

Grandparenting: Adult Children and Grandchildren

INTRODUCTION: FIVE PHASES OF DISCIPLING CHILDREN

1. **Caregiver**—The parent cares for all the needs of a child such as food, clothes, and hygiene. Season of life: Infancy and preschool. Biblical example: “Sons are indeed a heritage from the Lord, offspring, a reward” (Ps. 127:3).
2. **Commander**—The parent controls every area of the child’s life and corrects the child to encourage holiness in Christ. Season of life: Grade school. Biblical example: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).
3. **Coach**—The parent delegates decision-making as a child matures, models Christlike living, and releases responsibility. Season of life: Adolescence. Biblical example: “Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).
4. **Counselor**—The parent offers biblical guidance to navigate life choices and challenges. Season of life: Early adulthood. Biblical example: “Plans fail when there is no counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Prov. 15:22).
5. **Consultant**—The parent provides godly wisdom from a lifetime of experience and mentors adult children to make disciples of their children. Season of life: Adulthood. Biblical example: “Be wise, my son, and bring my heart joy, so that I can answer anyone who taunts me” (Prov. 15:22).

CULTURAL MESSAGES AND TYPES OF GRANDPARENTS

1. **Three Cultural Messages**
 - a. *You need to live your life independent of your family.*
 - b. *You’ve worked hard and now it’s time to enjoy yourself.*
 - c. *Your role is to be a companion and playmate to your grandchild.*

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2. Four Types of Grandparents (Larry Fowler, *Biblical Grandparenting*)

- a. **Biblical**—Biblical grandparents understand their role concerning the biblical mandate to teach and tell the next generations the truth about God and his redemption plan.
- b. **Cultural**—Cultural grandparents tend to focus their energy on doting over their grandchildren, or giving support to their grandchildren, with little attention to building that legacy of faith and truth.
- c. **Blocked**—These grandparents may desire to fulfill their biblical role, but they are “blocked”—in other words, there is some kind of barrier that gets in the way of fulfilling their biblical roles (e.g. geographical, relational).
- d. **Unequipped**—This type of grandparent wants to make a difference but feels inadequate to do so (e.g. fear, guilt, ignorance).

THE BIBLICAL ROLE OF GRANDPARENTS

“Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don’t forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don’t slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren” (Deut. 4:9).

“Do this so that you may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life by keeping all his statutes and commands I am giving you, your son, and your grandson, and so that you may have a long life . . . 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. 7 Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:2, 5–7).

“Grandchildren are the crown of the elderly, and the pride of children is their fathers” (Prov. 17:6).

“We will not hide them from their children, but will tell a future generation the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, his might, and the wondrous works he has performed. 5 He established a testimony in Jacob and set up a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children 6 so that a future generation—children yet to be born—might know. They were to rise and tell their children 7 so that they might put their confidence in God and not forget God’s works, but keep his commands” (Ps. 78:4–7).

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“The righteous thrive like a palm tree and grow like a cedar tree in Lebanon . . . 14 They will still bear fruit in old age, healthy and green, 15 to declare, “The Lord is just; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him” (Ps. 92:12, 14–15).

“I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5).

God expects grandparents to be disciple-making, God-fearing, daily-impressing, grandchild-loving, testimony-telling, truth-teaching, fruit-bearing, and faith-filled individuals.

DISCIPLESHIP PRACTICES EVERY GRANDPARENT CAN DO

“We proclaim him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. 29 I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me” (Col. 1:28–29).

Key Principle: *Your grandchild’s maturity in Christ is your priority.*

1. Ask and answer questions.

“When your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ 27 you are to reply, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when he struck the Egyptians, and he spared our homes’” (Exod. 12:26–27).

Become an askable grandparent, and become skilled at the art of asking good questions.

2. Give a blessing.

“A family blessing begins with meaningful touching. It continues with a spoken message of high value, a message that pictures a special future for the individual being blessed, and one that is based on an active commitment to see the blessing come to pass” (John Trent and Gary Smalley, *The Blessing: Giving the Gift of Unconditional Love and Acceptance*, 30).

3. Intentional meals.

“Talk about them when you sit in your house . . .” (Deut. 6:7).

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- a. An opportunity to connect.
 - i. View mealtime as talk time.
 - ii. Know that food is your secret weapon.
 - iii. Serve child-friendly food.
 - iv. Accommodate food preferences.
 - v. Invest in a quality table.
- b. An opportunity to celebrate.
- c. An opportunity to teach.

4. Prayer.

“Whenever a round of banqueting was over, Job would send for his children and purify them, rising early in the morning to offer burnt offerings for all of them. For Job thought, “Perhaps my children have sinned, having cursed God in their hearts.” This was Job’s regular practice” (Job 1:5).

5. Communicate wisdom.

“When I was a son with my father, tender and precious to my mother, 4 he taught me and said, “Your heart must hold on to my words. Keep my commands and live. 5 Get wisdom, get understanding; don’t forget or turn away from the words from my mouth” (Prov. 4:3–5).

6. Read and discuss the Bible.

“I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also” (2 Tim. 1:5).

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, 15 and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:14–15).

- a. Early instruction
- b. Frequent instruction
- c. Biblical instruction

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7. Tell God stories.

“This will be written for a later generation, and a people who have not yet been created will praise the Lord” (Ps. 102:18).

- a. Personal testimony
- b. Stories of God’s faithfulness

8. Share the gospel.

- a. God
- b. Man
- c. Christ
- d. Response

CONCLUSION

God designed grandparents to be disciple-makers who pass on a rich heritage of faith in Christ to future generations. Grandparents are partners with parents to raise the next generations to know, love, and serve God. Grandparenting matters!

“God, you have taught me from my youth, and I still proclaim your wondrous works. 18 Even while I am old and gray, God, do not abandon me, while I proclaim your power to another generation, your strength to all who are to come” (Ps. 71:17–18).

PREPARATION FOR NEXT LESSON:

- Read “Don’t Let the Screen Strangle Your Soul (1 of 2)” by Kevin DeYoung at thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/dont-let-the-screen-strangle-your-soul/
- Read “Don’t Let the Screen Strangle Your Soul (2 of 2)” by Kevin DeYoung at thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/dont-let-the-screen-strangle-your-soul-2-of-2/