins: “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”³²

These authors assisted in the work of this project due in part as clinicians, theologians, and practitioners of the inner workings of life. Stating the obvious is not a challenge. Working

³⁰ Joshua 1:9

³¹ Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *How People Grow: What The Bible Reveals About Personal Growth*: (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 21.

³² John 3:16

through the obvious in life with accuracy adds credence and respectability. These two authors rely heavily on the Scripture to advance where people are to where they need to arrive to. For example, grandparents may approach the selfless act of raising grandchildren with questions that circle around fear, doubts, discouragement, happiness, and contentment. The range of feelings will be multifaceted like a sparking diamond. Appreciation is given to these men for stating the reliability of Scripture from 2 Timothy 2:16-17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.”³³ “People need a structure to know God and how he wants us to love him and conduct our lives.”³⁴

Literature Related To Raising Children, Again

The grandparents who ever thought they would be raising children again after getting through the first set are slim. More and more articles and books are beginning to point in the direction of grandparents being positioned to be the primary caregivers. While much is said about taking in grandchildren, there is news that emerging from the health side of the new arrangement. The research from various authors shows that possessing a strong will to cope with the new adjustment is healthy. It is a better day when the realization of the new arrangement is accepted and life begins to flow in a structured environment. It might take time to get to this place and in the meantime the toll on health can be felt. There is a strong correlation between the inner health and physical health of a person. The article from Amanda Long, *When You're*

³³ 2 Timothy 3:16,17

³⁴ Cloud and Townsend, *How People Grow*, 195

A Parent...Again provides a direct approach to the inner working of the emotions and physical strain of the new arrangement from parenting again.

The research can't be denied, either. A recent University of Chicago study of 13,000 grandparents ages 50 to 80 showed that grandmothers who took over as primary caregivers, for grandkids whose parents were not present in the home, reported initial declines in their health. This need not be reason to fret, though. The researchers also reported that grandparents who stuck with it saw a modest improvement in their health, which suggests that the negative effect of becoming primary caretaker disappears as the arrangement continues.³⁵

A key component in parenting again is discipline. Some grandparents are going to have their grandchildren placed in their home where no discipline had been enforced. Take the grandparent who has clear boundaries and enters a child without boundaries and tension becomes the understatement. One of the leading authors on the topic of child disciplines is Dr. James Dobson. His book on *The New Dare To Discipline* is a resource that has encouraged parents for decades and now is encouraging grandparents. Dobson's approach is not to give children all they want, rather he believes in firm boundaries known for all in the family. He writes, "Permissiveness has not simply failed as an approach to child rearing. It's been a disaster for those who have tried it. When properly applied, loving discipline works!"³⁶

Still another author will helpful insight is Laura Montane Baily. In her book, *Courageous Love*, she states, "Managing a child's behavior during the time they are with you is not the same as bringing about deep, internal healing and transformation. Obedience in the moment may be

³⁵ Amanda Long, "Now That You're A Parent...Again," *Grandparents.com*, (2007-2014): accessed March 31, 2014. <http://www.grandparents.com/family-and-relationships/caring-for-children/whenyoureaparentagain>.

³⁶ James Dobson, *The New Dare To Discipline*: (Carol Stream, IL, Tyndale, 1992), 7.

important, but what counts even more is that your grandchildren grow up and continue living out the values and rules that you taught them even when you are not around to remind them.”³⁷

Spiritual Development In The Heart Of A Child

The ancient writer, Solomon observed this about training children from the Old Testament book of Proverbs 22:6, “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.”³⁸ That is what Solomon observed and parents and grandparents have discovered this to be a true principle when careful attention is given to the training of children. Some grandparents who are new to the Bible or not as familiar with biblical insights may ask where they can turn to acquire the main ideas of instruction.

An article from Rob Flood provides sections of thought that children can learn and apply. He writes, “The Book of Proverbs is arguably the most practical book in the entire Bible. So as you search for a place to start in the teaching and instruction of your children, why not start in a place that will make immediate impact”?³⁹ Proverbs contains pithy statements of wisdom that be applied immediately. Consider this a starter kit to begin instruction with children:

Pride/humility

Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.⁴⁰

Proverbs 3:5-8 - Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be

³⁷ Laura Montane Bailey, *Courageous Love: Instructions for Creating Healing Circles for Children of Trauma* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2013) 142.

³⁸ Proverbs 22:6

⁴⁰ Proverbs 16:18

wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.⁴¹

The fear of the Lord

Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.⁴²

Proverbs 14:27 - The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death.⁴³

When life gets hard

Proverbs 18:10 - The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe.⁴⁴

Most important of all

Proverbs 4:23 - Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.⁴⁵

The importance of possessing a good reputation

Proverbs 22:1 – Choose a good reputation over great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold.⁴⁶

Summary Of The Introduction

The intent of the introduction has been to summarize in a few pages the direction of thought for grandparents who are now responsible for the welfare of their grandchildren. Our culture cannot ignore the fact that thousands of grandchildren are in now being raised by their grandparents. From the indicators that reveal the downward spiral of the traditional family, the growth in this new family arrangement is going to continue to expand. To brush aside this sturdy demographic of society would be a mistake. What have been seen so far are the effects this

⁴¹ Proverbs 3:5-8

⁴² Proverbs 1:7

⁴³ Proverbs 14:27

⁴⁴ Proverbs 18:10

⁴⁵ Proverbs 4:23

⁴⁶ Proverbs 22:1

has on grandparents in all life categories. Grandparents are in the driver's seat for a new generation of children who are going to have their lives shaped and directed by adults who are not their parents.

The chapters ahead are places to stop, think, and reflect on what the shaping will consist of and how the directing will look in the decades to follow. Without grandparents opening their homes to their grandchildren the culture would have been littered with precious lives that may not have had the chance to be educated, better, different, and fulfilled. Because grandparents are opening their homes and hearts these children will be embraced in love, taught basic skills, learn self respect, discipline, and perhaps the greatest thought there is, to know that a loving God cares deeply about each day of their lives. The family circumstances may be different than what anyone could have envisioned but at least with the grandparents there is now safety, love, nourishment, and the freedom to develop in a caring home.

CHAPTER 1

HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?

WHAT TO KNOW AND WHAT TO DO NEXT AS THE CAREGIVER

Talking with grandparents raising their grandchildren and the stories will vary along with a common thread of sameness. In researching and reading books, articles, web site posts on why grandparents are raising their grandchildren and it does not require lengthily progression to read about pain. Each grandparent shared the common thread that ties them together; huge disappointment. Consider this unfolding story of pain by author Jeanne Sinclair-Krause as she described watching her own daughter falter under the weight of trying to be a parent: “I noticed that Amanda did not have any parenting skills at all. We had to go out to buy diapers for the baby as soon as they arrived here, and I noticed that Amanda would let Cynthia lay in the same diaper for hours at a time.”¹ Here is a grandmother being set up to take full responsibility of raising her granddaughter. In the majority of cases a tragic story unfolded and loving grandparents picked up the slack in order for their grandchildren to have a life far different then what they would have had.

One grandparent in Brevard County Florida was placed in the position of raising her grandchildren and discovered far too quickly that the challenges of parenting again is hard. It led her to question if other grandparents were in the same situation. What Mary Ann Sterling, director of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Brevard County Florida, discovered was that many in her surrounding area were doing exactly what she was doing. From there, she came to the realization that other grandparents needed help like she did.

¹ Jeanne Sinclair-Krause, *Remember Cynthia Rose: Grandparents Fight To Keep Their Grandchildren*, (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse Publication, 2002, chap. 1, under “Lola Osborne’s Family,” Kindle ebook.

This discovery led to the birth of an organization that would assist grandparents who decided to raise their grandchildren at a season of life where they should be enjoying them for quality times and then hand them back to responsible parents. Many yearned for such times, but reality writes a far different script. Grandparents left with rearing grandchildren have to understand at least four realities when they begin the unexpected journey.

Grandparents Face Numerous Problems That Parents Do Not Have To Consider

1. Grandparents are no longer at their peak earning age.

Grandparents might be considering retirement and living off of the fruit of their years of working. Those facing the responsibilities of raising their grandchildren will not have the luxury of such a scenario because it will be imperative to accept the financial care that comes with more people in the home.

If turning back the hands on the clock were possible, perhaps they could have set aside more financially for such emergencies had they known they were in the future. Unfortunately, life does not afford those options! One thing is for certain, the expenses will increase and they will be forced to make choices and decisions for the benefit of their grandchildren over their personal wants.

2. Grandparents will have to raise their grandchildren at an odd phase of life.

God designed life (in most cases) where energy, strength, and vitality are at the early phases of life while in the later years of life energy, strength, and vitality lessen. Some grandparents feel worn out after just taking care of their grandchildren for the weekend and rightly so. Demographics show a new grouping of people who are middle aged or older who are unable to hand grandchildren back to their parents, but instead have the responsibility of constant care.

Constant care means cleaning extra rooms, doing more laundry, helping with homework when the day was already full, preparing additional meals, disciplining children, calming hurt feelings and realizing that this is how life will be for years to come. It is probably an easy emotion to know but a harder one to swallow that grieving for a life that will never be known has become a fact. That is an emotional dilemma that might never be solved by some, yet accepted easily by others.

3. Grandparents can contend with legal issues because of the parent's actions.

Here is a tension point for grandparents that become puzzling. In various settings the grandparents are doing everything to raise noble grandchildren but the way of their instruction is against the desires of the parents. It is odd that all of a sudden the parent or both parents care about the wellbeing of their children when it may not have been the case before. Often, the parents still have the legal rights over their children but the grandparents are raising them on a full time basis. When pushed to the legal limits grandparents can be marginalized to yield to the parent's desires even though they are absent from their own children the majority of time. It is not prudent, but that is the way it is.

4. Grandparents need to know what is available for them to assist in raising the grandchildren.

Ms. Sterling, Director of the Brevard County Florida organization called Grandparents Raising Grandchildren was motivated to begin her organization because of her own experience and because of conversations with other grandparents who felt trapped by a lack of knowledge of assistance.

Much assistance with a legal issues, financial assistance can be located on the Internet from the state of federal level, and of course groups like Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, however the awareness that these programs exist and the knowledge of being able to find such or-

ganizations has to be present. The system has ways to assist, but without a way to garner information many grandparents are lost. There are grandparents who do not own a computer and cannot research information that is available to them. Frequently other concerns may arise if there is no knowledge of being facilitated as to operating or even having a computer.

The truth about grandparents raising grandchildren today is not easy at any level. Responsible mothers and fathers find that rearing and training children is a challenge, moreover grandparents with a lean financial budget, the coping of growing older and possibly their own health concerns as well as legal issues with the parents create even more difficulties when faced with the added necessities of raising these grandchildren.

With that understanding of what grandparents go through, which is not an exhaustive list; there are statistics from Mary Ann Sterling that cover a small composite of grandparents in Brevard County Florida which is one hour east of Orlando, Florida.

Within Brevard County there are approximately 103,897. The Department of Children and Families, through foster families and other county facilities, take care of 500-1000 of these children while grandparents are raising 6,324 and relatives 1,434 (totaling 7,758) of Brevard's children. Over 13% of Brevard County's children are being raised by someone other than their parents. Children being raised by grandparents would fill 10 of Brevard County schools.²

While the statistics from Brevard County are only one description of many counties in the country, it reflects the rapidly growing trend in the United States. Is it safe to say that the numbers will expand in higher proportion in the years to come? If what is being witnessed in the culture the answer is yes.

Surveying grandparents in Brevard County reflected that 15 out of 20 respondents were raising their grandchildren because of incarceration by one parent or both parents. This statistic

² Ashley Beatty, *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*. (Corvallis, OR). August 2006.

alone sends shock waves because of the length, the reason and the emotional trauma resulting from the incarceration.

The second major reason for grandparents raising their grandchildren had to do with substance abuse. Drug abuse leads to many other problems that in turn create a vicious cyclical downward spiral that can include incarceration. If the grandparent(s) had not intervened the children would have been placed into the Foster Care system for a lengthy time. . Maribeth Peters wrote her book on grand parenting after her daughter died of a heroin overdose. Her daughter struggled with the addiction and eventually lost her life leaving behind five grandchildren. The youngest was a new born. Her words sound as a warning for all: “We live in times where war is in our own backyards, in our playgrounds, in our homes. Drugs are everywhere. We have to protect our grandchildren and give them tools to succeed in life. Live your message each and every day. Educate your grandchildren. Build their self-esteem puzzle. Teach them that happiness and prosperity can be found in making good choices right off the bat, every single day.”³

From the survey the top reasons for the grandparent’s involvement were incarceration and substance abuse. As stated previously, the reasons for grandparents raising their grandchildren are not typically unpleasant.

The common reason beyond incarceration and substance abuse had to do with:

- Parental neglect
- Domestic violence by the parents
- Mental illness
- The financial structure for the parent(s) is too low to support

³ Maribeth Peters, *360 at 60: a Grandparent’s Guide To Raising Children All Over Again*, (Portland, OR: Astoria Publishing, 2013), “Introduction,” Kindle ebook.

- Immaturity of the parent(s)
- Children being threatened with death

The chart below is based on number of respondents from dissertation survey as to reasons grandparents decided to raise their grandchildren. Their decisions are based on providing stability and security for their grandchildren.

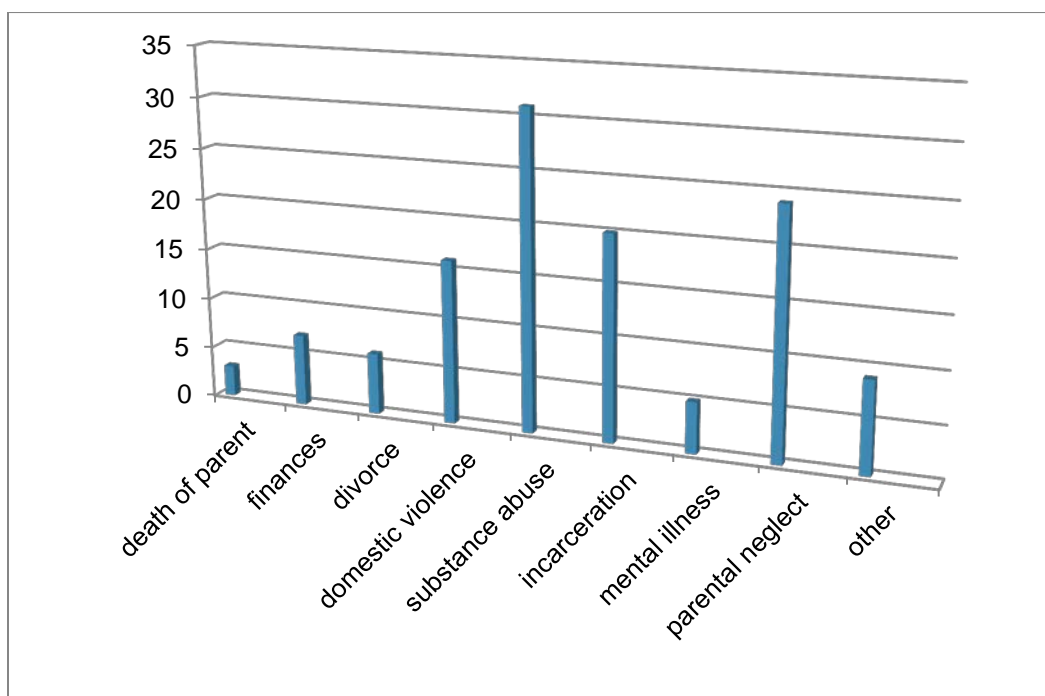


Figure 1.1 Survey related to the reasons why grandparents are raising grandchildren.

Trying to point in any positive direction of why grandparents are raising grandchildren is impossible from the survey. Grandparents stepped in to console, give, and support their grandchildren in horrid circumstances.

The survey (See Appendix B) was structured in a way that was not too lengthy, yet asked specific questions to gain and provide an overall picture of what these grandparents are facing. The same set of questions could be used in all regions of the country and would result in simi-

lar responses because of the age demographic. What may be varied is the financial hardship that can occur.

Some of the questions from the survey asked:

1. Has the decision to raise your grandchildren changed your life positively, negatively, or hasn't changed?

Some grandparents indicated that it has not been a negative effect on that they were enjoying the opportunity to build wholesome virtues into the lives of their grandchildren.

Here are examples of positive experiences:

"Keeps me active."

"It allowed me to go back to school so I can teach my grandchildren better."

"They put joy in my life."

"Keeps me young."

"Reminds me to keep things in perspective. Children are a gift and need to be cherished."

"Keeps me focused knowing I am helping someone else."

"I know they are safe." (The mother told her children she was going to kill them)

"It's rewarding to help guide these children."

Not every grandparent from the survey had positive expressions when asked if raising grandchildren is a positive experience, negative experience, or hasn't changed.

Here are examples of negative experiences:

"We get tired."

"I have less time for volunteering."

"We're losing our Golden Years together."

"I don't have time for myself."

“Restricts things my wife and I would like to do.”

“It’s a financial strain.”

“Financial and stress levels.”

This survey could be conducted in county after county and the expressions of what is positive and negative would probably be expressed the same. For many grandparents the opportunity to raise their grandchildren is the perfect situation while for others the challenge could not be more difficult.

Think about the work, commitment, dedication to working through tough times, and the disciplinary aspects of training children for eighteen years. The children are sent off to school or move on with their own life and for a short season there is a break. After the eighteen-year journey of your own children, you are now responsible to raise small children for the next eighteen years.

For that reason some of those surveyed indicated that they were angry at the demands of re-raising small children. They are angry that their life will never be the same and they are angry with the parents for irresponsible behavior.

The grandparents were asked in the survey what they enjoyed the least about raising their grandchildren. Here is a sample of their feelings:

“Settling arguments and punishments.”

“Homework and sibling rivalry.”

“Restricting me from what I wanted to do in retirement.”

“Bedtime is hard and day to day freedoms are restricted.”

“Not enough time in the day.”

“Limitations on date-time due to trouble getting a babysitter.”

“Dealing with DCF and their mother.”

“Not having them listen.”

“Coping with teen anger.”

“Giving up the things I was involved in.”

“Emotional connection.”

From the array for emotions and expressions it is understandable that traces of anger reside in grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. The anger stems from the reality of a life curve being leveled against people at an age where some tranquility should be residing. The option to raise grandchildren is a staggering decision that will affect many areas of life as stated. Here is an additional discovery:

The roles of today’s grandparents have drastically changed from fifty years ago. Grandparents are now expected to give up their retirement and that “grandparent relationship” to fill in the position of “parent” when the child’s parents can no longer do so. This can be a hardship for both the grandparents and the grandchildren. Grandparents raising grandchildren are more likely to experience increased depression, poverty, and isolation and need assistance.⁴

According to Beatty, grandparents who decided to raise their grandchildren are forfeiting dreams, ideals, goals, and even health to make the life of child/children far different than it would have been. The frightening sentence in her observation is the how often grandchildren suffer behavioral problems and related depression in grandparents. It is not how it is supposed to be but grandparents know that this is how it is.

Below is a chart showing how the lives of grandparents have been affected by their decision to raise their grandchildren and how they will view the future. The likelihood of having these children into their advanced ages is a great probability.

⁴ Ibid.

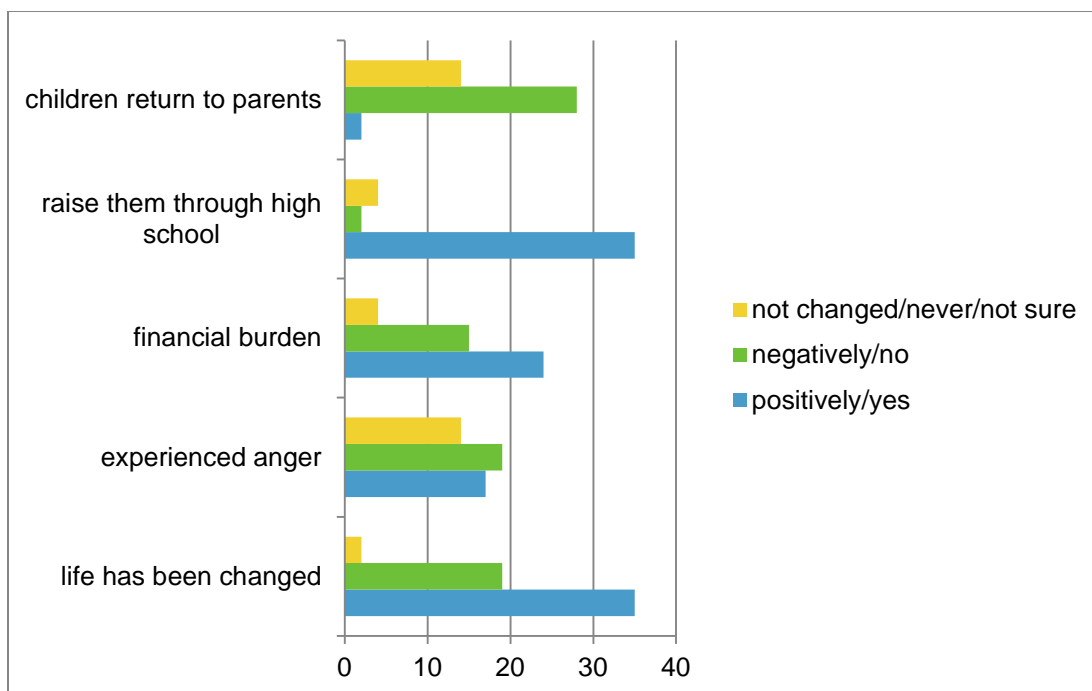


Figure 1.2 Responses from survey regarding how their lives have changed.

2. How long have you been raising this child or these children?

Many of the children had been with their grandparent(s) for five to ten years. These grandparents can expect to have the children with them at least until they graduate from high school. Even though many stated that the responsibility of caring for the grandchildren is not an added burden there are unexpected expenses. Furthermore, life has drastically changed for these grandparents, especially those who have retired.

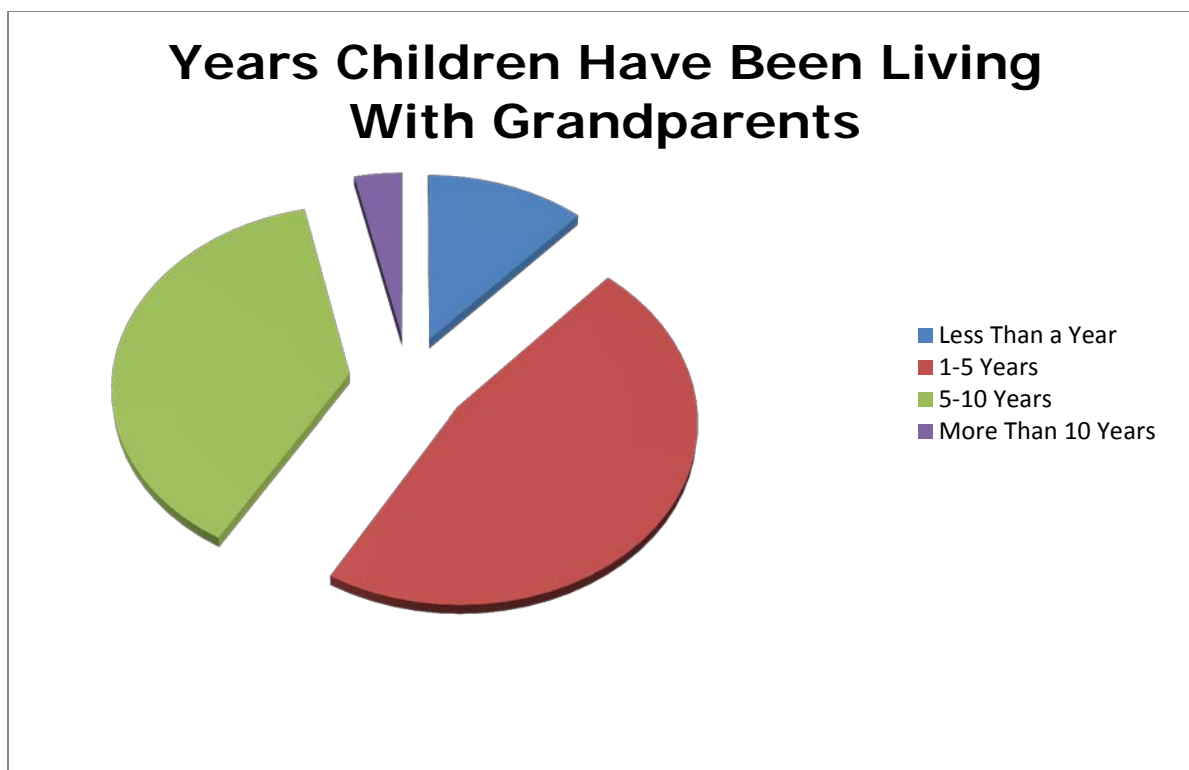


Figure 1.3 Survey shows the following results of length of time children have lived with grandparents.

3. How old are you?

In the survey from Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, the age of grandparents raising grandchildren is from their late 50's to 86 years old and it is expected that raising grandchildren will be to the end of their health. Asked if these grandparents will raise their grandchildren differently and over half of those surveyed indicated they would do much of the same. What they meant is they will seek to transfer their values onto their grandchildren. Teaching solid values the second time around will not be easy because of the culture and age differences. This is an added stress for adults in an age bracket where their health is not as good as it was when they were younger. Their strength is also not like what it was when they were raising their own children. Many never expected to have the responsibility of raising young children

and it can create a hardship for them. Yet for others it brings an opportunity to “feel young” again.

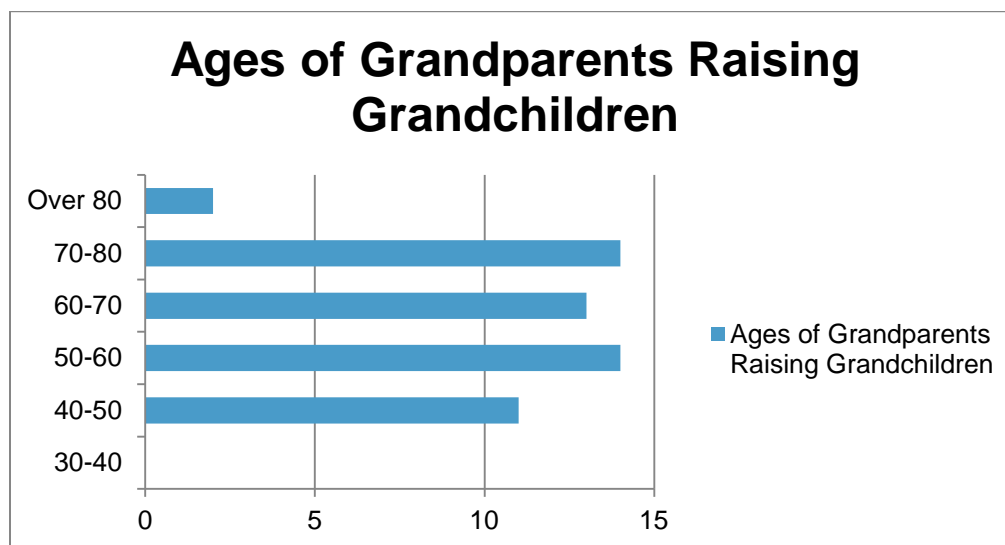


Figure 1.4 Results from survey showing ages of grandparents with numbers of individuals surveyed shown at bottom.

Elaine Williams says this about the transferring of values to grandchildren.

“As grandparents we empower our grandchildren by teaching values through words, actions and family traditions to help them grow, achieve, explore and return to the roots of their family these priceless values provide the bridge to connect generations and are the foundation for strong families.”⁵

Since every home is different what are those values that will hold a family, as well as a life together? It should be a common feeling for grandparents who did not have their children step up and face the parental act of responsibility that their grandchildren may end up in the same demise as their parents did.

⁵ Elaine K. Williams (2011-08-10). *The Sacred Work of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (Kindle Locations 144-146). Balboa Press. Kindle Edition.

Questions like:

- What if my grandchildren become just like their parents?
- What if we do not have the financial resources to help develop our grandchildren?
- What if our grandchildren reject our values, as they get older?

These “what if” questions are valid. Such concerns come from living based on fear because of what has happened in the past. Devastation from a past relationship with their children and now the task of raising their grandchildren come into play as they are now faced with the aspects of taking total responsibility of rearing these children.

This is why questions begin with “What if.” The reverberation of might happen to their grandchildren can cause a grandparent to be highly suspicious of the future.

Here are four values that grandparents should consider as they influence the next generation:

1. Biblical authority

This will not be everyone’s value but those who hold to a faith in Jesus Christ seek to have this higher authority. The ancient writer, Solomon observed this, “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.”⁶

Although the passage mentions “children” the case should be made that those of an impressionable age need direct guidance from an authoritative caregiver who can direct with clear boundaries in life. It is not an easy step to bring up children or grandchildren with clear definable guidelines, but the alternative can bring greater irresponsibility. Grandparents can locate passages in the Bible that speak of peace in troubling times,

⁶ Proverbs 22.6

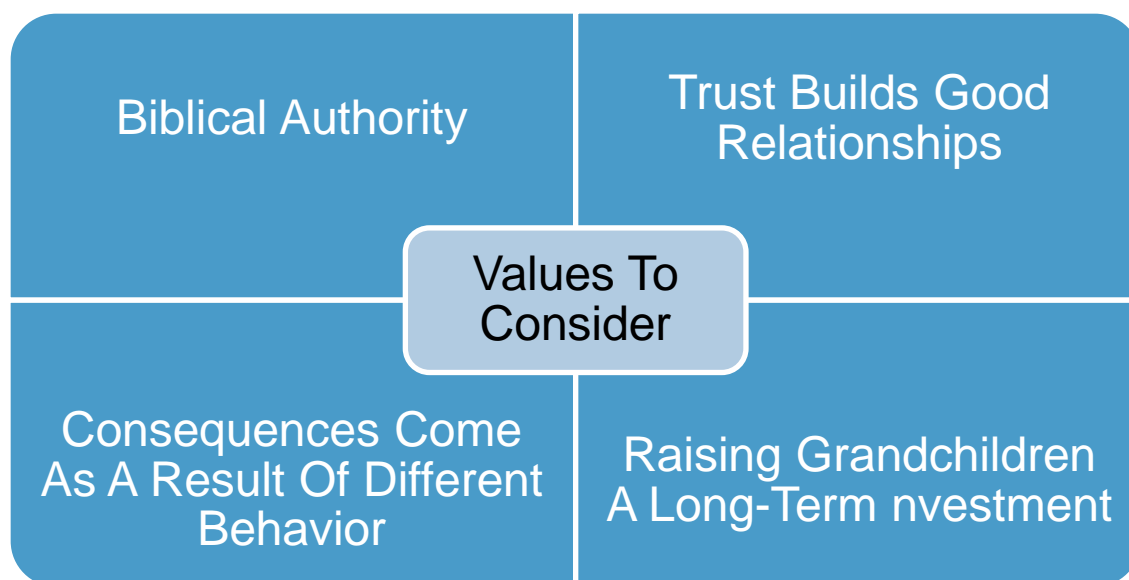


Figure 1.5 Value Systems.

understand what clear boundaries of truth are, and hope for the season ahead. As mentioned, the Bible might not be everyone's choice of instruction, but there really is nothing to lose. For those with a biblical world view the choice is clear: God has spoken and the wise will determine that God's voice on all matters of life is clear.

Just because someone uses the Bible does not mean there are not challenges. It does mean that when challenges do come, someone greater has answers. It can be a wise read to go through the Old Testament book of Proverbs and discover wise instruction from Solomon on wisdom, foolishness, children, even grandchildren, and discipline. When people who discount the Bible's wisdom discover all the subjects that speak to everyday life they are often surprised.

2. Trust is the foundation of relationships.

Relationships are a challenge in the first place and then furthermore the stress of raising grandchildren to the relationship building will take precision and patience. In the book, *The Sacred Work of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, this important topic of trust is addressed.

“When their parents present consistent, adequate nurturing and care, children develop basic trust, realizing that people are dependable and the world can be a safe place. In this stage, children learn how to express what they need, accept nurturing, and bond with the parents or grandparents who love with cheerfulness and smiles. As trust in the external world builds, children develop a healthy dependence and show signs of engaging with life.”⁷

A grandparent might read William’s remarks and hope it would have been that way. She is correct in the stages of development, but that didn’t happen for a world of reasons with children and because of that struggle grandparents are raising their grandchildren.

Perhaps it is not too late to regroup and think of these stages of development with their grandchildren. The uphill climb of raising grandchildren is when these and other stages of development have passed. What occurring is a 75-year-old grandparent raising a 16-year-old. Now what? As the saying goes, “You cannot unscramble scrambled eggs.” The translation is, what has happened cannot be undone.

Trying to compare what a 75-year-old person has in common with a 16 year-old is glaring. The teen will probably not enter the world of their grandparent. It will be the challenge for the grandparent to enter the world of the grandchild. A more accurate way to express this would be to “try to” enter the grandchild’s world.

A 75 year-old grandparent did not grow up with:

- Multiple ways to communicate
- The global reach of the Internet
- Media related venues that “preach” an amoral approach to life
- Narcissistic values

⁷ Williams. *The Sacred Work of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (Kindle Location 922). Balboa Press. Kindle Edition.

The 75 year-old grandparent was probably shaped by an era that had a sense of sharing, generosity, selflessness, and values that all people had worth. From this brief description of generational gaps is there much wonder why stress and strain can emerge like two people speaking two different languages at the same time.

Because of this relationship challenge more agencies or places of help are beginning due to the reality that grandparents are searching for support and help. What grandparents are discovering is they are not alone in the struggle. Other grandparents are dealing with predominate emotions and situations that require better understanding.

How can a senior adult build the necessary trust is a question that must be addressed and eventually understood. One way is to discover common ground. It may be as simple as relating on the idea of being related. At least that is a place to start. It will not be the only thing, but it can be a starting place.

Here is a suggestion for grandparents to build a bridge toward their grandchild during the critical stage of parenting again:

“During this critical stage, as parenting grandparents you must seek to help your grandchildren trust you; you can do this by making sure that they feel a sense of security in your presence.”⁸

This may possibly be easier than one might think. The main reason why grandchildren are now living with their grandparents is due to incarceration and drug and alcohol-related occurrences. For some time the grandchild may have been living in the horrid emotional insecurity. Now, a grandparent enters their world where they provide stability, love, balance, and genuine compassion.

⁸ Ibid. Kindle location 926-927

A child who has not had stability may gravitate to such an environment in spite of rules that are designed to guide, not restrict. At first they may rebel, but over time respond with a spirit of gratitude because the boundaries spell love and sincere concern for the grandchild.

A danger sign for some grandparents is being too permissive. If a grandparent was a strict parent and the relationship with their children vanished then a “whatever” approach to parenting the grandchildren may follow. It might stand to reason that the old approach to parenting did not work so a less restrictive approach may follow. Regardless, rules without a relationship bring disaster. Setting a schedule for grandchildren is not an inferior idea. It is an idea that appears to have validity. Rules are like guardrails that give security not insecurity.

Another danger sign is a grandparent who decides to be their grandchildren’s best friend as opposed as the loving grandparent that has in place rules and guidelines to make life for fulfilling for all.

3. Consequences come with different behavior

There are large numbers of grandparents who live with various stages of guilt because of how their own children turned out. It is not a joyous time to replay stories of how your child was arrested and is incarcerated for the next 20 years. Who wants to send a family update to the Christmas lists because of the embarrassment of a child’s dilemma? There can also be the challenge of managing the day-to-day causality of a child infested with a drug addiction and at the same time caring for grandchildren. There are enough traumas on every front to want to stop life because of the pain. All this stems from consequences that stayed in the shadows but became exposed after a trail of decisions. Too bad people are not handed a script or short video clip of what is ahead for them before making tragic decisions. Yet would the person be wise enough to stop?

Several thoughts emerge about consequences a parent did or did not have:

- The parent outlined the consequences but their child peels off into personal destruction.

Warning signs were ignored.

- The parent never had clear lines of consequences and peeled off into personal destruction.

There were not any warning signs therefore boundaries were never discovered.

4. Raising grandchildren should be seen as a long-term investment.

If a large circle of grandparents gathered to discuss what it would mean to engage the decision to raise their grandchildren questions with unknown answers would be on the table. Sadly, some questions will never have an answer.

- How can this be possible at the current age?
- How can we manage a child who is destructive in life and raise grandchildren?
- Will retirement be possible?
- How can this decision fit financially?
- What if the grandchildren become destructive too?
- What if later in life the parents want their children back after reaching a level of stability?
- What if we have no legal rights?

These questions are in the Pre-decision category. The decision to raise grandchildren is going to be one of the most life-altering decisions anyone will ever make. A grandparent will give up much while not knowing what the end looks like. With their children they have a good idea of what the story-line looks like. What a grandparent does not know is how their influence will guide their grandchildren into a future that they will never see.

One reason why Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Brevard County, Florida has been effective is due in part that now there is a place for grandparents to meet, talk through tough situations, receive emotion support, and help one another make it along with challenges.

Much of the Post-decision to raise grandchildren centers on having the opportunity to discuss the variety emotions that comes with raising grandchildren.

Here are some questions to consider:

- What happened to the part of you that was ready to retire when you made the decision to parent your grandchildren?
- What had you anticipated experiencing and enjoying during these later years of life that you then had to give up in order to raise your grandchildren?
- What activities are you engaged in on behalf of your grandchildren that you thought were part of the past?
- Have you returned to work in order to earn additional money to better manage the financial responsibilities?
- Do you find that you must engage in school activities on behalf of your grandchildren, or that you must drive them to and from various appointments and lessons on a regular basis? Based on the answers to these questions, can you see that you have one foot in each of two different life stages? What a challenge this is!

1. How do you get through a day, let alone a month or a year? “You do whatever it takes.”
2. How are you managing financially? “Well, we are using our retirement money to pay the additional expenses.” Or, “Grandpa went back to work.”
3. What will you do in the future as that money decreases? “We’ll figure it out then.”
4. How do you manage on a fixed-income? “You learn to shop the sales; you know when different items are on sale during the month; you learn to do without.”
5. How is your energy level? “Well, at 60, it’s not what it was at thirty-five! But you get through it.”⁹

The common response for grandparents regardless of why they are raising their grandchildren is, “we’ll do whatever it takes to make it work.” On days when the challenges are high and the funds and energy are low it is that tenacious spirit of doing whatever it takes

⁹ Ibid. (Kindle Locations 1626-1636).

that will rule the day. Many grandparents had to choose between their grandchildren going to Foster Care or being received in their home. The choices are simple and yet complex.

“When the front door opens, and the grandchildren walk in because their parents can’t or won’t raise them, for many grandparents, the back door also opens, and dreams of leisure and retirement suddenly exit. This is a big loss for parenting grandparents, and much grief and frustration accompany it. Again, most parenting grandparents do not give voice to these feelings, but they still exist, usually just below the surface.”¹⁰

Grand-parenting grandchildren does not come easy and it will extract much, but it will also be a rewarding time as well. As with all phases of life there are challenges and victories along with highs and lows.

It is important for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren to have some reminders along their journey in order to stay engaged in the process. The reasons for taking on this responsibility come with their share of pain so being reminded of what are vital needs to be revisited.

There are four reminders for grandparents to hold onto to in the process of parenting again.

1. Find a safe place to talk through the emotional shock of parenting again.

All grandparents who are parenting again know exactly how they arrived at the decision to raise their grandchildren. It is not a mystery. Because of this new factor how are they going to juggle all dynamics of what has been presented in this chapter: finances, parenting again, dealing with the parent’s lifestyle, and forfeiting the dream of a future that will not happen? That is a lot to process while at the same time secure a better future for grandchildren. With the survey from Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, the question was asked if they had their grandchildren in any type of religious training. Eighteen out of nineteen of those surveyed had a church where they were able to keep relationships open to places of working through the

¹⁰ Ibid. (Kindle Locations 1701-1704). Balboa Press. Kindle Edition.

challenge of a new life of parenting again. Grandparents who have taken over this role as the primary care-givers need places like a church family to be able to help talk out and talk through what is going right and what is challenge.

2. Accept the fact: This is happening.

When a grief-stricken event is placed in life, the temptation is to rationalize, “This is not real.”

It’s probably a mild form of denial but the fact is something happened that shocked the emotions into numb feelings. Few can fully appreciate the life-altering decision to raise grandchildren late in life and because of that decision now have a life that will never match hopes and expectations.

It is not about asking others to show them pity; it is just the sudden jolt of realizing that retirement will be for others and not for them. Having quiet evenings will be for others as well. Planning a vacation of solitude will be a thing of the past. Taking a pass on working beginning algebra will no longer be a choice.

Sooner rather than later it will become imperative to accept the fact that this is happening and it is a reality. Acceptance of a major life cure is best interpreted through the lens of what cannot be changed.

3. Life is loaded with transitions.

The only constant in life is change. Transitions are common and when life is rolling along at a tranquil pace it is often than not when disruptions occur. There is a section of the Bible that describes the nature of transitions. Although written centuries ago, the wisdom of practical application applies today regardless of the setting, culture, or geographical spot on a map.

Ecclesiastes 3.1-8

“For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.
 A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.
 A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up.
 A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance.
 A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to
 turn away. A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to
 throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to
 speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.”¹¹

The ancient writer, Solomon wrote these words from his journal about life to remind all people of the certainty of transitions. Grandparents made the decision in a particular season of life to care, love, give, and sacrifice for their grandchildren. They chose to add value in a season of life of their grandchildren. It is a season that may offer their grandchildren a season of hope instead of despair.

4. Use wisdom that has been acquired through the years.

It should be an expectation that as a person travels through various seasons of life that levels of wisdom are added to decision making. In the arena of acquiring wisdom, a grandparent should have more wisdom than their grandchildren.

Would it be a wise decision on the part of grandparents to exercise what they have learned through the years and make application raising their grandchildren? The obvious answer is yes.

¹¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

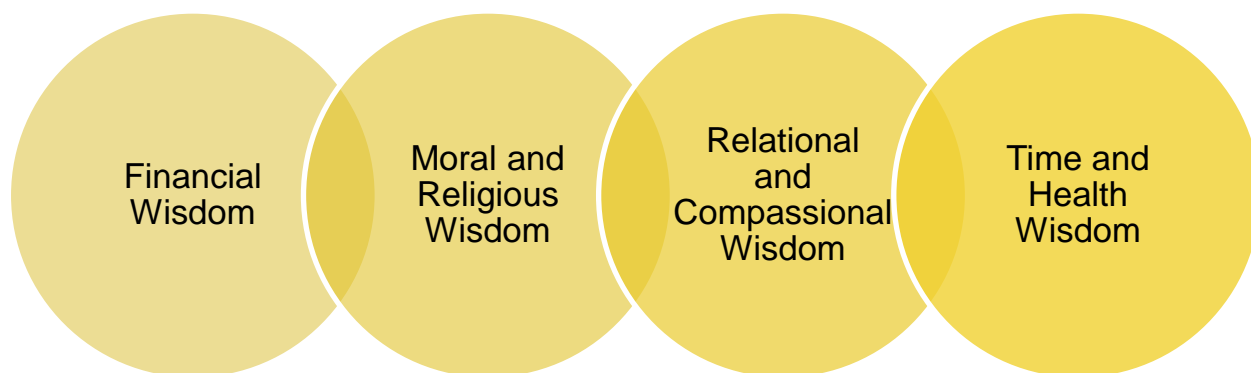


Figure 1.6 Crucial areas where wisdom is important.

Here are crucial areas where wisdom should be passed on in conversational settings and practical settings:

- Financial wisdom
- Moral wisdom
- Relational wisdom
- Time wisdom
- Health wisdom
- Compassion wisdom
- Religious wisdom

All grandparents arrive at the point of raising their grandchildren because of circumstantial pain. Once the decision to raise them gets made it becomes a matter of sorting through the key elements mentioned in this chapter to manage the decision. It is easy to read about raising grandchildren, but a challenge to put the ideas into practice on a daily basis. The encouraging

picture is seeing grandchildren begin to thrive and flourish opposed to being stuck in a setting of fear, drugs, hopelessness, and mountain of insecurity. Grandparents put aside their future so their grandchildren could have one.

CHAPTER 2

CULTURAL FACTS THAT PROVE YOU ARE NOT ALONE

TRENDS TO LOOK FOR AS YOU RAISE YOUR GRANDCHILDREN

In a time not too long ago parents had a child, the child grew up, assumed responsibility for his life, got married, had a child, and the grandparents visited the child, and after the visit they went back to their quiet home. While that was a trend back in time (this scenario still occurs) there is a volcanic trend that is sweeping through each state: grandparents are raising their grandchildren.

It is a movement that is not likely going to diminish, but flourish in the decades to come. While the documentation is sketchy at this point, there are flash points of stories where great-grandparents are now raising their great-grandchildren. People in their eighties and nineties are parenting again. Could this be the next trend?

A trend is nothing more than an accumulation of facts that people recognize as a legitimate grouping of what people are thinking about and doing. Face book is a trend, twitter is a trend, the wave at a game is a trend, and grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are a trend. A trend is sustained by the actual accumulation of movement by people for a certain length of time. When an individual or group recognizes a trend then documentaries, books, articles, dissertations, and open discussions increase, rather than to decrease.

A headline in the culture today could read, “New Studies Show Grandparents Are Raising Their Grandchildren In Growing Numbers.” From that headline would be the flow of statistics, interviews, and pictures of older people caring for children. While that would not be an

uncommon picture, it is now common for older people and children to be grouped as a new family.

Movements reflect what is happening in a culture. In the American culture the trend is grandparents are parenting their grandchildren. It is that simple. The definition of what a family is has dramatically shifted and because of these trends it will not look like “the old days ever again.” An unscientific way to describe this is, “you cannot unscramble scrambled eggs.” What is done is done so that begs for people to adjust. And every grandparent who is raising his or her grandchildren knows about adjusting.

Consider these facts from AARP:

Across the United States, almost 7.8 million children are living in homes where grandparents or other relatives are the householders, with more than 5.8 million children living in grandparents’ homes and nearly 2 million children living in other relatives’ homes. These families are often called ‘grand-families.’¹

The trends are not moving back to a traditional family as defined as a father, mother, and child. Because of this the lines of what a family is have become blurred. Someone might be tempted to believe it is isolated to a certain region of the country. But nation-wide reports indicate that it’s a developing that is blanketing the entire nation not a section of the country.

In the United States:

Almost 7.8 million children under age 18 live in homes where the householders are grandparents or other relatives (10.5% of all children under 18). Of these, more than 5.8 million live with grandparents who are the householders (7.9% of all children under 18 in the U.S.) and almost 2 million are living with other relatives who are the householders (2.6% of all children under 18 in the U.S.)

¹ Amy Goyer, *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, AARP, August 31, 2011.

Percentage By Ethnic Group Living in Households Where Grandparents Are Responsible For Children

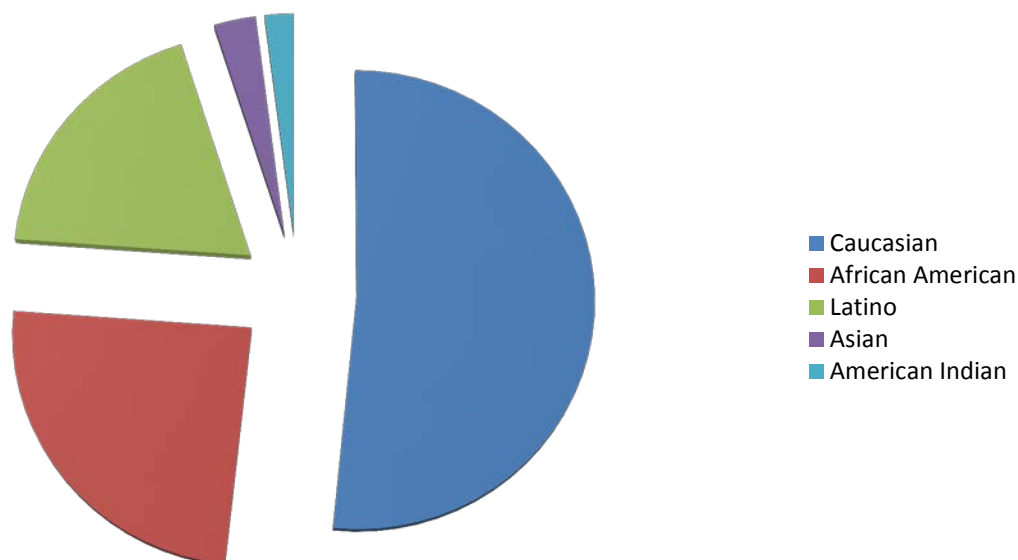


Figure 2.1 Percentage of Children By Ethnic Group Living With Grandparents.

“More than 2.6 million children live in homes where grandparents are the householders and are responsible for them. Of these, almost 1 million children have no parents present in the home. More than 2.5 million grandparents are the householders and are responsible for their grandchildren living with them.”²

The statistic showing that 7.8 million children under the age of 18 are living with a grandparent is alarming. This number is almost the population of New York City. This

² Ibid.

question is for another day, but is it still a mystery why the cultural shift to a variety of family settings is bludgeoning?

The organization, Generations United, has published further statistics to support the trend of grandparents who raising their grandchildren. Several decades removed the term; “baby-boomer” was coined to describe a generation of people. A new term called, “Grand-families” has now emerged because the trend of grand parenting has moved in greater demographics.

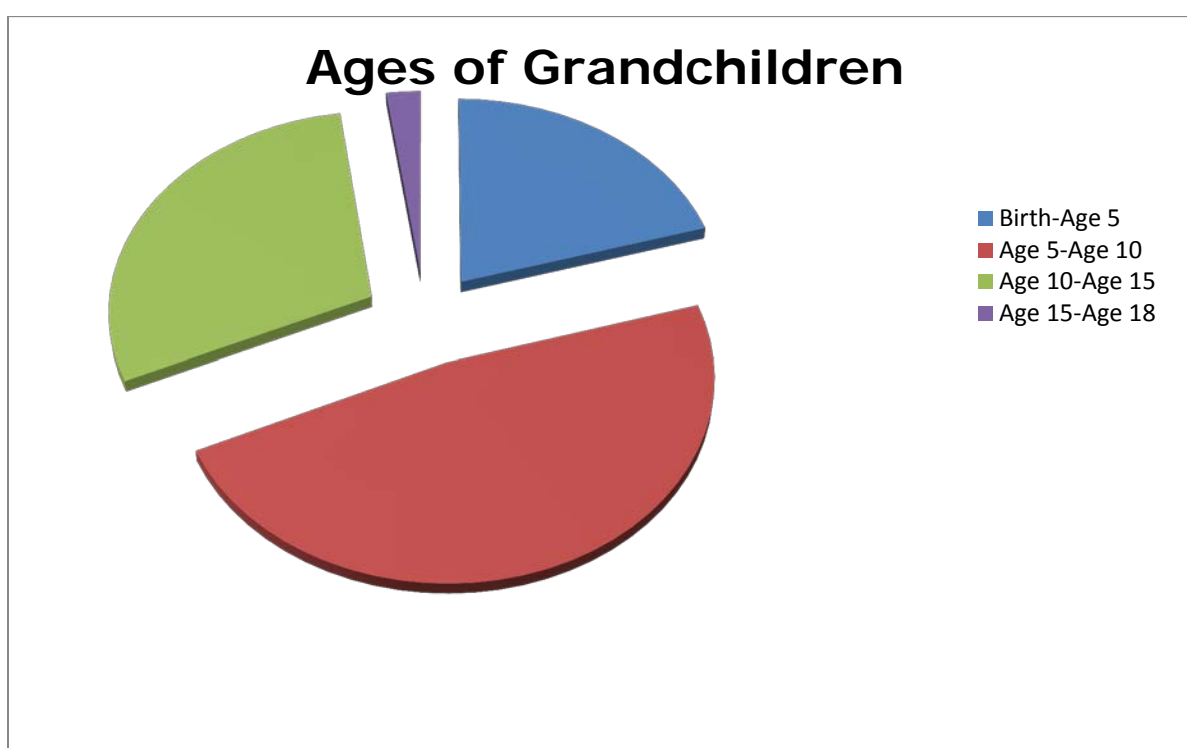


Figure 2.2 Results from survey showing the ages of children now living with grandparents.

The Grandparent Boom

- Grandparents in 1980 – 40 million.
- Grandparents in 2011 – 65 million
- Grandparents in 2020 – 80 million

The Family Next Door

- 1 in 6 Americans live in a multigenerational household.
- 7.8 million children live in grand-families (previously cited).
- 2.7 million grandparents are responsible for most of the basic needs of children living with them.

Grandparents Help

- Taxpayers save money – 6.5 billion amount grandparents save taxpayers each year by raising children and keeping them out of foster care.
- Younger generations understand the world. Fifty percent of grandparents talk with their grandchildren about problems they are having as well as morals, values, and religion or spirituality.
- Children have a healthy start. One in four grandparents help pay for their grandchildren's medical or dental expenses.³

If someone were beginning detective school there is a strong possibility that on day one of the first class the teacher might say something like this: “Everything tells a story.” Some might call it the glaring look of a clue. Trends tell a story, shift in populations of cities tell a story, how one manages their time tells a story, and of course spending habits tell a story.

There is a multitude of statistics that are telling a story in the United States that more and more children are being raised and will be raised by someone other than birth parents. It is a staggering fact that the number of children living apart from their parents is roughly the size of New York City.

The numbers reveal several trends that should be closely watched because everything does tell a story. Grandparents are raising more grandchildren reveals that:

1. The family, as defined from a biblical foundation has shifted dramatically. From a biblical world-view this growing trend is off from what the biblical writers intended. The

³ Generation United, *Grand Fact Sheet*, AARP, 2010.

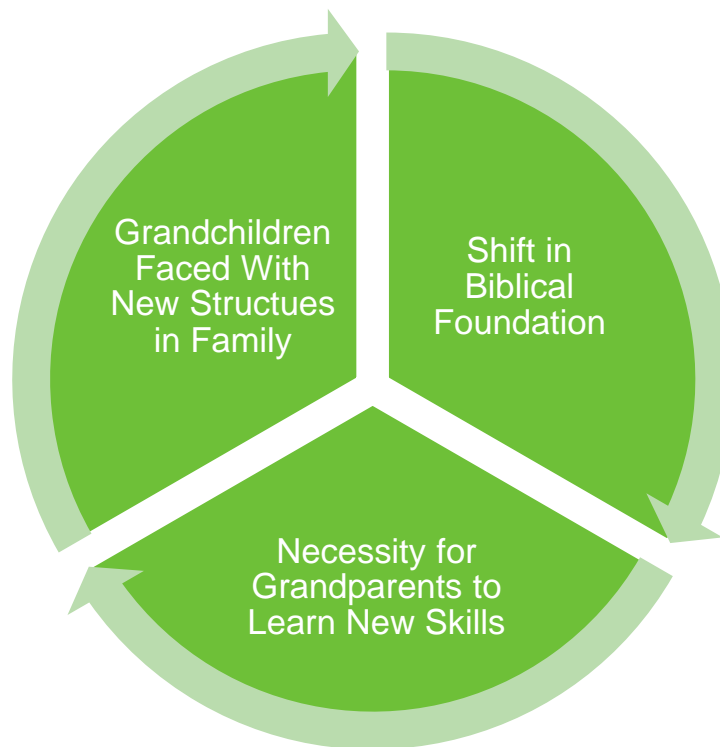


Figure 2.3 Changes in Trends Faced by Families.

writer of the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, Moses gave clear instructions on how parenting was to unfold. While the mention of a mother and father is absent, the implication of parents who parent their children is clearly implied by the phraseology.

Moses says,

“And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting

up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”⁴

There is no doubt that grandparents can train and develop children to appreciate the ways God but this directive was given to the parent(s).

1. Grandparents will have to learn a new set of skills. With the growing population of "grand-families" emerging, baby boomers who thought they could coast into the “golden years” are having ramp up their learning ability with:
 - Computer training – A large number, but not all older grandparents might be learning computer skills for the first time.
 - Communicating with grandchildren – The communication skill and styles can be a drastic shift depending on the ages of the grandchildren. The important thing to remember is grandchildren are always watching (that communicates) and listening (that communicates). Writer of grandparents issues, Harriet Hodgson relays these wise words on communicating with your grandchildren: “A calm voice is more powerful than a loud one. Grandkids learn a lot about you by listening to the pitch of your voice and the words you say.”⁵
 - Financial reconstruction – What was once a sure plan to retire on is now being called into question because of trying to stretch dollars late in life.
 - Health revitalization – It will take new levels of energy to manage children who are considerably younger. It might require the money and time to get healthy in order to keep up the pace with grandchildren who are wired for a faster pace of life. Sitting on

⁴ Deuteronomy 6:6-8

⁵ Harriet Hodgson, *Help! I'm Raising My Grandkids: Grandparents Adapting To Life's Surprises* (Charleston, SC: Book Surge, 2012), chap. 4, under “Communicating With Kids: Hello”? Kindle ebook.

the back porch drinking sweet tea and watching the sunset in peace becomes a setting that is no longer real. That perfect setting has dissolved because of grandchildren's math problems to solve, lunches to pack, clothes to lay out for the next day, back packs to fill, getting money together for the field trip, meals to make, baths to give, and evening prayers to offer with grandchildren. Relaxing in the evening after a busy day will have to wait.

- Disciplinary oversight – One clear fact that has not changed is that children, regardless of age, need guidance and discipline. The ancient writer Solomon weighed in on the issue of heart and life transformation centuries ago when he said,

“A youngster's heart is filled with foolishness, but physical discipline will drive it far away.”⁶

It is possible that grandparents will or will not discipline their grandchildren differently because of the past. If discipline was lacking in the phase of parenting then the phase of parenting grandchildren may prove to be a challenge for all. The contributing factor for discipline could be reduced as to why parenting grandchildren became necessary. Regardless of the structure, discipline is not easy but necessary. Author Henry Cloud describes good discipline with good character this way:

A child's character will determine much of the course his life takes. To develop a child of good character, we must be good parents of good character.⁷

If the grandparent has good character the possibility of developing good quality in the heart of the grandchild will be strong also. On the other hand, shallow commitments and shifty char-

⁶ Proverbs 22:15

⁷ Henry Cloud, *Boundaries With Kids*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) 21

acter displays will bleed over to the life of the grandchild. People seldom know how valuable character is until it's absent in a relationship.

The third wave of change is in the grand-family structure:

2. The third change relates to how grandchildren will have to cope with the new family structure.

Questions will flow like:

- How come you do not live with your parents?
- Why do you have older "parents?"
- Will you ever live with your mom or dad?
- Why are your parents in jail?

Up to this point the view for the new family structure has been through the eyes of the grandparent. What about the view of this new structure from the grandchildren's angle?

Our grandchildren are going to have to answer this question raised by their peers at some point. It would be better for the grandparent to have this conversation before the question is asked and awkward feelings surround the question. It would be wise to discuss these issues with grandchildren as to why they are being raised by their grandparents instead of living with speculations and innuendos. Some children can be cruel and by not arming grandchildren with the necessary reason why they are not with their mom and dad can add to the hurt and disappointment.

Author, Elaine Williams describes how questions unfold based on the perceptions of people who believe they understand the lives of people, but do not.

Grandparents interviewed across the country frequently indicated that their age was a frequent source of criticism from their grandchildren's peers. The reactions of both the grandparents and the grandchildren varied from not caring at all about this to feeling embar-

rassed and self-conscious. As human beings, we hold certain conscious or even unconscious, expectations related to life's cycles.⁸

Being scrutinized will be a part of the challenge in the new setting of grand-families. Wise grandparents cannot isolate their grandchildren from unsettling questions and comments but they can insulate them the best they can by being:

- Authentic
- Willing to not hide anything
- Willing to be asked delicate questions and not hedge on the truth
- Do not display shame or embarrassment
- Open about “different” as a family and being OK with the arrangement
- Aware that criticism can come from all ages.

First of all, realize that many children across the United States are in the same situation as your grandchildren: Their grandparents are raising them. This growing trend is making “parenting grandparents,” also known as “kinship caregivers,” much more commonplace.⁹

One advantage grandparents have is they can initiate the dialogue with their grandchildren as to why the living arrangement is the way it is. Looking for the right time to broach the subject will take wisdom and timing. But, better to be equipped with answers that have been thought through than to be caught off guard in a moment of trying to rearrange thoughts to cover an answer to one of the most important questions that will get asked.

⁸ Elaine Williams. *The Sacred Work of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (Kindle Location 576). Balboa Press. Kindle Edition.

⁹ Ibid, (Kindle Locations 575-576).

When the conversation of “why” surfaces, the grandparent has the privilege of guiding what a proper response should be. If shame is injected in the conversation then very quickly grandchildren will equate the structure as shameful and they will respond in shame. If confidence is injected into the conversation then grandchildren will have good footing to respond in confidence. Again, Williams reinforces the idea of transparency:

Disregarding curious or critical comments only teaches children how to ignore or avoid problems, which is not a good life skill. It also prevents them from managing unsettling emotions, such as embarrassment, shame, sadness, anger, and others. Build your grandchildren’s confidence and self-esteem by inviting them to share their thoughts and feelings about difficult issues, first with you and then with others.¹⁰

Before the challenge of relaying to grandchildren why they live in the arrangement that they do, it is imperative that the grandparents are comfortable with talking about what led to being a grand-family. Honesty cased in love is typically a wise way to go. To go down the road of saying disparaging remarks about the parents may lift the grandparent’s spirits in some weird way, but it could also plunge the grandchildren deeper in confusion.

What led to the grand-family comes in the variety pack. Some parents are absent because of incarceration, death, drugs, military, and lacking the skills to parent. As the grandparent the task of raising the grandchildren and dealing with absent parents is a heavy load to carry.

When grandchildren are of age to speak with them having the best attitude possible is advisable. Dragging their parents (regardless of why they are absent) through verbal dismay will not benefit the structure or situation. It may raise more questions about their parents. Honesty can be used without hateful words or actions. Having the best attitude possible will go a long way for grandchildren to gain a healthy attitude.

¹⁰ Ibid. (Kindle Locations 587-590).

This has been a lengthy discussion on handling questions with care but necessary to help grandchildren transition to the reality of their family will look and function like most of their peers. One thing is for certain, family structure will be different for a long time and learning how to talk and work through this will be delicate.

With all the statistics available today and data to back up the trends of more children being raised by their grandparents what is the one of many things that grandparents must do to harness an acceptable setting in their home? What has been established in previous pages is the unique family setting will be different for reasons that have hurt surrounding the family.

If grandparents and grandchildren can possess an attitude that fosters acceptance of the setting and focus on their love for one another then hope has a chance. No one is claiming it is easy, but what are the other options. It is highly unlikely that the grandchildren will set the tone for the grand-family. That is the responsibility of the grandparents.

Perhaps the strongest quality that grandparents can possess in the reordering of their world, their grandchildren's world, and everybody's future, is an attractive attitude.

It may not be how life was supposed to be, but reality has been defined.

It may not be how the last part of life was to get shaped up, but reality has been defined.

It may not be how other people of the same age are constructing their days, but reality has been defined.

Attitude about anything is a personal choice. A grandparent can have a winsome attitude about this "new" season of life or grumble and carry on with a sour attitude. It is a fact that grandchildren will begin to own exactly what the grandparents own when it comes to attitude. Grandparents need to be reminded that grandchildren may not be thrilled over the family structure any more than grandparents are.

Leadership guru, John Maxwell writes about the importance of a good attitude:

What is an attitude?

It is the “advance man” of our true selves. Its roots are inward but its fruit is outward.

It is our best friend or our worst enemy. It is more honest and more consistent than our words.

It is an outward look based on past experiences. It is a thing that draws people to us or repels us. It is never content until it is expressed. It is the librarian of our past.

It is the speaker of our present. It is the prophet of our future.¹¹

It is hard to imagine any opportunity that does not possess some level of difficulty and then by reversing that statement to realize that when great difficulties arise often great opportunities are present as well. Keeping a winning attitude is not a once and done deal. To possess a winning attitude about how life has been constructed might be a multiple times per day activity. The winning attitude is the best choice in life especially around grandchildren who are taking their impressions about their family from the grandparents.

Often the best way to readjust an attitude in life is to be reminded what “is” instead of what is missing. In the survey conducted from the organization of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren of Brevard County, Florida the question was asked:

What do you enjoy most in raising your grandchildren? Here are various answers:

- “Seeing her learn and participate with her in her activities.” Age 74
- “I am teaching my granddaughter how to be a young lady.” Between 50-60
- “Receiving love and giving love.” 40-50 age bracket
- “My values and love.” Between 50-60
- “Receiving their enthusiastic love.” Age 86
- “Teaching them values and giving them a safe environment and stability.” 60-70 age bracket

¹¹John Maxwell, *The Winning Attitude* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 24.

- “Being a good example.” 60-70 years of age
- “Doing things I didn’t have time/opportunity to do with my own 3 kids.” 50-60 age bracket
- “Teaching giving, loving, and receiving love.” Age 80 plus
- “Having them around and helping them cope with life.” Between 70-80

Each one of these descriptions indicates an attitude that is welcoming and inviting to the world of the grandparent. A revealing study over time would be how the point of view shown by the grandparent and of the grandchildren meshed through the years. If the outlook of the grandparent is horrible then that of the grandchildren will probably be poor as well. If the attitude of the grandparent is a desirable one then the approach of the grandchild will probably be winning as well. Again, a person’s attitude is a choice. It is that simple. The main challenge to a winning attitude is forecasting the future.

While some grandparents may differ on the outlook they possess about raising their grandchildren, the challenge for all grandparents is living with the “what if” feeling of living through a repeat experience as they did with their children. Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren because of a sad life story could dread the thought because of the trauma and drama associated with raising their own children. This might be the little secret that few grandparents are talking about because of the fear of repeating what they endured with their own children.

Who really wants to repeat getting a call from the police about an arrest? Who wants to go through rehab for drug or alcoholism again? Who wants to reenlist for years of fighting, rebellion, caustic words, and runaway’s? The collective answer from grandparents is, “No one.” It will be necessary for grandparents not to project the hurts and disappointments onto their grandchildren from the hurts and dissatisfactions that they received from their own children.

It is understood that good character traits will be the fuel that carries grandparents through the years of raising their grandchildren, but there is another word that fits well into the scope of

being an effective grandparent. It is the word, patience. Patience is not just about raising grandchildren, but also with life over all.

The Bishop of Geneva, Switzerland, Francis de Sales, who lived from 1567-1622 wrote these penetrating and convicting words about patience many years ago, but still ring true for all people in all stages of their lives.

“Complain as little as possible of the wrongs which are done to you; for it is certain that ordinarily he who complains, sins, because self-love ever makes us think the injuries greater than they really are; but above all do not complain to such persons as are prone to wax indignant and to think evil.”¹²

The words from Francis de Sales, although written centuries ago offer every person, and in this study particularly, offer grandparents a way to avoid a “tranquilized spirit.” Grandparents who have stepped into the role of parent, caregiver, and shaper of future souls must summon their courage to lead themselves well with an attitude that is worth putting into the hearts of their grandchildren.

From possessing an attractive attitude the next stop will be to summon huge amounts of patience that will be easy on some days and a herculean feat on other days. With the attitude and patience grandchildren may want to emulate the grandparent. Because people do what people see it will be worth the resolve to be that grandparent who models a good attitude in challenges and patience when everyone in the home has lost patience.

Be assured, grandchildren are listening and they are watching. If a grandparent can apply the wise words from Francis de Sales, “Complain as little as possible” then at the end of the day, everyone can say, “It has been a good day as a family.”

¹² Allan Ross, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, translated by Allan Ross (London: Burns, Oates, and Washburn, 1937), pp. 109-114.

CHAPTER 3

TEN WAYS TO KEEP THE “GRAND” IN GRANPARENTING

RAISING GRANDCHILDREN AND ENJOYING THE JOURNEY

There is a principle from the Bible that speaks directly to every person on the planet and it is: life is loaded with challenges. Call challenges an unexpected life curve, a disaster, a season of suffering, or simply, a hard time in life. Here is what all people share in common: They are facing trouble, they have just come out of trouble, or trouble is just around the corner. That is just the way life works. In the New Testament book of John 16:33 Jesus said this plainly and truthfully by teaching: “...here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”¹

It makes little difference if you are living life and all is well or living through challenges; the truth remains intact that all people on earth will encounter a season where life is discombobulated. Jesus’ prescription to these seasons is to look to Him, the Author of Peace in unsettling times. That Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the church in Philippi and addressed the idea of peace when he said, “Don’t worry about anything, instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”²

With a narrowing focus of parenting grandchildren it is a helpful reminder that life has seasons and sorrow. Of course there are seasons of extreme joy too, but too often the pain of

¹ John 6:33

² Philippians 3:6,7

the “life curve” get accentuated and the pleasure and joy of pouring into a grandchild’s life gets lost in the malaise of why life has turned out as it has.

Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren might say that they never saw it coming and still have the “stunned deer in the headlights look.” The blunt reality is raising grandchildren is real and this not going away anytime too soon. With this firm reality in place, how can grandparents keep the “Grand” in grand parenting? Grandparents get the “parenting” assignment, but what can make it grand along the journey of life?

Keeping the “Grand” in grand parenting is sectioned in three distinct areas for an easier grasp of understanding:

1. Emotional Expectations
2. Physical Realities
3. Spiritual Foundations

TEN WAYS TO KEEP THE “GRAND” IN GRANDPARENTING

EMOTIONAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Accept That This is a Big Change For Everyone.

The reason grandparents picked up the challenge to raise their grandchildren is probably not a pleasant one. The call may have come in the middle of the night, in the middle of a busy day, or just as the sun was setting with news that the grandchildren need a place to live. Drugs and alcohol probably ushered in the quick arrangement or there was an arrest. The grandchildren did not get a choice in the decision because it was made for them. Somewhere in this decision grandchildren moved into the home of their grandparents and they began the steps of adjusting to a world that they did not expect either.

It has been this author's experience that adapting to the life change of taking in three grandchildren has been a monumental challenge. Looking forward to seeing our three daughters move toward independence was exciting because of the natural progression of growth. As with most parents whose children are on their own, getting a new vision for the next stage of life was fun to talk about and plan. Our story would be different. Some couples talk about the empty nest because it means more time together and turning the empty room vacated by the last child into an exercise room.

Our experience has been different. There was no empty nest. In fact the nest expanded to caring for three grandchildren at the time they were 5, 3, and 2. To call this a life curve would be a gross understatement. There would be no empty nest for us. It would be a long season of helping with homework again, packing lunches for school again, doing teacher conferences again, dolling out money for field-trips again, settling arguments over trite things again, waking up kids for school again, looking at report cards again, cleaning up messes again, teaching morality again, going over why lying is wrong again, using car seats again, buying diapers again, discarding and applying diapers again, and saying bedtime stories and prayers again.

This is the life we have been handed by God. It is not a punishment from God but rather an assignment from God with an opportunity to serve our grandchildren. We have not abdicated our role as the leaders, but we are also called to serve. Author James Hunter explains serving this way: "Remember, the role of leadership is to serve, that is, to identify and meet legitimate needs. In the process of meeting those needs, we will often be called upon to make sacrifices

for those we serve.”³ To arrive at this point of acceptance has not been easy and there are days when the challenges are high that getting off this ride is appealing. Often, after a disciplinary problem, weariness from the day, 3rd grade math yet to do, and getting cloths out for the next day that one of the grandchildren may unexpectedly say, “Granddad, I love you.” That one sweeping sentence makes the renewal for another day of raising grandchildren a possibility.

Taking on this assignment is a big change. Some will gracefully embrace what the next 20 years can be while others will have to get use to the big change and gradually embrace the reality. It will be beneficial for grandparents to get to the place of joy sooner rather than later. A lot is at stake. Lives are being influenced and shaped in this new family. It is this author’s experience that acceptance of the arrangement will benefit all while remaining distance will create havoc.

If grandparents remain upset because their life is distressed then the entrance of “grand” in grand parenting will be slowed. Somewhere in the thought process of sorting out the new life curve grandparents will have to settle the fact that a change in life has landed at the front door and the change is not going away anytime soon. Author Sylvia de Toledo describes perfectly how quickly change can occur. Her sister committed suicide and left behind an 8-year-old son who was now parentless. She describes the next step this way, “There was no question of what to do. My parents took Kevin in, and in that moment they became part of a family much larger

³ James Hunter, *The Servant Leader: A Simple Story About The True Essence of Leadership* (Boston: Prima Publishing, 1998), 85.

than ours, although we didn't know it then. They joined the growing ranks of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.”⁴

Some grandparents will adapt sooner while some will take longer to move toward acceptance. Until adaptation becomes comfortable and a rhythm of living with the changed is viewed as normal, it will be a high hurdle to overcome and the “grand” will stay away from the new arrangement.

There is a word that helps with life curves or change and it is the word: commitment. Depending on the circumstances commitment can be a broad sweeping word to use. In the context of grandparents raising their grandchildren obligation describes their willingness to see the change in life and make the commitment to seeing new opportunities from this new season of life. Raising grandchildren is a selfless dedication of embracing the future while loosening the grip of the past. The past represents what life should and would have looked like. Embracing the decision to raise grandchildren is the way life is.

Grandparents can accept the change in life without the work to be “grand” but by making a commitment to the change they can be “grand” parents in the most meaningful ways. For that reason, delaying acceptance of the change in life keeps commitment away and that keeps a special relationship with grandchildren delayed as well.

After a grandparent makes a decision that raising grandchildren is now a part of life for a long time there is an emotional act that should come next for the benefit of all involved. It is forgiveness toward the parent(s). Again, the reason for the life curve is probably not a pleasant one. To now be the primary caregiver who has acknowledged the change and has come to

⁴ Sylvia de Toledo and Deborah Elder Brown, *Grandparents As Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising A Second Family* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2013) 1 Introduction.

terms that the arrangement is long-term will have to take the important step of forgiving people who do not deserve it.

It is important to note that forgiving someone else for what they did is not necessarily for them, but the offended one. In this case the grandparents are the offended ones because of what the parents did or did not do.

In his book, *The Success Principles*, Jack Canfield writes on steps to forgiveness.

“The following steps are all integral to forgiving:

- Acknowledge your anger and resentment.
- Acknowledge the hurt and pain it created.
- Acknowledge the fears and self-doubt that it created.
- Own any part that you may have played in letting it occur or letting it continue.
- Acknowledge what you were wanting, but didn’t get.
- Let go and forgive the person.”⁵

Anyone can read about forgiveness, hear stories about compassion, and know that clemency should be offered. It is all good until the need to show reconciliation becomes a part of being a “grand” parent. Holding on to the miserable disappointment will take grandparents further away from emotional than they could ever imagine.

Grandparents who are followers of the way of Christ’ life are probably aware that going around with unforgiveness is grievous to God and manufactures a destructive life. An unforgiving attitude is so destructive that Jesus mentioned the need to forgive when teaching about the importance of prayer in Matthew 6. When His followers were eager to learn the basics of prayer Jesus launched into a pattern for them to follow: “And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us

⁵ Jack Canfield, *The Success Principles* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 218.

from the evil one. If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.”⁶

In the middle of this important teaching on prayer Jesus inserts a relief valve that soothes the emotions, which in turn heals relationships. As we have been forgiven let me be in a position of releasing other people who have sinned against me. It is not a suggestion, but a command. It is not an innoxious slip of the tongue. Jesus made it clear that extending forgiveness precedes being forgiven.

Being a “grand” parent will have challenges so if the challenge to forgive the parents appears too daunting just remember what the alternative is. A home where peace is absent is typically driven this way because of strife in the heart. The flip side of that scenario is a person who has grasped the importance of forgiveness and creates a peaceful place for all dwell.

Because of the way the human heart functions it is a common fact that keeping a scorecard of accomplishments versus the faults of others is easily recognizable. A grandparent might be tempted (from a place of pain) to inform their children about the debt of gratitude that is owed them for taking on the challenge of raising their grandchildren. If mercy is a centerpiece of a Christian’s life then the luxury of reminding others about all the self sacrifice, like raising grandchildren gets brushed aside by to commands from the Bible.

In the fray of trying to manage life and the raising grandchildren there is the important piece of learning to forgive your child for how they have lived. How they lived and the choices they made produced the responsibility of raising grandchildren. Jesus had an answer for the numerical times exoneration should be offered to wrongdoers. It was not, “one and done” but a

⁶ Matthew 6:12-15

multitude of times of forgiveness. Sounds harsh and even unreasonable, but Jesus said it and he said it to someone in his inner circle.

Jesus made it clear that keeping a scorecard of generous forgiveness will not work because of the temptation to short circuit the process. Jesus had a conversation with Peter over the idea of numerical forgiveness. From Peter's viewpoint the conversation did not go as expected. Jesus had to remind him that being magnanimous to the offender is a constant ebb and flow or living life out day by day. Here is the teaching moment for Peter: "Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"⁷ Jesus' idea of forgiveness meant that forgiveness would have to occur in numerous times because of numerous events.

There is another instance where the Bible shouts out a command that is a challenge found in Ephesians 4:32. It makes sense to a follower of Christ because the sacrifice of the huge debt paid to enjoy forgiveness of personal sins. It is a "do the math" verse from Ephesians 4:32 that says, "Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."⁸

As God made forgiveness possible through Christ, make it a habit to pardon people who are offensive in their actions and words. Perhaps, a follower of Jesus is the most like Jesus when they extend reconciliation to their child for the behavior that led to accepting grandchildren in the home.

⁷ Matthew 18:21,22

⁸ Ephesians 4:32

How can grandparents who have to live on multiple levels of pain expect to function in the realm of being merciful? It is not just for grandparents, but also for all who desire to experience freedom and not bondage from the past.

The reason for laboring through this section of forgiveness is due to the fact that unforgiveness chokes out love, peace, harmony, and contentment. Homes where love, peace, harmony, and contentment are missing will only endure disastrous results for grandparents and grandchildren.

One of the most insightful works on the topic of releasing the offender through forgiveness is by R.T. Kendall. His words are important for anyone wanting to move on to healthy places in the soul. He writes:

“Love is a choice. Total forgiveness is a choice. It is not a feeling at least at first but rather an act of the will. It is the choice to tear up the record of wrongs we have been keeping. We clearly see and acknowledge the evil that was done to us, but we erase it or destroy the record before it becomes lodged in our hearts. This way resentment does not have a chance to grow. When we develop a lifestyle of total forgiveness, we learn to erase the wrong rather than file it away in our mental computer.”⁹

If grandparents are looking for a “grand” way to parent it might begin with the important step of choosing forgiveness. All grandparents know that their grandchildren are observing their lives. Learning to forgive and then expressing forgiveness can be a lifelong lesson that will mark grandchildren for good the rest of their lives.

2. Realize That Grandchildren Are Adapting and Making Sacrifices Too.

⁹ R.T. Kendall, *Total Forgiveness* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2002), 21.

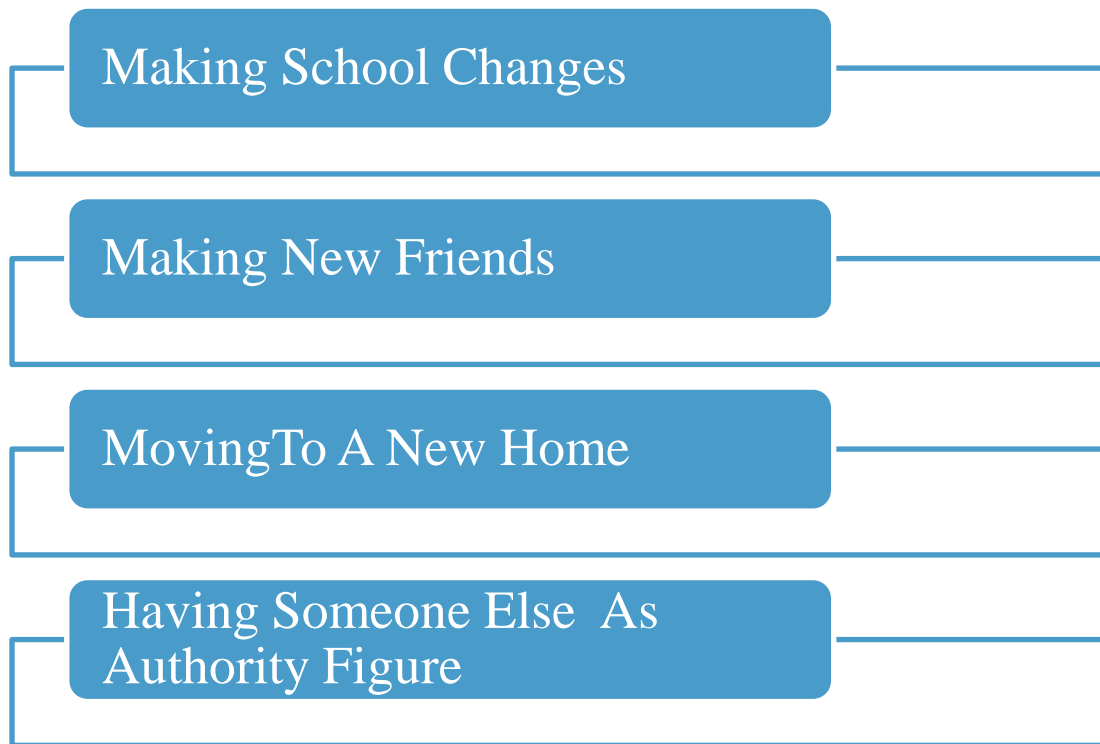


Figure 3.1 Challenges to Children and Sacrifices They Must Make When Going To Live With Their Grandparents.

A common thought for grandparents can be that they are the only ones making a sacrifice in life because they are raising their grandchildren. Of course they are sacrificing their money, time, and health but all this does not register with grandchildren.

Depending on the age or ages of the grandchildren it would be wise to acknowledge that they are making sacrifices too. They did not ask for this living arrangement anymore than the grandparents did.

Here are three environments where grandchildren adapt and make sacrifices:

School

The majority of children in schools are being raised by their biological parents and that is the way it should be. Grandchildren raised by their grandparents have different challenges in the school setting. From the documents to be filled out to enroll children for school and the crafts made celebrating Mother's and Father's Day all point to grandchildren that their family is different. When grandchildren are making crafts for Mother's and Father's Day they know it is really being made for their grandmother and grandfather. For some grandchildren the making of crafts is just another reminder that they have a different home arrangement. Something as small as a craft that says, "Happy Mother's Day or Happy Father's Day might be a small reminder of the home they do not have. This can make a big impression on a child.

In the last few years this author has had a sense of sadness looking at the masterpieces of art that said, "Happy Mother's Day or Happy Father's Day with a Polaroid picture attached to pop cycle sticks. It is a sense of sadness knowing what the inscription says but to whom it is given to. It should be handed in carefully wrapped tissue paper for the mother or father to see but they are not around to receive it. Questions like: What was our grandchild thinking when she or he wrote, "Happy Mother's Day or Happy Father's Day"? Were they happy to write Happy? Time will tell as they become more communicative. Grandchildren are making sacrifices even though they do not register in magnification like the one the grandparents are making.

An age factor is obvious to grandparents, parents and other children when the child is attending an elementary school. The grandparent who is fifty-five walking down the school hallway does not look like the twenty-eight year old parent. To the grandparent, that might not register as something important to dwell on, but it can to grandchildren. They may be thinking a lot about these discrepancies but lack the verbal and emotional skills to express their feelings.

Friends

If grandparents entertain their grandchildren's friends at the home questions that are certain to surface is, "Where are your parents?" and "Why don't you live with your parents?" Those questions can usher in new feelings of awkwardness if the reasons have never been discussed. There are questions that only lead to further questions. It takes a wise grandparent to talk through these questions ahead of time otherwise grandchildren are going to have to muster up the words to explain why their home arrangement is different. Telling the truth opposed to covering up the truth always fosters trust. Truth fertilizes trust. An appropriate way to tell the truth is found in the Bible from Ephesians 4:15, "...we will speak the truth in love, growing more and more like Christ."¹⁰ Speaking the truth in loving ways will cover a multitude of suspicious speculations.

It is the responsibility of the grandparents to explain to grandchildren at the appropriate time why the home is this way. Author Elaine Williams expands the idea this way: "One of the important responsibilities you have as a parenting grandparent is to explain to your grandchildren why their parents are not raising them. Regardless of the reason why you are raising your grandchildren you need to have an age-appropriate conversation with your grandchildren to explain the reason to them. This conversation is absolutely necessary."¹¹

Home

Raising grandchildren at the middle-age section of life or older does include sacrifices that have been discussed. For grandchildren being raised by their grandparents can sacrifice a younger and more enthusiastic caregiver. It is not a physiological mystery that a parent in their late twenties will usually have more energy than the sixty-seven year old grandparent.

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:15

¹¹ Elaine K. Williams. *The Sacred Work of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*. (Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, 2011) Kindle Locations 640-644.

While not looking through the grandparent's eyes but the grandchild's eyes they may feel like they are missing out on activities due to low energy and a lack of enthusiasm to ride bikes, play basketball, or spend ten hours at a water park. On the surface this may appear trite to an adult, but to grandchildren it may mean they are left to sit in front of the TV or sit alone playing video games for hours instead of good activity.

Another area where sacrifice in the home can be evidenced is in academics. If a grandparent is raising multiple grandchildren making the attempt to complete homework assignments may prove challenging. Do the grandchildren recognize their sacrifice academically? Probably not, but they are still making one whether they grasp it or not. If the rest of the class had their work done on time but not your grandchild because of fatigue or a lack of understanding then embarrassment maybe close at hand.

All through life sacrifices are made. This could be a valuable lesson that grandparents strive to teach their grandchildren so they do not grow up feeling like they missed out on a conventional lifestyle. They will know that their setting is not normal from school, friends, and the home. Almost every day and in every direction they look someone or something will remind grandchildren who are being raised by grandparents them that their life is different. But, when told the truth in love they can have the capacity to answer questions with a greater degree of confidence even if their circumstances remain the same.

3. Talk Honestly and Openly About the Family Structure.

This author's time of honest talk about the family structure has been open and forthright. While it has been this way it has not been easy. As the grandchildren are getting older they are asking questions. The point has been made with our grandchildren that we will raise them to adulthood. The reasons are simple to say but complicated for them to accept fully. It is not an

easy assignment to explain to a 10 year old that is living apart from mom and dad has nothing to with their lack of love. We have chosen to tell the truth and say that mom and dad lack the financial strength to provide and that they do not possess parental skills for multiple children now.

Depending on the ages of the grandchildren there will be a time when the “talk” will become necessary for everyone’s sanity. The ordeal of not being with their parents has enough mystery surrounding the circumstances; there is no need to add to the unknown by avoiding honesty and openness. It will take a level of wisdom to know what to say and how much to say for grandchildren to process information about their parents.

Here is a simple suggestion: Answer the question of “How much should you tell young grandchildren?”

When deciding what to tell your grandchildren about the situation, it’s important to consider their age and developmental skills. The following tips may help:

- Avoid telling the child too much detail.
- Avoid telling the child too little or nothing at all that leaves them more confused.
- Never twist the facts or lie to the child because they deserve the truth.

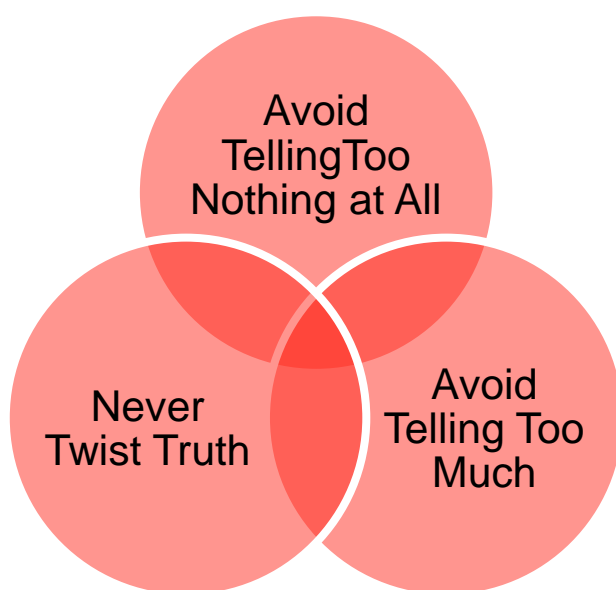


Figure 3.2 What to Tell Children.

It appears that honesty is the preferable way to handle the awkward moments when discussing the new family structure. It might be tense for a season but grandchildren will most likely appreciate the tough news about their parents when handled with love and truthfulness.

One gross violation of integrity would be to tell grandchildren a story that cannot be supported by the truth to cushion the painful reality of their parent's life. If their parents are in jail and to say they had to move away for work will only prolong the inevitable reality of them someday knowing the truth. If a grandparent goes with that option, then when discovering the truth about what really happened will cost the grandparents credibility and trustworthiness, which is difficult to regain. If the family structure is tenuous at best a lie can do damage that may not be able to undo. If people would adhere to the ninth commandment that says, "Do not lie"¹² fragile relationships would have a better chance of survival.

What will be hard to detect in grandchildren is stress. Adults have perfected worry, strain, and anxiety. Grandchildren may be going through these same emotions but will not come out and say that they are filled with apprehension. Maybe they get quiet, stop eating, lash out in anger, or shut down. Adults handle stress differently and so do children.

Here's a short list of recommendations from author E.E. Warner to help grandparents handle times of stress when the honest and open discussion did not go as anticipated:

- Help your grandchildren express their feelings.
- Encourage friendships with peers and siblings.
- Assign chores so the child will feel helpful.

¹²Exodus 20:9

- Seek out supportive teachers at school.
- Try to ensure a stable school setting.¹³

Grandparents know first-hand the work it takes to provide a place where their grandchildren can flourish, opposed to floundering. To ensure that grandchildren have the opportunity to launch well into their future it will require places of honesty and openness. Coming to the place where conversation can flow freely does not come easily but what are the options? Jumping into the deep end of the pool of serious talking will overshadow the results of trepidation. In the big picture, there is a high probability that respect will be given by grandchildren because the grandparents did not avoid honest and open dialogue.

There are times when children need to release their frustrations. Give them ample opportunity to do so. A composition notebook can be used for journaling or merely to draw their feelings when they cannot express them verbally. Grandparents can allow their grandchildren to write them letters and allow them to be brutally honest. Many times a child can express their feelings more adequately when writing than they can verbally. A grandparent who allows a grandchild to write letters should remember that each letter no matter how short deserves an answer. Let them know that they are loved unconditionally regardless of what they say.

4. Make Encouragement a Family Value

Encouragement sounds good and feels good to the soul. If a grandchild has not been accustomed to the sound of encouragement it may take some time for them to grasp how special it is to be in an encouraging environment. Receiving encouragement is interpreted differently based on one's personality. Somebody may need encouraging words to life them, others are encour-

¹³ E.E. Werner, *Protective Factors and Individual Resilience*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

aged by a kind action, while someone else may be filled up with encouragement by a sacrificial gift.

In our family structure we have decided that a fresh batch of encouragement always goes down better than a constant barrage of negativity. There are corrections to be made along the way, but choosing to say the appropriate thing in a respectful way far outweighs the continuation of finding faults. Encouragement is offered up when we have discovered that the room was cleaned, a few points higher than the last report card, or the dishes were put into the sink when asked. We have decided encouragement is a value. It is a point of reference that gets talked about in our home. Modeling encouragement with words and actions will serve any family better than a cloud of doom. One way we encourage is to say over and over, “We love you.” Saying these words with repetition brightens faces and soothes hearts.

Being an encourager matters in a culture where people are surrounded with cynicism. If grandchildren cannot find encouragers in the culture but only in their grandparent’s home then so be it. It is important for this to be a family value. Not a rule but a value. A value helps create the culture of the home where people who live together under the same roof know what is expected.

The Bible is full of stories where people were at their very lowest but were given a new vision for their lives because of encouragement. One prime example is from the life of Gideon in the Old Testament. Evil people overran the nation of Israel and they needed a new leader who would provide direction in order to be blessed by God again. The Bible states that an angel of the Lord came to Gideon and said, “Mighty hero, the Lord is with you.”¹⁴ From that en-

¹⁴ Judges 6:12

counter with God's messenger Gideon was never the same. He was encouraged to become someone he never would have become had it not been for this divine act of encouragement.

Encouragement can turn a tough home life around where people have the ability feel that life is worth living. When grandparents speak encouraging words over their grandchildren it can be the fuel that ignites their spirit to become "a mighty hero." The words grandparents' use can damage or they can lift their grandchildren's lives to new levels.

The excuse that says, "I don't know how to encourage because no one ever encouraged me" is nothing more than a cope out. Encouraging pastor, Joel Osteen of Lakewood Church in Houston, TX says, "Remember, your thoughts don't bless anyone."¹⁵ If you appreciate your grandchildren then tell them and tell them often. Be specific in encouragement.

Holding in valuable and potentially life-changing words of encouragement helps no one. Here are phrases that when used in love adds strength to lives. It does not require vast amounts of money or high levels of education to encourage. It will require the wiliness to express appropriate words that build and boost.

- I love you for who you are, not for what you do.
- I believe in you.
- You are special to me.
- God made you for a special purpose.
- You are talented.
- I love you.
- You matter to me.

¹⁵ Joel Osteen, *Becoming A Better You: 7 Keys To Improving Your Life Everyday* (New York: Free Press, 2007) 143.

- You did an exceptional job.
- I see you doing something great with your life.
- I am thankful that God brought you into my life.
- God has special plans for you.
- You have a God given destiny to fulfill.

Those ten statements repeated to a grandchild everyday have a better chance of lifting the spirit then remaining silent. Keeping voices on mute when something good needs to be said benefits no one. The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews gave this wise advice: “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today...”¹⁶ The admonition from this biblical writer is to practice the art of encouragement on a daily basis. Everyone can benefit from life giving words. Grandparents can keep the “Grand” in grand parenting by using their words to bless and encourage their grandchildren with this one value. If the children came from a less than flattering environment with their parents, then words of encouragement could be the “hope” infusion they have been longing for.

5. Learn To Have Fun Together

The key word is “learn.” It can be common for people as they age to believe that they are losing their creativity. Some of the grandparents surveyed for this project were in their 70’s and 80’s. That maybe considered beyond the prime of life. If a grandparent is well beyond their prime then buying into idea that the creative days are gone can do more harm than good. There is a difference between energy levels and creative levels. While the energy may be waning a little the creative juice may be only a few ideas away. Creativity is more than a few crayons

¹⁶ Hebrews 3:13

and glue sticks poised to being used in the latest masterpiece. Author Robert Fisher provides a working definition of creativity that can help grandparents get into their creative/imaginative mind-set:

Creativity is not just about the arts, or particular types of individual. We all have the capacity for creative thinking – for generating and extending ideas, suggesting hypotheses, applying imagination and looking for alternative innovative outcomes in any activity. Creativity means generating outcomes that are original and have value. Originality may be in relation to one's previous experience, to a group or it may be uniquely original.¹⁷

Learning to be creative is fun, it strengthens imagination, promotes self-confidence, increases spontaneity, promotes teamwork, and it creates something out of nothing. It does not take a lot of money or even time to become a creative person. Being creative or imaginative is not necessarily how the grandparent views the attempt of pulling off a memorable event, but rather what would be memorable to the grandchild.

Author of a book on creativity, Bob Moore says this about having creative moments with children, "The key to teaching children is: don't give up on them and they will not give up on you."¹⁸

Discovering what is creative and imaginative for grandchildren may take time but the idea is to not quit on the first attempt. What may appear improvisational to a grandparent that is expected to inspire grandchildren may be a colossal flop. Just make it down that an attempt at creativity did work but that other imaginative ideas have yet to be tapped. If grandchildren turn down their face, offer comments that reflect their boredom, and appear uninterested then keep digging for the right creative thing to do.

¹⁷ Robert Fisher, *CATS: The IATEFL Young Learners SIG journal*, (Spring 2006), 5-9.

¹⁸ Bob Moore, *101 Improv Games for Children* (Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 2004), 10.

As an example of trying something creative and fun this author decided to purchase a Slip-N-Slide for some backyard fun. Remembering the joy of this as a child the expectation was high that our grandchildren would find this water toy exhilarating too. After setting everything up the grandchildren were asked to get their bathing suits on for a morning of more fun than they could imagine. With their eyes closed they were led to the backyard where the display of creativity and endless fun awaited them. After the explanation of how the Slip-N-Slide works they tried it once or twice and calmly explained that they were bored. Bored? What was designed fill up the day with creative fun and excitement lasted all but five minutes. After dealing with that it was just a matter of looking for something else that would strike the imaginative cord within. The moral of the story is not to become discouraged and give up when your expectation did not match reality.

Searching various web sites that stir creativity is always a helpful way to get ideas. Also, books from the library will provide various ways to create learning times that are fun. Whenever fun shows up there is a great chance that laughter is nearby too.

Here is a sample list of 40 ways to explore that may ignite a few ideas that will help put fun and laughter into grandchildren's lives. We have tried most of these and the results have been fun, laughter, and a sense of bonding.

1. Make popcorn and have movie night.
2. Learn how to make play dough.
3. Sign up for a walk or run.
4. Write letters to soldiers.
5. Go to the library.
6. Go to a museum.
7. Have coloring contests.

8. Plan a picnic indoors.
9. Hold a cooking class.
10. Go biking.
11. Share favorite birthday and vacation stories.
12. Paint bedrooms.
13. Learn magic tricks and put on a show.
14. Create books using pictures from magazines.
15. Visit nursing homes and pray with patients.
16. Volunteer to add value to people's lives.
17. Make cupcakes
18. Hold a family game night.
19. Visit the zoo.
20. Play charades.
21. Decorate small notebooks and begin daily journal.
22. Organize dresser drawers and closets.
23. Organize a garage sale.
24. Wash cars together.
25. Make macaroni jewelry.
26. Go fishing.
27. Make photo albums.
28. Make gift cards.
29. Make birthday cards.
30. Decorate cookies.
31. Sleep outside.
32. Write love and appreciation letters to each other.

33. Read joke books.
34. Go bowling.
35. Have a fashion show.
36. Go on a scavenger hunt.
37. Buy a slip-in-slide for hot days.
38. Use colored chalk on the sidewalk.
39. Get a large clear jar and start saving coins.
40. Play “hide and seek” at night outside or inside.

The idea is to learn to have fun together. There are enough serious times to go around for the grandparents and the grandchildren because of the circumstances that created the family arrangement. While the reasons of what brought everyone together may be stressful there is no reason why fun together cannot be injected into the culture of the family. Solomon, once the King of Israel said in one of his Proverbs: “A cheerful heart is good medicine...”¹⁹ This is a dose of medicine that every child should enjoy taking.

PHYSICAL REALITIES

6. Make Structure and Stability a Friend.

¹⁹ Proverbs 17:22

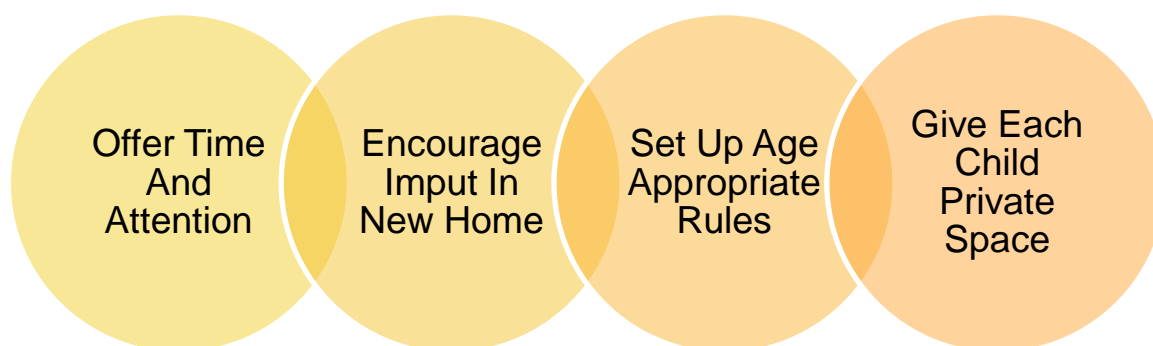


Figure 3.3 Ways to create a stable and predictable environment in new home.

Structure may sound more like a military environment but it does not have to be. In some cases grandchildren arrived at the front door of their grandparent's home with little or no structure. While living with their parents maybe they could eat whatever and whenever, personal hygiene may have been lacking, and having necessary tools to cope in life were absent.

Not all, but in many situations, grandchildren are living with their grandparents because their stability was shattered. The causation of why grandchildren are not living with their parents obliterated constancy so now the responsibility has landed in the laps of the grandparents. Now what? This is why structure or stability becomes an important piece in the developmental stages of progress.

If grandchildren arrived with no foundation or solidity do not be surprised if it takes firmness and clear expectations for grandchildren to arrive at the idea that their home environment will now be vastly different.

This author and his wife had three young children arrive to a 1200 square foot third floor condo with the oldest grandson age five, a grandson 3, and a granddaughter 2. Our youngest

daughter in high school was living with us too. We were a big family of six living in a small space. We had to have structure with the influx of more cloths, toys, towels, food, and beds. Our grandchildren had come from a loving Foster Care Home where structure was not a foreign concept and we were grateful.

In some instances grandparents who layer in structure will get some strange looks due to a lack of organization and structure in their lives. While it will take grandkids time to adjust to their new living arrangement, there are things that can be done to make the transition easier. Above all, they need to feel secure. Children thrive in an environment that is stable and predictable. The Bible speaks about order and structure as a good thing to have incorporated in life. Solomon, the writer of most of the book of Proverbs draws an analogy between a lazy person and the diligent work of the structured ant: Proverbs 6:6-8, “Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise! Though they have no prince or governor or ruler to make them work, they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter.”²⁰ In another verse from the New Testament book of 1 Corinthians 14:40 says, “But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.”²¹

In cases where grandchildren have lived apart from order and boundaries here are suggestions to bring structure and stability for them:

- **Establish a routine.** Routines and schedules help make a child’s world feel safe. Set a schedule for mealtimes and bedtimes.
- **Encourage their input in their new home.** Let your grandkids help pack and move in their things to the extent that they’re able for their age. Encourage them to decorate their new room and arrange things, as they’d like.

²⁰ Proverbs 6:6-8

²¹ I Corinthians 14:40

- **Set up clear, age-appropriate house rules and enforce them consistently.** Children feel more secure when they know what to expect. Loving boundaries tell the child he or she is safe and protected.
- **Make sure that each grandchild has a private space.** If grandchildren are sharing a bedroom, get creative: use idea to help them see it as their own room.
- **Offer your time and attention.** You can be a consistent, reassuring presence for your grandkids. Try to make time to interact with them at the beginning of the day, when they come home from school, and before bed.

The following chart can be used as an example of a possible sequencing routine that will help the child adjust. Different colors can be used for different children or to make the chart more colorful and fun for each child. We have used a chart like this:

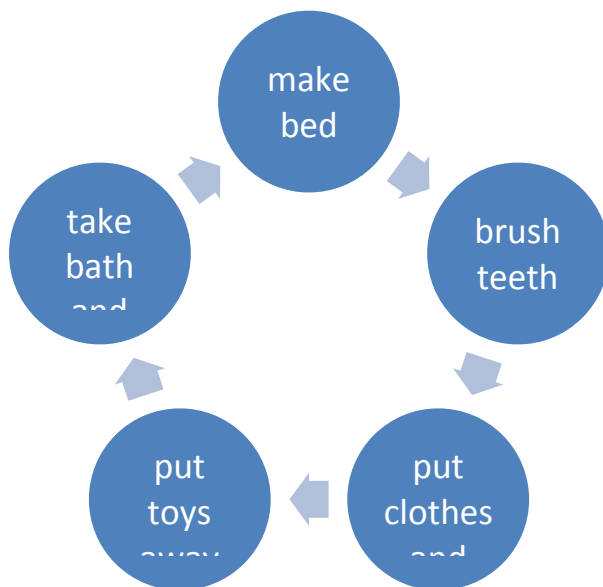


Figure 3.5 Routine that can be used.

Creating a home where structure and stability are present will make everybody's life a little better. Few people enjoy long-term chaos consequently that is why organization and permanence become allies to a successful home. It is important that grandparents who decide that environment and strength is a prize worth pursuing need to keep the arrangement reasonable. If grandchildren have had little to no structure from their parents then deciding on day one of

their arrival that the structure resembles a military installation could prove to be a drastic mistake.

The best way to layer in structure and stability is to offer a reward program with a chart where progress can be achieved and witnessed. The chart needs to be age appropriate but common items to help with structure and stability included but are not limited to: making the bed, getting dressed and brushing teeth, riding politely in the car, doing homework, and eating meals without whining. That is just a sample list. Along with rewards for being able to be structured there can be a loss of rewards depending on behavior and attitude. Losing the privilege to watch TV or play video games may be the necessary consequences to help grandchildren understand that structure and stability is not a bad thing, but good. If that level of learning begins to sink in then the effort to work on structure and stability will be worth it.

7. Build In Time For Yourselves (Or Yourself)

It is common to feel and be overwhelmed. For all the devices that are designed to make life comfortable and manageable people can be frazzled. Add the long “must do” list with parenting again and the physical drain set in. Having now decided to parent again for the second time and life can be stressful. What was going to happen during the empty nest season of life has been put on hold or forgotten. One wise act to follow through on is discovering time to renew and get refresh by having time for you as grandparents. To make this statement is simple and free. Carving out the time will demand more thought and planning.

If people do not plan their day someone else will plan it for them. If busy grandparents who are raising their grandchildren do not plan some time for personal rejuvenation then who is going to plan it for them? Grandchildren are not going to comprehend why building in time for rejuvenation is necessary. The neighbor who sees the grandparents hauling kids in and out of

the SUV are not planning a day at the spa for them. Random people are not thinking how to bring a little refreshment back into the grandparent's world. There is not going to be a strategy session created by others to bring rest, rejuvenation, renewal, and refreshment in the lives of grandparents. The "4 R's" just mentioned are necessary to the vitality to one's life. Without a built in pause to collect strength and new thoughts life will reflect the grind of disappointment. Having the latest and fastest devices to streamline life will not fill the hole left behind by doing too much without a stop at the emotional, physical, and spiritual rest stop.

A word of caution: making the attempt to carve out the necessary time to collect emotional, physical, and spiritual strength will not be easy. Patterns of living a certain way are difficult (but not impossible) to alter. This is not to be melodramatic, but building in time to collect necessary strength will force grandparents to re-slot patterns of living that prove to be healthy for long term sanity.

Building in time for emotional, physical and spiritual strength is not a money issue. Setting aside time for what is necessary to recapture sanity cannot be viewed as \$10,000 get-a-way to Tahiti for eight days. That would be a nice gift, but waiting on such a reward is unlikely.

It is important to immediately remove the notion that getting a break cannot be accomplished. It can and it must be in order to sustain strength for the journey ahead. Perhaps the first step is recognizing the need. There are no super-grandparents who can cast aside their lives and expect there to be joy in the journey of raising their grandchildren without building in time for revitalization. Recognizing the need might be the easiest step while actually building in the time to rejuvenate life creates the hardest part. The gap between recognizing and doing is the challenge.

Our experience after having our grandchildren with us was getting time alone is tough. This is echoed in the surveys done for this project. Grandparents from the survey (See Appendix B) stated that one of the challenges is finding time alone. This was one of the major adjustments from re-parenting.

We discovered that having one evening alone to go and eat, see a movie, or visit with friends once a month meant that we had to be intentional and stick to the plan. There was a stretch of time that we did not share a meal together for over 90 days. Eating standing up, helping with homework, eating at separate times, or not eating at all became the norm.

People need rest. Stopping from the heavy traffic of living is wise and healthy. If grandparents are in raising grandchildren for the long haul then getting the physical rest and time alone are key ingredients for sustain sanity. Neglect these tools and drudgery will be a constant companion.

As tempting as it might be to keep a reeve-up pace, grandparents who are racing through life by raising grandchildren can take a wise tip from God. The Bible states in Genesis 2:1-3

‘So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.’²²

The idea from the biblical example of God is that He stopped. He did not stop creating due to fatigue, but He stopped as if to say, “Enough has been accomplished.” In one sweeping example from the God of creation, humanity is given a glimpse into the all-important activity of stopping. The impression is to stop doing now in order to do something later with a clear

²² Genesis 2:1-3

mind, body, and soul. How odd this must appear on the surface, but God set the pace. His activity of not being active is worthy of a closer examination.

The first place to look for the example of building in time is in God's #1 bestseller, the Bible. Because God stopped from activity people should too. Busy overworked grandparents should stop too. In order to live a sustaining life from day to day the important step of resting must be built in.

When God was drafting a blueprint for life he dictated to Moses ten steps to doing life vertically and horizontally with success. Of the Ten Commandments God placed as # 4 and opportunity to stop from everything and rest. Exodus 20:8-11

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.”²³

Stuck in the middle of the Ten Commandments is the precedent for establishing a stopping point in life. God did it and according to Ephesians 5:1 we are to imitate Him: “Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.”²⁴ People who decided that a cessation is needful for life are wise. Overworked and tired grandparents need to stop with frequency for the reason of being sustained with renewed vigor. Only God could come up with a formula that helps people do more by stopping more.

A large quantity of grandparents who are in race-mode from the start of the day to the end of the day will be quick to admit that something is missing from their lives. What is missing is

²³ Exodus 20:8-11

²⁴ Ephesians 5:1

stopping. What is missing is the Sabbath Rest. And the quick retort is, “there is no time to stop or rest.” With life like this it will only be a matter of time before life gets unhinged and discover that life’s brake pads are worn down to the metal.

Here is why some may reject Sabbath thinking: subtracting never equals more; deducting equals a loss. In math that makes perfect sense but in God’s world subtracting means addition. Matthew Sleeth, MD has written a book describing the purpose of stopping. His description of stopping for a Sabbath is profound. The idea is to stop for one day a week to collect what slips away. For busy grandparents it is collecting the life they will need to be at their best for their grandchildren, but more importantly for themselves. To be the best version for who God wants them to be is why stopping is vital.

Sleeth’s thoughts regarding the necessity of stopping are worth reading slowly:

“One day a week adds up. Fifty-two days a year times an average life span is equal to more than eleven years. Take away eleven years of anything in a lifetime, and there will be a change. This is a law of the universe: for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Subtract over a decade of sleep, work, or education, and the entire character of one’s existence is altered. Multiple eleven years times a third of a billion Americans, and you are looking for a lost continent of time.” ²⁵

It is important to note that the only commandment from God begins with the word, “remember.” In God’s mind He wanted frail people to remember something that is important. Grandparents who need a schedule break acknowledge that something is missing and by acknowledging that they can have the inner strength to face what lies ahead.

Maybe the Sabbath rest will diffuse points of anger over life’s challenge of raising grandchildren. The point of the Sabbath stop is choosing a day or a time when the inner workings of life can recharge, opposed to becoming frayed around the edges. If anger is the acceptable on

²⁵ Matthew Sleeth, 24/6 (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2012), 8,9.

most days then everyone loses. But, what if grandparents had the relief valve turned wide open with a Sabbath day that allowed the anger to subside? It could not hurt to have a place to let anger out and not store it. “It doesn’t matter how unfairly, unjustly or thoughtlessly someone has behaved toward you, you are angry because of your own self-talk.”²⁶

Such a rest could be the tool God uses to help grandparents make it through the journey of raising their grandchildren. “Resting is even more necessary in uncertain times. It helps us remember that God is in control and that our identity is not dependent on the work we do.”²⁷

Here are some common sense non-academic approaches to finding a time to stop for the rejuvenation of body, mind, and soul.

- Decide that stopping is important enough for long-term vitality.
- Choose a specific time of the week to recollect. Choosing a specific time each week will make that day “sacred.”
- Guard the Sabbath rest from urgent request. Say, “no” with regularity to pressing demands.
- Listen to messages and read books that recharge and restore life.
- Take walks or do vigorous exercises that recalibrate what goes missing in the fray of life.
- Go to a movie, work on a hobby, meet with friends, or just stop for the sake of stopping.

²⁶ William Backus and Marie Chapien, *Telling Yourself the Truth* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1980), 53.

²⁷ Sleeth, 24/6, 81.

The suggestions have activity in them but even enjoyable activity can be a form of restoration. Grandparents are busy and their lives are running at a diligent pace now for the second time in life. Raising children for the second time will be different. It is the wiser person who makes rejuvenation in life a priority. By doing this simple Sabbath rest God will be honored and joy can be a part of life opposed to only wishing for it.

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS

8. Build a Biblical Foundation As The Anchor of Truth

There is no shortage of people in the world who reject the validity of God's number one bestseller, the Bible. Some people reject the claims of the Bible but have never read it while other people read portions of the Bible and because it did not make sense to them they reject the content as valid information. People ascribe to their opinions about the Bible and whether they believe it is helpful for life or not remains their choice. While God's counsel can be rejected there are scores of people who adhere to biblical patterns and have discovered the content of God's wisdom to be true. Theologian Dr. Elmer L. Towns, make this comment about the integrity of the Bible: "Perhaps the greatest influence of the Bible is its convicting, convincing, converting power to all who honestly accept its message and believe in Jesus Christ."²⁸

As the author of this project the settling of God's Voice as authoritative was settled years ago. It is easy to understand why people discount God's wisdom on life because on a daily basis the only apparent viable message is human logic and human wisdom. From the looks of

²⁸ Elmer L. Towns, *What's Right About The Church: A Manifesto of Hope* (Ventura: Gospel Light, 2009), 39.

the culture it does not appear that the human way of doing life has a shred of credibility. God's people have never been perfect but on many occasions they have been wiser.

In raising our grandchildren from a biblical worldview we are not trying to isolate our grandchildren from a decadent culture that is drunk on narcissism, but we do want to insulate them from thinking that selfish satisfaction is the utopian discovery. We have taken the counsel from the strong Old Testament leader, Joshua who stated these words in front of people who did not know which way to turn: "But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer to serve the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord."²⁹ It comes down to choices in life. Follow the ways of God and life can still be a challenge. Not following the ways of God does not produce the perfect life. Following the Lord, as Joshua heralded means that one can tap into the wisdom of God over the human vault of understanding. This author and his family have decided to take the wisdom of God. We teach our grandchildren that moral boundaries are good, telling the truth is a moral virtue that will serve them well their whole life, and the all people reap (good or bad) consequences.

By creating a biblical foundation for grandchildren they have boundaries to know what is true. When a person knows what is true they have the opportunity to reject what is untrue which is wise. A passage from the Old Testament book of Proverbs 22.6 describes in simple terms how children can have the truthfulness of God's way guide them for their remaining years of life. The passage from the Bible says:

²⁹ Joshua 24:15

“Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.”³⁰

Solomon, the ancient writer of this verse from the Bible made an observation that grounding children in truth has a way of remaining with them throughout the remainder of their lives. There is also an underlying truth in his words and that is that someone wiser and older than the child knows what the right path is.

For some grandparents the idea of establishing a spiritual foundation from biblical realities is too much religion, vague, or unnecessary. Their reasoning for these feelings has more to do with them than the validity of establishing a biblical foundation.

In support of grandparents who hold dearly to a biblical foundation it provides a structure of truth to build lives on opposed to the ambiguous display of humanity’s best effort to come up with solutions in life.

Below are five vital truths that grandparents can teach their grandchildren:

1. The Bible tells us why people do sinful (opposite of God’s way) things.

Romans 3:23 “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.”³¹

2. The Bible tells us the severe consequences of sin.

3. Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”³²

³⁰ Proverbs 22:6

³¹ Romans 3:23

³² Romans 6:23

4. The Bible tells us that believing makes us right with God through Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9,10 “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.”³³

5. The Bible tells is that eternal life with God is certain.

I John 5:13 “I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.”³⁴

The strongest suggestions for training and developing truth in the hearts of grandchildren have to do with the quality of life now and life beyond this lifetime. It is incredulous to believe that people will time planning their two vacations but never give thought to their eternal destination after life comes to a dramatic stop on earth.

If grandparents are raising grandchildren that are young it would wise to establish the spiritual foundation sooner rather than later in their lives. Simple steps to launch the biblical foundation may include doing the following with grandchildren:

1. Pray about big and small things on life.
2. Read from the Bible selected passages about various topics.
3. Read a Bible storybook.
4. Act out a Bible story and talking through the meaning.
5. Tell how Christ has changed the grandparent’s life.
6. Tell stories of God’s faithfulness.
7. Attend a church that adheres to a biblical worldview.
8. In the summertime, have grandchildren attend a Summer Bible Camp.

³³ Romans 10:9,10

³⁴ I John 5:13

9. Have standards in home that come from biblical values.

10. Model a life of integrity before grandchildren.

What remains is the challenge of raising grandchildren. Wise grandparents will gain wisdom from the Author of life and do their best to instill truth in their grandchildren's life one day at a time. The results of their labor may not appear on the first day, but over time and repeating what is true and valuable can have a huge payoff in the years to come.

9. Celebrate Small Accomplishments.

Because of the home environment that grandchildren can be coming from it is vital that grandparents begin the rebuilding confidence in their grandchildren. When a grandparent begins to wisely inset trust through valid encouragement something can happen in the heart of a child where they begin to believe life is going to be all right. Much of their disbelief, hurt, and pain from their former living arrangement can be kept bottled-up; but knowing that they matter and what they do can begin a process of healing.

The atmosphere they were in prior to being with grandparents can be troubling and discouraging. Since that is true it will be prudent for grandparents to set up "success markers" for their grandchildren to reach for the expressed purpose of putting some wins in their life. After all, winning trumps losing every time and for many grandchildren they have been on the losing end of life because of their parent's actions.

In our home we have tried our best to point out places of success. We can do better especially when frustrations are running a higher than normal but we are trying. Each of our grandchildren responds to authentic praise differently. They can be encouraged with praise because of a correct response, or feeling good over an academic accomplishment, or even

something as small as making their bed. We have discovered through trial and error that at bedtime is a perfect setting to instill positive praise. It is a good time to go over their accomplishments. A mistake is thinking that celebrating accomplishments is reserved for the major things. Recognizing the small things they do is good for all.

Celebrating small accomplishment is not difficult, but it does require a grandparent to take notice of certain victories. Success markers should be employed by what is age appropriate. Below are practical suggestions that do not take much time but can boost the heart of the most discouraged child.



Figure 3.5 Amaya, (far left) Shane, and Brayden preparing to construct a ginger bread house Christmas 2013.



Figure 3.6 Brayden (Red Shirt), Shane, and Amaya with the finished product.

Employ stickers and reward charts – Making a creative poster that has spaces to show accomplishments such as making their bed, brushing their teeth, putting away toys, finishing a book, completing their homework, or helping hands is an excellent way show accomplishments. With age appropriate tasks, a child can begin to feel what winning is like perhaps for the first time.

Give occasional gifts by reaching their goals –Just because a grandchild made their bed four days in a row does not qualify them for a \$300 play station or an I-Phone. With age appropriate goals it might be wise to have a prize at the end of the month. It does not have to be extravagant, but a small gift for working and reaching a goal.

Celebrate accomplishments by cooking together – A fun and simple way to demonstrate a success marker is allowing grandchildren to help cook something. This author has found that the grandchildren not only love to eat the homemade cookies but they love to help make them too. Yes, it takes longer and has a bigger mess, but it is worth it. Making cookies and talking about the right ingredients may even be a strong teaching tool about life. There is no reason why learning and accomplishments cannot go hand-in-hand. By simply making cookies a grandchild may learn why the right ingredients are important. This may sound trite, but for the grandchild it may be a special time of learning and doing something that actually has value to it. Spending special time with a child who perhaps has spent countless hours alone is worth its weight in gold and can be of great encouragement and can aid in the bonding process. Whether it is a teacher or a grandparent who is trying to teach, the best learning is achieved when it is fun. Most people do not learn in a dull environment regardless of their age.

Notice the smallest improvements – This is not a herculean challenge, making the effort to think about what would add value to a child's life. If a five year old did their best at making their bed then it is wise to notice the accomplishment with a simple verbal praise. Thanking the child for remembering to make their bed is another way to provide encouragement. Noting deflates a child's enthusiasm faster than being excited about their effort only to be told it is not good enough. Even a simple idea like appears below can be cut out of construction paper and labeled to encouraged child who is having a rough time adjusting to their new living situation. It can be affixed to their bedroom door or placed on the pillow of their bed.



Figure 3.7 An “I love you “ Note of Encouragement

Another way to recognize special accomplishments is to make a big presentation at a meal when the family is together. Children, appreciate special recognition.

Celebrate as a family – This is a great time to show what families can do together. Building trust, respect, values, standards, and hope is not an overnight phenomenon. As necessary as these are it is not going to happen after a speech on family rules and regulations. In time though celebrating small accomplishments can begin the structure that grandparents are looking for. When families celebrate together it is as if they all win together. Even God noticed the baptism of Jesus and said these words of this special day in Matthew 3:17 “And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”³⁵ Of course jealousy can creep in when children are small but even that becomes a learning time in midst of this frustration. The accomplishment of filling in their task with stickers for the month may constitute a pizza dinner and movie at home. Make up movie tickets, “sell” candy and popcorn and make it fun. For some grandparents this sounds like too much work and is boring but the extra effort

³⁵ Matthew 3:17

means the world to some children. For grandchildren it may be something they anticipate with excitement all day. To them something good is going to happen because they accomplished a goal and on the inside they feel good.

A worthy accomplishment is worth getting noticed – After a grandchild accomplishes a goal why not make it a big deal with balloons and banners. It is easy to do and even a 12 year old likes seeing their name in a banner because of their accomplishments. As grandchildren get older a nice note of appreciation goes a long way. It says, “You are important enough to be noticed for your hard work and diligence.” A common way for corporations to encourage their employees is to acknowledge accomplishments in a company publication.

Books with blank pages can be a helpful tool to write in because it turns someone into an “author.” These are white bound hardback books with blank pages. This gives children the freedom to write and illustrate their own story. The cover can be decorated as the child sees fit as well. It gives them the opportunity “publish” their own book. If the books with blank pages are not available then use a blank composition notebook. They come with blank pages or lined pages and can be utilized just as effectively. “Black books” are available at art or craft stores and come in different sizes. More than likely they can be found in Wal-Mart in the Office Supply section or at an art and craft store.

Display their books in prominent locations to show pride for their creations. Why not have a “family publication” night that highlights when a grandchild accomplishes something of value? It is never a mistake to make a big deal over small achievements.

Take advantage of nighttime listening - When the day is over and life begins to settle down from the activity of the day instilling what was accomplished at bedtime can be productive. Taking time to share special accomplishments can be a valuable time for grandchildren who

have been told that they are not worthy. Listening to them and allowing them to tell about things that impressed them during the day can be most rewarding for both grandparents and grandchildren. There are times when putting an alligator to bed may be easier than putting grandchildren to bed. On the occasion when the moment is right at bedtime rehearsing what a grandchild did right can sink in with deeper meaning.

Remind grandchildren of their worth – Everybody likes to believe they are important. Even the person who states the opposite still likes to believe they matter. The art of celebrating small accomplishments could well mean the difference between a discouraged grandchild and an encouraged grandchild. Grandparents like it when their grandchildren succeed because it offers hope often from the nightmare they may have been living with. When celebrating small accomplishments it is vital for the grandchild to know that their worth is not based on what they do but rather on who they are. Author and life coach John Maxwell describes believing in people this way:

- Look for ability in others
- Helping others discover their ability
- Helping others develop their ability³⁶

Is it important to celebrate their small accomplishments? Yes, but not at the expense of gauging their worth as a grandchild. Children will probably respond differently, therefore it is important to know what motivates and what could potentially provoke. The one emotion that will cross all boundaries is honest sincerity. Sincere honesty demonstrates something like this: “I love you for who you are not for what you do.” Grandchildren can get this when they know

³⁶ John Maxwell, *Today Matters: 12 Daily Practices To Guarantee Tomorrow's Success* (New York: Warner Faith, 2004), 228.

they are loved unconditionally. Celebrating small accomplishments is wise and healthy when balanced with the over arching way of communicating love regardless of what they accomplish.

10. Think Long-term Investment

Grandparents may all have this habit: adding up their age when their grandchildren could be out of their home and they can take another stab at the empty nest. Hopefully, grandparents do not witness their grandchildren's high school graduation and the next day check themselves into the nearest nursing home.

Regardless of the ages of the grandchildren being raised it helps in the journey to see the long –term investment. Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren probably began this journey because of love. The circumstances of why grandchildren are living with their grandparents have its own set of painful circumstances so what can be done is to think with a long-term investment in mind.

Only God can see tomorrow. It is not a mystery to Him but it is to us. What grandparents can do is create an environment where grandchildren have an opportunity to be different than their parents. Can a grandparent dare make such a request? Do grandparents hope that their grandchildren will make wiser choices than their parents? Yes. To repeat the agony witnessed would almost be too much to deal with in life. While there are no guarantees that will not happen there needs to be some push toward hope that will give grandchildren a chance to make a great life for themselves and for others.

It is this author's desire for our grandchildren to make wise choices, be responsibility, avoid people who thrive on disaster, and love God with all their heart. We have to remember that we are raising grandchildren for the long haul. Investments typically do not have a quick return,

but over time good things happen when the right ingredients are put in. We are like other grandparents who are striving to do a lot at a busy time in life. We are still helping our adult children in minimal ways and we have small children in our home who need constant care. It is not just the normal care, but we are dealing with children with ADHD. That in and of itself magnifies mood swings, diet, schoolwork, and thought process. We have to prepare like team getting ready for the big game. In our case, the big game is every day. Every grandparent reading this would probably concur. John Maxwell quotes the legendary Coach John Wooden being prepared: “When opportunity comes, it’s too late to prepare.”³⁷ Preparing today for a lifetime investment in the lives of grandchildren is gift that they will never have to pay back.

Everyone has heard the admonition that we are to live one day at a time. Is there another way? Yesterday is history and tomorrow is only a possibility. Of course today is the only day that matters so grandparents should put great wisdom into today and make it a good day.

Thinking long-term investment is not a someday mentality, but rather a today mentality of putting in the right ingredients to make a lasting difference in the lives of grandchildren. A common worn out phrase to getting anything done is to say, “One of these days.” Unfortunately, “one of these days” usually does not arrive. What is important today can get put off to a more convenient time. Or, as Solomon stated in his journal, “Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest.”³⁸ For grandparents raising their grandchildren everyday counts because they may be attempting to undo failing habits in their grandchildren. Thinking long term investment in their

³⁷ Maxwell, *Today Matters*, 6.

³⁸ Ecclesiastes 11:4

grandchildren does not begin a year from today, it begins today. Yesterday ended last night and tomorrow has not arrived which makes this day most important.

Because of a grandparent's influence of long-term investing what if the grandchild:

1. Became a great church leader who influenced thousands for Jesus Christ?
2. Became a business owner who found fulfillment in their work?
3. Became a physician?
4. Became an engineer?
5. Became the person they were designed to be by their Creator.

Giving to grandchildren so that they can have a better life is one selfless act of courage. It happens one day at a time. Every twenty – four hours grandparents get up and try again to give their grandchildren a chance at a better life than their parents could give them. When a day is a challenge it would be encouraging to read these words for former Super Bowl coach of the Indianapolis Colts, Tony Dungy, “Things will go wrong at times. You can’t always control circumstances. However, you can always control your attitude, approach, and response. Your options are to complain or to look ahead and figure out how to make the situation better.”³⁹

Here is what grandparents should think long-term for their grandchildren: Help grandchildren choose a life that is wise, improve their situations, and become someone of humility because of the goodness of God.

We tell our grandchildren over and over what are wise choices and what are unwise choices. Wisdom is seeing life from God's perspective. When it comes to living and making decisions what would be the wise thing to do. In the Old Testament book of Proverbs, Solomon

³⁹ Tony Dungy, *Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, and Priorities of a Winning Life* Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2007), 16.

sketched out the consequences of the wise and the unwise. It is not a complicated acquisition of wisdom but asking, “Is this a wise use of my life, my decisions, my associations, and my time”?

“My child, if sinners entice you, turn your back on them! They may say, “Come and join us. Let’s hide and kill someone! Just for fun, let’s ambush the innocent! Let’s swallow them alive, like the grave let’s swallow them whole, like those who go down to the pit of death. Think of the great things we’ll get! We’ll fill our houses with all the stuff we take. Come, throw in your lot with us; we’ll all share the loot.” My child, don’t go along with them! Stay far away from their paths.”⁴⁰

It appears from Solomon’s words that he is telling people that there are options in life that are wise and unwise. It has nothing to do with socioeconomic developments, education, ethnicity, or who is raising you. It comes down to making wise decisions that produce wise results.

There is a strong reality that grandchildren are going to have to face the fact that their lives are different. Will lack wisdom cause them to act out in destruction or will wisdom cause them to be mature enough to accept their current reality. Family Life founder, Dennis Rainey commented on maturity and home life by saying: “Maturity demands that we confront our past. We will not experience the benefit of growing up if we deny or refuse to face the reality of having been raised by fallen human beings.”⁴¹

If grandparents had the interest to peel back the reasons why they are raising their grandchildren it would not take very long to see unwise thoughts and then actions by their own chil-

⁴⁰ Proverbs 1:10-19

⁴¹ Dennis Rainey, *The Best Gift You Could Ever Give Your Parents* (Little Rock: Family Life Publishers, 2004), 28.

dren that led to the current arrangement. Now, everyone makes unwise decisions, but repeated unwise decisions would place the person in a category of being a fool.

Buying a car that is less than reliable can be a foolish mistake with money. An attempted robbery to get money is against the law and unwise. The consequence to purchasing a car that is falling apart is nothing to a life that is falling apart because of unwise decisions. Since all people make unwise decisions in life the goal is to avoid tragic decisions that come with disastrous consequences.

A wise grandparent who can teach wisdom to their grandchildren is making a long-term investment that will compound in spiritual dividends. It is easy to count the seeds in an apple. But what if all the apple seeds were planted in rich soil that would one day produce apple trees? Then the question becomes how many apples were in the seeds of the original apple. It would be too numerous to count.

The point is, no grandparent can tell with accuracy how their grandchildren will turn out or who they will become. Only God knows that answer. Their job is to instill wisdom, maneuvered one day at a time, and be available for healing to take place in the hearts of their grandchildren. They face challenges that other children will not face.

A wise grandparent points their grandchildren to the safest place to heal hearts that are broken. Wisdom enables them to know when to stop, listen, and cry if necessary. Tim Clinton is a biblical counselor who shares his wisdom about the healing emotions: “We find our healing in the Healer. We recover our joy in Him who is joy incarnate. We recover our broken lives in the

One who is the way, truth, and the life. It is time to open our hearts to Him and believe in the transforming power of Jesus Christ.”⁴²

How grateful grandparents will be to one day see their grandchildren walk wisely, choosing the right path, living according to God’s ways, having a sense of inner healing and thinking about their life’s future. How did it happen? Some grandparents decided that living one day at a time was not a worn out cliché, but actually a way to live as a way to make a long-term investment in their grandchildren lives.

⁴² Tim Clinton, *Turn Your Life Around*, 187.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW NOW THAT YOU'RE PARENTING AGAIN

DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER YOUR INFLUENCE

If you are parenting your grandchildren the probability is strong that you will raise them into adulthood. If your grandchildren are toddlers and you are in your late forties or fifties you have already done the math of when they may leave your home.

If someone knows you are raising your grandchildren and you are middle age, comments like, "Do you know how old you will be when they graduate from high school" does not add vast amounts of encouragement. The arithmetic has been done multiple times of when the next opportunity for an empty nest may come back around.

Because grand parenting is for a long season and not a month long commitment what should this courageous group of people know as the years of influencing move along? One thought to dwell upon is, "time appears to move fast and influence is forever."

When a grandparent is exhausted from the day's work and the third grader you are raising has two pages of math to do, a story to read, and then write a story summary, no one is thinking of time moving fast. The reality remains intact, time is moving along at a clip that is common for every human on earth; twenty-four hours in a day.

A large section of grandparents can recall how fast their children grew up when looking back. Those children did not grow any faster than others children but for whatever the reason it seems that way. Someday, a grandparent may look back on the experience of raising grandchildren and think it went too fast.

In tackling each day at a time they will realize that some days will be better than others. Great days do not happen every day and neither do the awful ones. Life has a way of looking different each and every day.

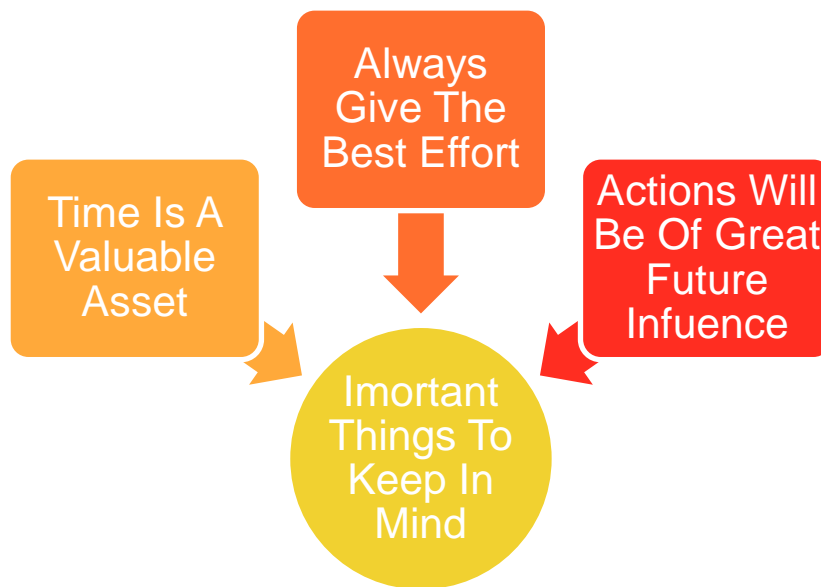


Figure 4.1 Ways Grandparents Can Mold the Lives of Their Grandchildren.

As grandparents begin the work of raising their grandchildren these tips can improve the atmosphere in the home and create an enjoyable place to thrive:

1. Time is nothing more than an accumulation of seasons put together to that makes a life.

Solomon, the writer of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes described time in a series of opposites to let the reader know that there is a time for everything: “For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance.

A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn

away. A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.”¹

It is clear that Solomon had the idea that the ups and downs in everyone’s life are just that – life. God allows us to have the mountain top experiences and the valleys so that we will not become conceited and believe that we are in control of our lives. We all have seasons. A farmer knows seasons are important. The timing of doing the right thing at the right time is crucial.

We live in seasons. Deciding to raise grandchildren is a season and one day it will be a new time frame of life. Nothing stays the same. If someone reads about farming it is certain that seasonal activities would be mentioned. There would be activity for the winter months that would make the spring months productive. Successful farmers understand what needs to happen in each season to be a successful. Knowing is only one part of their success. They have to execute their plan.

The illustration of agriculture can go in many directions even with the topic of parenting grandchildren. The wise caregiver will have to know what the seasons are. A biblical farming analogy from the Old Testament book of Proverbs states: “Those too lazy to plow in the right season will have no food at the harvest.”²

The point is clear that if planting is not done at the right time then the apparent lack of food will be realized. No farmer wants to work hard and have nothing to show for his labor.

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

² Proverbs 20:4

No grandparent wants to labor in various seasons of parenting and not have good results from their hard work.

The farmer is a perfect example because he must do his work in spite of all the weather challenges. A grandparent must work through challenges in spite of the cultural climate. Both the farmer and the grandparent who is parenting their grandchildren will do something in order to have something. One commodity for the farmer is food. One commodity for the grandparent is seeing their grandchildren excel in life. Both have to do their best under the conditions that exist. There will never be the perfect season for the farmer to work and there will never be perfect conditions for grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren. Perfect conditions do not exist; never look for them but work in them.

Grandparents raising their grandchildren might not have:

- A large home and the conditions may be less than perfect but do their best under those conditions.
- An abundance of resources but manage to do provide.
- A lot of help to cope from day to day but they summon their courage do their best.
- The emotional, physical, and spiritual stamina each day but they never stop loving.
- All the patience required re-upping for parenting for the next fifteen years but they will do the best they can.
- The life they had envisioned but will gracefully give without the expectation of ever asking to be repaid.

It takes an enormous amount of money to raise a child and it takes an enormous amount of money to raise a grandchild. All parents and grandparents hold this belief in common. Having money is not the solution, although it gives people options.

Grandparents may be fresh out of money because they just got their own children raised need to know what is still free and hold a powerful influence in a child's heart.

This is free:

- A long and meaningful hug.
- A kiss on the cheek.
- A word of sincere appreciation.
- A look of approval.
- A handmade gift that says, "I love you."
- A note on a pillow that reinforces love.
- A walk together.
- A story told and a story read.
- A time of prayer together.
- A special meal made together.
- A movie night with popcorn.

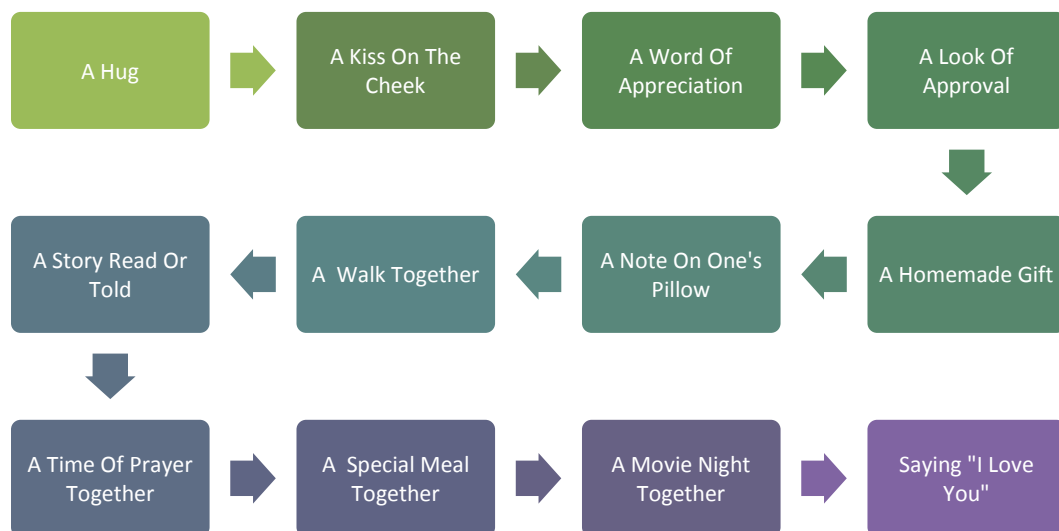


Figure 4.2 Things That Money Cannot Buy.

Not all grandchildren being raised by their grandparents are going on a memorable seven-day Disney Caribbean cruise, but every grandchild can experience memorable acts of love regardless of the grandparent's financial status. There are memory-making items that are free. When a grandparent who is raising their grandchildren utilizes what is free they are like the wise farmer who does what can be done with the conditions given. Time is life and life is made up of seasons. The writer of the New Testament book of Galatians puts the enduring quality of diligent work this way: "So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."³

2. Grandparents who give their best will have their efforts compound for another's benefit.

Greatness is not always what one does with their life but whom they inspire to something great in life. No one ever gave their best effort to a relationship and looked back and had regrets. It is just the opposite; plenty of people gave the minimum and looked back with regrets because no one gets a "do over" in life.

If people could see the immediate result of years of giving their personal best then everyday would be a masterpiece. The unfortunate reality is no one gets the advantage of seeing what will happen when his or her personal best is done each day.

We have to attempt our best and overtime, just like financial compound interest there is a significant gain. It applies with financial investing and it applies with a grandparent who is raising a grandchild. The grandparent, who loves without conditions, cherishes the heart of a grandchild, speaks words of hope, prays over, and cares endlessly for their grandchild is investing for a different future for all involved.

³ Galatians 6:9

John Wooden was the legendary basketball coach at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). In his tenure as a coach he won ten national championships as UCLA's coach. That is a record that may hold for decades to come. He never called himself a coach, but a teacher. One of the important truths that Wooden conveyed to his teams and to audiences who listened to him speak was the importance of improving. Staying the same year after year benefits no one.

For grandparents who have the challenge and opportunity of raising grandchildren must improve. Whatever area of life that may be improvement is a required course. The popular truth from Coach Wooden was: "I am not what I ought to be, not what I want to be, not what I am going to be, but I am thankful that I'm better than I used to be."⁴

There is a great advantage to improving at something. One simple improvement may be accepting that as a grandparent the responsibility of raising grandchildren will be a part of life for the rest of life. This may take time, but it is still an improvement. Keeping the television silent for an evening and reading to grandchildren is improvement. If people have a desire to improve then they will. If the plan is just to survive then that can be done as well.

Coach Lou Holtz states in his book, *Winning Every Day*, "If life is a classroom, adversity is its teacher."⁵ Every grandparent who gives their best will overcome stages of adversity. They will have to fight to make their efforts compound in value. It will not happen by accident nor will they casually drift toward a profound influence in their grandchildren's lives. Proud people believe they have arrived and that nothing can be improved upon while humble people know they will never arrive and life is full of ways to improve so they keep trying.

⁴ John Wooden, *My Personal Best* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 19.

⁵ Lou Holtz, *Winning Every Day*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1998), 29.

3. A grandparent's life will influence for years to come.

Influence is a tricky thing. Everybody has influence, but not everybody uses their influence as leverage for a brilliant future for other people. Because grandparents have already raised their children they know firsthand that influence is powerful. It can shrivel up the soul of someone or cause someone to dream big. Influences can change a life that can change many lives. Everyone will influence people and that will be a sad thing, a nothing thing, or a really big thing. Big thing means someone left his or her mark on another life forever in a positive way.

Sad influence looks like a crushed spirit and hopelessness. No impact is an emotionless way of looking at people and events. No guidance describes an ambivalent attitude. But the big influencer came into someone's life and forever changed another life to have a better life.

Medical doctor, Arthur Kornbaber described grandparent's influence in simple terms: "Your power and effectiveness depends on how well you understand your many diverse roles and how you act them out. By fulfilling these roles, you will bring great joy, meaning, and usefulness to you own life. In addition, you will set a shining example for your children and grandchildren by illuminating their lives too."⁶

It is not a sudden reality that people die. People who are hated die and the people who are adored die too. Every grandparent must someday square up to the fact that their voice will be silenced although their influence will not. Grandparents raising grandchildren will influence far into this century. Call it legacy or call it inspiration the reality is how grandparents do their work will not go unnoticed for a long time. Raising children is over and so it is onto round two

⁶ Arthur Kornbaber, *The Grandparent Guide: The Definitive Guide to Coping with the Challenges of Modern Grandparenting*, (New York: Contemporary Books, 2002), chap. 1, under "Grandparent Roles," Kindle ebook.

of raising grandchildren. It is not what anyone imagined but this is the current reality so try to make it work.

When a voice is silenced in death there is no way going back to make things right, apologize, or thank someone for giving. Whatever there is to make right should be done sooner, rather than later.

If grandparents would like to chart a clear path forward in order to be the greatest guidance on their grandchildren then they should consider these two ways to make their life a pattern to follow. When a voice is silent the influence does not have to be.

1. Words will shape a world-view.

The words from a person's lips can inspire or deflate. The object is not to depress but inspire. Here is how wholesome words will work: "The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences."⁷

The Apostle Paul instructed the church in Ephesus that words carry an enormous amount of influence: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior."⁸ In his grouping of instruction he listed words and behavior as links that can be destructive. Grandparents already know that their grandchildren are watching and it is a good reminder to know that they are listening too.

2. Pray over grandchildren daily.

Here's a blunt question for grandparents: Do you pray over your grandchildren? It is not to be intrusive or pushy. It is just a simple question about covering your grandchildren in prayer.

⁷Proverbs 18:21

⁸ Ephesians 4:32

This is not a religious question but a relationship question. Religion is a list of good things that one must do in order to get God's attention and win favor from the Almighty.

A real belief in the relationship with God through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross brings someone (anyone) into a new relationship. Religion is made by people while a relationship is initiated God and is a gift. Underserved, yet freely given to all who will ask.

Prayer is a choice. If a grandparent chooses to take a pass on prayer then that is their choice. If a grandparent believes in prayer then they have made a choice too. For those who see prayer as a necessity here are ten key areas to pray with specificity for grandchildren.

Praying diligently over your grandchildren:

- That the grandchildren under your influence will discover the joy of knowing Jesus Christ in a personal way. 2 Timothy 2:10 "So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen."⁹

- That the grandchildren will mature into devoted Christ followers who will mature in their faith all the days of their lives. 2 Peter 3:18 "Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to him, both now and forever! Amen."¹⁰

- That the grandchildren will live their lifetime reading, studying, and loving the Bible, God's eternal Word. Psalm 19:10 "They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb."¹¹

⁹ 2 Timothy 2:10

¹⁰ 2 Peter 3:18

¹¹ Psalm 19:10

- That the grandchildren will derive their self-worth and esteem from a biblical world-view over the flawed influence of the culture. Colossians 2:8 “Don’t let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ.”¹²
- That the grandchildren will be courageous in their faith. Deuteronomy 31:6 “So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you.”¹³
- That the grandchildren will possess godly wisdom throughout their lives. Proverbs 1:7 “Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”¹⁴
- That the grandchildren will live with a sense of gratefulness. Colossians 2:7 “Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.”¹⁵
- That the grandchildren will possess a life of contentment. Philippians 4:11,12 “Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. ¹² I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.”¹⁶

¹² Colossians 2:8

¹³ Deuteronomy 31:6

¹⁴ Proverbs 1:7

¹⁵ Colossians 2:7

¹⁶ Philippians 4:11,12

- That the grandchildren will grow in their service toward other people. 1 Peter 4:10 “God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.”¹⁷

- That the grandchildren will have a passion to serve God for their entire life. Psalm 63:8 “I cling to you; your strong right hand holds me securely.”¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:58 “So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.”¹⁹

For decades the name, Billy Graham has been synonymous with preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to scores of people around the world. Mr. Graham is in the winter of his life at the age of 95 (born: Nov 7, 1918).

Through decades his voice has asked people to embrace the free gift of Jesus Christ and millions have done so. Today, he is frail and seldom is in public. The soft-spoken older Billy Graham has replaced the vibrant and thunderous voice of the young Billy Graham. Because time slowly and yet methodically invaded the life of Mr. Graham he will someday give way to the taker of life and be with his Lord in eternity. It is the assurance for all who know the Keeper of life. His voice will be silenced but his influence will endure because of the lives that were changed. No one knows when he or she will enter through the veil from this life to the next so being ready is the greatest decision anyone will ever make.

Ann Graham Lotz is Billy Graham’s daughter. She was reflecting on her father’s influence and summed up his future this way: “What will it be like for him to never again hear the gentle

¹⁷ 1 Peter 4:10

¹⁸ Psalm 63:8

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:58

strains of “Just As I Am” echoing above the quiet shuffle of thousands of feet as people make their way down to stadium steps and cross the grassy field in order to find God? While Daddy’s voice may be silent in stadiums and arenas around the world, I am confident that his message will continue to reverberate throughout generations to come. My prayer is that thousands of pastors, teachers, evangelist, and ordinary men and women will take up the message like a baton being passes in a relay race and faithfully send it on to those with whom they come in contact.”²⁰

There is a good chance that grandparents will not fill stadiums with sermons that will influence thousands of people. But their words can fill the heart of a child who does not live with his or her mom and dad.

Many grandparents and grandchildren have to form new kinds of families because of some tough situations. It is not was anyone thought it would happen, but it is happening. Grandparents will never know what the empty nest would have looked like and grandchildren are growing up without their mom or dad being by their sides. The family looks different.

Grandparents will have to summon their courage in the years to come since their grandchildren’s future is being held in the balance. When Ann Graham Lotz stated that her father’s voice would be silenced one day she was right. So will every grandparent’s voice. That is why influencing a grandchild in valuable ways must occur.

Someday a grandparent will put life’s baton in the palm of their grandchildren and it will be their turn to run the race far into decades that grandparents will never see. Whether they are ready or not the day will come that will silence their voice forever. They will have run their race and they will step aside for their grandchildren to run their race.

²⁰ Billy Graham, *Billy Graham, Living In God’s Love* (New York, NY: Putnam, 2005), 17

What will grandchildren remember? Will they remember:

- The scarifies you made?
- The trips to the dentist or doctor?
- The money it took to buy school pictures?
- The time a vacation had to be put on hold?
- The love and devotion?
- The day they went to live with their grandparents instead of a Foster Care home.

The fact is they will remember many things. It could take years for them to come to the appreciation of what they have in life because courageous grandparents opened their door and heart. Their appreciation may come with age.

One of the most joyous days a grandparent could ever possess is seeing their grandchildren excel in life because they were influenced well. They did not see the end result of their dedication on day one or year 4, but in time the hard work paid off with the three P's: prayer, patience, and persistence.

Do not just look at what is immediate, but take a long look 10, 15, or 20 years down the road. Build in the daily acts of wise words and actions that will add courage to grandchildren as they grow into adults. How did it come to this? Years earlier a grandparent chose to become parents again; this time to their grandchildren.

Who knows, your grandchildren make sit with you in the years to come and with tears of gratitude creasing down their faces whisper these words into your ear, "I love you. Thank you for taking me into your home but more importantly into your heart. You did not have to do it, but you did and I have a different life today because of you." In that one tender moment their appreciation told you that all the years of hard work and prayer was worth it.

APPENDIX A

How Our Journey Lead To Parenting, Again

This is personal. My wife Heather and I are parenting again. We are in our fifties and after raising three daughters to adulthood; we reached back and started parenting again.

Here is why.

On the afternoon of February 6, 2009, we were informed by the Department of Family Services that our grandchildren might go into the foster care system for a number of years. The other possible options were putting them up for adoption or live with us.

Our daughter Leslie had made some poor choices that had her children and our grandchildren taken to Foster Care in the Dallas, TX area. It became an instant recognition that the situation from the state of Texas was giving us three options:

1. Remain in Foster Care
2. Be adopted into another family
3. We would have them live with us.

Number three became the only viable option. We did not know what it all meant but we decided to have our grandchildren live with us. At the time Brayden was 5, Shane was 3, and Amaya was 2. We were starting over and this was a life curve with gigantic ramifications.

You may read these words and not feel the weight of their meaning. If you have grandchildren, just imagine that there is a strong possibility that you will never see them again. They will grow up without your words of love and your hugs; without spilling Kool-Aid on your carpet; without bedtime stories; without sharing holidays with you; and without you having opportunities to spoil them, lavish them with praise, or hear them say, “I love you.” Simply put, you miss out on their lives—and they miss out on yours.

Heather and I could not let this happen. Within hours of hearing from the Department of Family Services, we made a solid decision to take our three grandchildren back into our home, knowing that this would be a huge life-changing event for our two younger daughters and us. We'd be back into diapers; a big roll of paper towels packages from Costco, both Superman and Cinderella pj's, car seats, and a tandem stroller! Not to mention the curious stares from strangers! We were starting over.

That very morning when we got the call, I had been up early reading *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. Little did I know what the day was going to bring forth. But God knew! He always does!

Here's a portion of the reading for that day. If you are wondering where God is in your particular set of challenges, I pray these words will encourage you to be poured out for the One whose love calls us to a full surrender. Here are a few lines from that day's reading:

Are You Ready to Be Poured Out?

2 Timothy 4:6 (New Living Translation) says, "As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God ..." (New Living Translation).

"Tell God you are ready to be offered; then let the consequences be what they may, there is no strand of complaint no matter what God chooses. God puts you through the crises in private; no one person can help another. Externally the life may be the same; the difference is in the will. Go through the crises then when it comes externally, there will be no thought of the cost."

I shut the book and whispered a prayer to God that went something like, "I sense that you're asking us to serve You without limits, without the distraction of self-will, with-

out a consuming desire to know all the details about the future, but simply to joyfully rest in Your plans.”

We believe that serving God well means we give our grandchildren our best. We do not know who they will become but God does. We have tough days like a lot of other people do. Sometimes we get life right and other days are discouraging. Some days there is anger because we grieve over the life we know we will never have. The anger has subsided and we have settled in that this is our world and that God will give us the necessary strength to cope from day to day.

APPENDIX B

Research Questions For Grandparents Raising Their Grand Children

The following questions were submitted to grandparents as a tool to discover commonalities for those raising their grandchildren. The fifteen questions helped reveal certain trends; trials grandparents are working through, and even the joys of influencing their grandchildren toward a brighter and a more preferable future.

1. What led you to the decision to raise your grandchildren? Please check as many as apply.

_____ Illness by the parent(s) and the now the responsibility rests on you.

_____ A death from the parent(s).

_____ The financial structure for the parent(s) is too low to support.

_____ Divorce from the parents.

_____ Domestic violence by the parents.

_____ Substance abuse.

_____ Incarceration by one parent or both parents.

_____ Mental illness.

_____ Parental neglect.

_____ Other: _____

2. Has the decision to raise your grandchildren changed your life positively, negatively, or hasn't changed?

Positively – How? _____

Negatively – How? _____

Hasn't changed.

3. Do you ever experience anger because you are raising your grandchildren?

Yes – No – Never

4. Has raising your grandchildren created financial difficulties for you?

Yes – No – Haven't thought about it.

5. Do you see raising your grandchildren to their completion of high school?

Yes – No – Not Sure

6. What do you enjoy most in raising your grandchildren? (Example: teaching them your

Values, giving/receiving love, etc...)

7. What is the least thing you enjoy in raising your grandchildren? Example: helping

them with their homework, not enough time for yourself etc...

8. What has been the most specific change in your life since you decided to raise your grandchildren?

9. What are the ages of your grandchildren currently living with you?

a. Birth to age 5

b. 5 to 10 years

c. 10 to 15 years

d. 15 to 18 years

10. Do you believe your grandchildren will return to their parents to live on a permanent

basis? Yes – No – Never – Not Sure

11. Are you raising your grandchildren with different values that you raised your children

with? Yes – No – Haven't thought about it.

12. How long have you been raising your grandchildren?

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1 to 5 years
- c. 5 to 10 years
- d. More than 10 years

13. Do you have your grandchildren involved in any religious training?

Church – Synagogue – Mosque – No religious training

14. Did your grandparents raise you? Yes – No

15. Knowing what you know now, what would you tell other grandparents who are considering raising their grandchildren?

16. Would you please give your age?

- a. 30-40
- b. 40-50
- c. 50-60
- d. 60-70
- e. 70-80
- f. Rather not say

VITA

Larry D. Lamb

PERSONAL

Born: November 9, 1957

Married: Heather C. Lamb, June 11, 1983.

Children: Leslie A. Lamb, born July 6, 1986.

Aimee D. Lamb, born March 5, 1990.

Noelle E. Lamb, born October 4, 1992

EDUCATIONAL

B.S., Baptist Bible College, Springfield, MO 1980.

M.R.E., Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA 1983

D.Min., Louisiana Baptist University, Shreveport, LA 1993.

MINISTERIAL

License: January 31, 1983, Southwest Baptist Church,
Amarillo, TX.

PROFESSIONAL

Associate Pastor, Southwest Baptist Church, Amarillo, TX, 1983-1989.

Pastor, La Costa Hills Church, Carlsbad, CA, 1989-1994.

Associate Pastor, Skyline Church, San Diego, CA, 1994-2002.

Teaching Pastor, InChrist Church, Beverly Hills, CA, 2002-2003.

Co-Pastor, Central Community Church, Cocoa, FL, 2003-2009.

Teaching Pastor, Cielo Vista Church, El Paso, TX, 2009-Present

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AARP.org

Backus, William and Marie Chapian. *Telling Yourself the Truth*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1980

Bailey, Laura. *Courageous Love: Instructions for Creating Healing Circles for Children of Trauma*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse:2013

Beatty, Ashley. *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*. Corvallis, OR, August, 2006

Boglar, Jim. *Faith Legacy*. Indiannapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009

Butts, Donna and Brigitte Castellano. "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" *Children's Voice*, 2006 <http://search.proquest.com/docview/20395132?accountid=12085>

Canfield, Jack. *The Success Principal*. New York:Harper Collins Publishers 2005

Clinton, Timothy. *Turn Your Life Around:Break Free From Your Past to a Better You*. New York:Faith Works, 2006

Cloud, Henry. *Boundaries With Kids*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002

Cloud, Henry. *NecessaryEndings: The Employees, Business, and Relationships That All of Us Have To Give Up In Order To Move Forward*. New York: Harper-Collins, 2010

Cloud, Henry and John Townsend. *How People Grow: What The Bible Reveals About Personal Growth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001

Denholtz, Elaine. *The Extra Parent: How Grandparents Are Helping Out, Pitching In, and Raising Their Grandchildren*. Lincoln,NE: iUniverse, 2004

Dobson, James. *The New Dare To Discipline*. Carol Stream, IL: Tydale, 1992

Dr. Jerry Lewis's address – San Antonio, Texas as referred to in Stu Weber, *Tender Warrior:God's Intention For A Man*, Colorado Springs: Mesltnomah Books, 1995

Dungy, Tony. *Quiet Stength: The Principles, Pratices and Priorities of a Winning Life*. Carol Stream, IL: Tydale, 2007

Fisher, Robert. CATS: The IATEFL Young Learners SIG Journal Spring, 2006

Flood, Rob. "A List of Scriptures From The Book of Proverbs To Teach Your Children" (Family Life 2006) accessed March 31, 2014
<http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/parenting/foundations/spiritual-development/a-list-of-scriptures-from-the-book-of-provrbs-to-teach-your-children#.UznyDRlp4Xw>

Generation United, Grand Fact Sheet AARP, 2010

Goyer, Amy. *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, AARP, August 31, 2011

Graham, Billy. *Billy Graham, Living in God's Love*. New York, NY: Putnam, 2005

Hodgson, Harriet. Help! I'm Raising My Grandkids: Grandparents Adapting To Life's Surprises. Charleston. SC: Book Surge, 2012 Kindle ebook

Lang, Amanda. "Now That You Are A Parent... Again", *Gandparents.com* (2007-2014) accessed March 31, 2014 <http://www.grandparents.com/family-and-relationships/caring-for-children/whenyouareparentagain>

Mac Arthur, John. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson 2005

MacBride, Craig. "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" *The Leader*, June 17, 2008
<http://searech.proquest.com/docview/3731460867?accountid=12085>

Maxwell, John. *Leadership Gold: Lessons I've Learned From A Lifetime of Learning*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson 2008)

Maxwell, John. *The Winning Attitude*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993

Maxwell, John. *Today Matters, 12 Daily Practices To Guarantee Tomorrow's Success*. New York: Warner-Faith 2004

Martine, Dave. *Family Safety Program* Office, Florida Department of Children and Families March 4, 2003

Moore, Bob. *101 Improv Games for Children*. Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 2004

Osborne, Hilda. *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*. Bloomington, IL: 1st Books

Library

- Osteen, Joel. *Becoming a Better You: 7 Keys to Improving Your Life Everyday*. New York: Free Press, 2007
- Peters, Maribeth. *360 at 60: A Grandparent's Guide To Raising Children All Over Again*. Portland, OR: Astoria Publishing, 2013 Kindle ebook
- Rainey, Dennis. *The Best Gift You Could Ever Give Your Parents*. Little Rock: Family Life Publishers, 2004
- Rosenthal, Doreen and Susan Moore. *New Age Nanas: Being a Grandmother in the 21st Century*,
Newport, NSW, Australia: Big Sky Publishing, 2012 Kindle ebook
- Ross, Alan. *Introduction to the Devout Life*. translated by Alan Ross, London: Burns, Oats and Washburn, 1937
- Sinclair-Krause, Jeanne. *Remember Cynthia Rose: Grandparents Fight to Keep Their Grandchildren*.
Lincoln, NE: iUniverse Publication, 2002 Kindle ebook
- Sparks, Martha Evans. *Raising Your Chrilren's Children: Help For Grandparents Raising Grandkids*.
(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2011)
- Swindoll, Chuck. *StrengtheningYour Grip. Essentials In An Aimless World*. Waco:Word 1982
- Stanley, Andy. *How To Be Rich: It's Not What You Have, It's What You Do With What You Have*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013
- Steeth, Matthew. *24/6*. Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2012
- Toledo, Sylvia and Deborah Elder Brown. *Grandparents As Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising A Second Family*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2013
- Towns, Elmer L. *What's Right About The Church: A Manifesto of Hope*. Ventura: Gospel Light, 2009
- Trembley, Jr., K. R. Colorado State University Extension housing specialist and profesor, design merchandising; C. E. Barber, former Colorado State University profesor of human development and family studies and L. Kubin, Extension family and consumer services agent, Larimer County

Warner, E. E. *Protective Factors and Individual Resilience*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000

Werner, E. E. *Protective Factors and Individual Resilience*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001

Williams, Elaine. *The Sacred Work of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*, Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, Kindle Edition, 2011

Williams, Elaine. (2011-08-10) *The Sacred Works of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (Kindle Locations 144-146, 575-576, 587-590, 640-644, 922, 926-927, 1626-1636, 1701-1704, 1838-1840)

Wooden, John. *My Personal Best*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004



The Graduate School at Liberty University

Dear Larry,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:

(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Professor, IRB Chair

Counseling (434) 592-4054

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971