



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



CRESCENDO
GRANDPARENTING
SMALL GROUP STUDY



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

CRESCENDO

Lives of Lasting Purpose

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Grandparenting Small Group Study provided through Crescendo Ministries! Crescendo is an initiative of the Evangelical Covenant Church to provide resources based on a framework for ministry to, with, and by boomers and older adults. This study is the third in a series with topics to assist boomers and beyond grow as missional disciples and engage in purposeful living all the days of their lives.

As we explore grandparent-grandchild relationships, we acknowledge the wide varieties of circumstances surrounding the relationship (i.e., distance, blended families, multiracial families, custodial grandparents, never married parents, divorced parents and grandparents, estranged relationships, etc.). We do not address the specifics of these circumstantial differences in this study; rather, we focus on commonalities. The intent of the Crescendo team is to eventually provide additional resources to help support those personally involved in navigating such challenges in the grandparenting world today.

We acknowledge that cultural differences exist in the perceptions of and expectations for grandparent-grandchild relationships. We encourage each participant to share their own culture's perceptions and expectations of grandparents as appropriate.

In addition, we recognize that sometimes individuals choose to "grandparent" persons who are not their own grandchildren and/or are not biologically related. We believe the concepts presented here are applicable to those relationships as well.

This Participant's Guide includes background reading to review before each session. Some of the content in that information will be explored during the session, while some is strictly background to stimulate your thinking about specific topics of discussion.

We pray that through this study, you will be prompted to engage more intentionally with your grandchildren or other children, teens, and young adults in your sphere of influence.

—Nancy Carlson, Lynda Delgado, and Evelyn Johnson
Development Team

PURPOSE AND GUIDELINES

Purpose: To encourage, inspire, inform, and nurture individuals in the purpose and practices of grandparenting, whether engaged with biological or adoptive grandchildren (birth to about age 35).

Guidelines for each session:

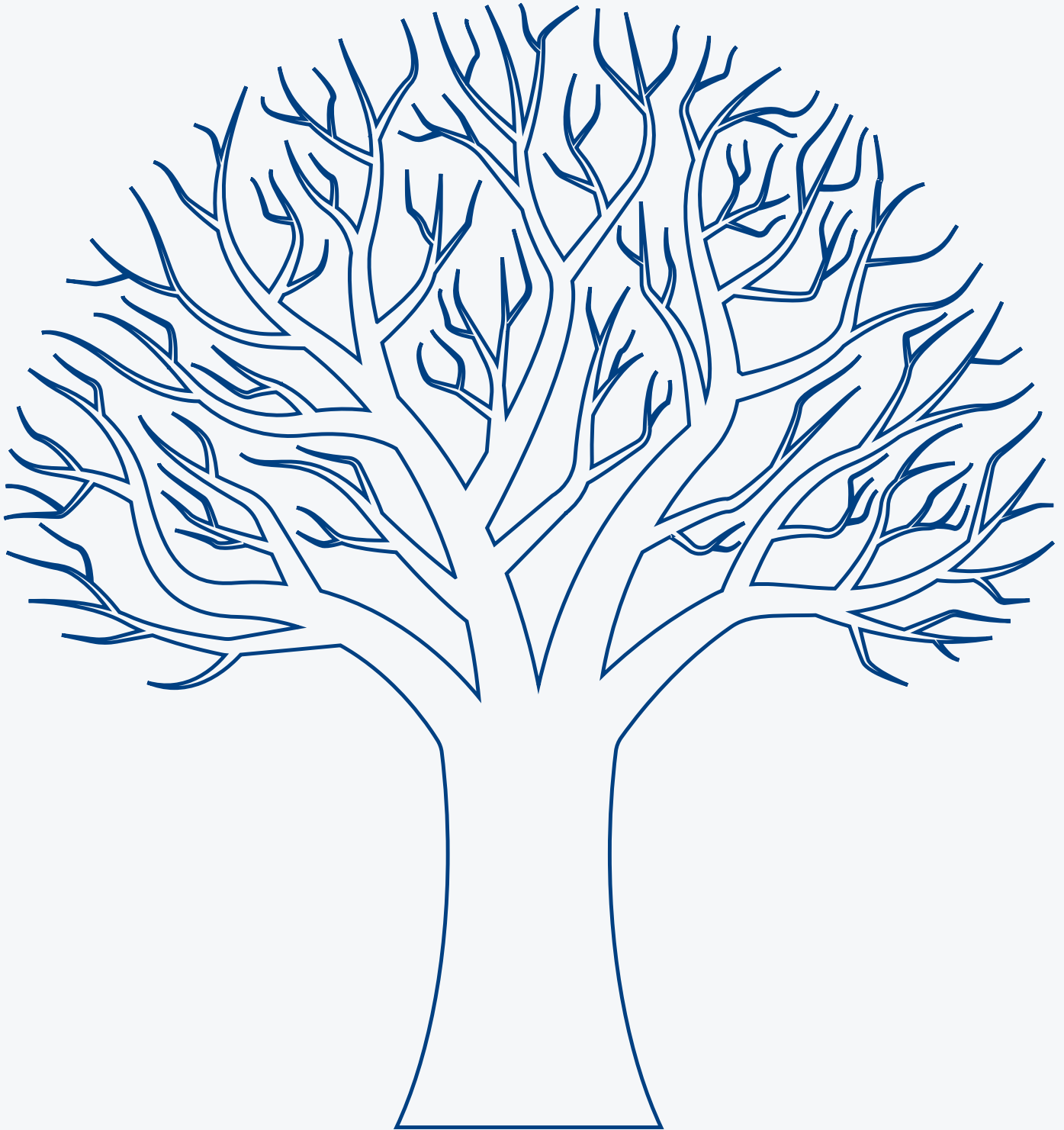
- Seek first to understand and then to be understood.
- Remember there is not one right approach.
- Share your feelings and thoughts (use "I" statements).
- Maintain confidentiality within the group.
- Have fun!



RELATIONSHIPS



GRANDCHILD	DEVELOPING AND NURTURING RELATIONSHIP	GRANDPARENT
<p>Culture/Context Family Heritage</p>		<p>Culture/Context Family Heritage</p>



THE MIGHTY OAK LEGACY TREE

*“That they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD,
that he might be glorified.” —Isaiah 61:3b*

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Big Idea: Grandchildren are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.

SESSION TOPICS

- Perspectives on Grandparenting
- Grandparent Identity
- The Mighty Oak

PRE-SESSION RESOURCES

- Historical Perspectives: Watch “Building a Seven-Generation World” https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=building+a+seven+generation+world
- Grandparents: 2018 Grandparent Today National Survey https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/life-leisure/2019/aarp-grandparenting-study.doi.10.26419-2Fres.00289.001.pdf

PERSPECTIVES ON GRANDPARENTING

Biblical

Historical

Current and Future

GRANDPARENT IDENTITY

AGES AND STAGES OF GRANDPARENTS

Common Name of Phase	Common Cohort Term and Approximate Birth Dates
None	Gen X and Millennials (born after 1964 until mid 90s)
Emerging Old New Old Young Old	Boomers (born approximately 1946-1964)
Middle Old Old Oldest Old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builders—the Silent Generation (born post World War I to 1946) • Those born during World War II (1941-1945) may exhibit behaviors of both Boomers and Builders

Some of the unique characteristics of Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Builders are outlined on the next page. In addition to the various phases of “old,” with accompanying changes in work status, physical and mental well-being,

as well as other age-related changes, it is important to be aware of the generational differences that may influence our perceptions of grandparenting.

EXPLORING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

The charts below reflect general characteristics of four generations of persons born in the U.S. and Canada who do not align strongly with an immigrant population.

What characteristics would you add to the group with which you most strongly identify?

	Builders (pre-1945)	Boomers (1946-1964)	Gen X (1965-1980)	Millennials (1981-1996)
Formative Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Depression • World War II • Traditional nuclear family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil rights • Vietnam War • Women in the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Latchkey kids” • Increasing divorce • Dual income family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital media • School shootings/terrorist attacks • 9/11
Messages to Motiva	<i>Your experience is respected.</i>	<i>You are valued and needed. Be an agent of change.</i>	<i>Forget the rules and do it your way.</i>	<i>You will work with other bright, creative people.</i>
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect authority • Loyalty • Patriotism • Hard work and long-term commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal rights • Personal gratification • Spend now, worry later 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techno literacy • Diversity • Connection • Suspicious of boomer values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely tech savvy • Diversity • NOW! • Extreme fun
Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thrifty, abhor waste • Sacrifice • Trust authority • Loyal to institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious • Challenge the process • Multi-taskers • Loyal to a person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand loyalty • Ignore leadership • Sense of entitlement • Loyal to a cause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity, multicultural • Focus on children/family • Respect competency, not titles

AGES AND STAGES OF GRANDCHILDREN (BIRTH TO AGE 35)

Big Idea: SOMETIMES ALL THAT IS NEEDED FROM A TREE IS SHELTER.

SESSION TOPICS

- Overview of Psychosocial Stages
- Lenses for Grandparents
- Exploration of Ages and Stages
- Statement of Intentionality

PSALM 23

A PSALM OF DAVID

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

(NIV)

Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development					
	Psychosocial Crisis (the first one in each pair is the desired result)	Important Events	Basic Virtue	Age	Name of Grandchild/person
1	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding	Hope	Infancy (0-1½)	
2	Autonomy vs. Shame	Toilet Training	Will	1½-3	
3	Initiative vs. Guilt	Exploration	Purpose	3-5	
4	Industry vs. Inferiority	School	Competency	5-12	
5	Ego Identity vs. Role Confusion	Social Relationships	Fidelity	12-18	
6	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Relationships	Love	18-40	
7	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Work and Parenthood	Care	40-65	
8	Integrity vs. Despair	Reflection on Life	Wisdom	65+	
9	Gerotranscendence (Joan Erikson, his wife, added the ninth stage after Erik's death to note the uniqueness of the 80s and 90s.)	Revisiting Each of the Less Desirable Parts of the Crisis of Earlier Life	Faith Humility	mid80s and beyond	

AGES AND STAGES

	A Grandparent's Lens	Key Characteristics	Application of Concept to Practices or Experiences
Early Childhood (birth-8)	Developmental Appropriateness		
Middle Childhood (9-12)	Reason		
Adolescence (13-18)	Tunneling		
Young Adulthood (19-35)	Hold Space		

EARLY CHILDHOOD

The early childhood years, birth to age 8, have significance greater than any other eight-year span in an individual's lifetime! They form the "mold" or framework that defines future physical, social, emotional, cognitive, language, and spiritual development. To the extent that circumstances enhance or inhibit that development, a course for life is set in these years that is challenging to refine or redirect. That means not only parents but also other adult family members—grandparents!—have amazing responsibility and opportunity.

Researcher George Barna writes in his book *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*, "From the time a child is born until he or she is in the early primary grades, the child is voraciously consuming cues and lessons (intended and unintended) related to each of the developmental dimensions, forming a world view. Studies indicate that by the time the child is nine, he or she 'shifts' mental gears and begins to use the cues received from that point forward to either confirm or challenge an existing perspective."

Based on this transition from taking in cues to using those cues to confirm or challenge perspectives, Barna's research concluded that the highest probability for a person committing their life to Christ—when they are instructed and influenced about things of faith—is between ages 5 and 12.

Within these early years of development, a high priority for relating to children is awareness and incorporating Developmentally Appropriate Practice. This represents the cornerstone of philosophy and professional practice with young children and honors the general sequence of child development (not expecting what isn't appropriate for the age). It also honors each child's individual and unique differences. It is not a curriculum or a method—it is simply an easily adaptable way of thinking about and interacting with children.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice invites us to treat children with respect by recognizing their changing capabilities and by viewing them in the context of their family, culture, and community. Also, important to consider: their age and past experiences, knowledge, skills, and level of comprehension. Respect involves having

faith in a child's ability to eventually learn the behaviors, skills, and concepts they will need to constructively function on their own while not having expectations or making demands that do not fit their developmental capability. Respect also involves acknowledgement, in terms of faith development, that the child in these early years is engaged in an imaginative stage. Depending on the cues in their parental home or other settings such as daycare, church gatherings, or play groups, faith can take on the form of fantasy. Phrases such as "Jesus in our heart" and "God's everlasting arms" have literal interpretation—a child in these early years can imagine those metaphors to be real. We show respect when we allow children to think for themselves, make decisions, work toward their own solutions to problems, and communicate their ideas. And we show respect when we recognize that self-control is an emerging skill that children achieve over time into young adulthood, given adequate support and guidance. Children's mistakes (during any age) should be handled as gaps in knowledge, skills, and behavior, not as character flaw.

When we consider children's individual and unique differences—including the realm of perceived and diagnosed deficiencies—we do well to keep in mind the philosophy and word of Fred Rogers, who always encouraged people to "Accept folks the way they are."

NOTE: Developmentally Appropriate Practice insights are derived from the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8* (revised edition), edited by Sue Bredekamp and Carol Copple, published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

Middle childhood, ages 9–12, is when children transition into expanding roles and environments. They move in more defining ways toward independence and in developing skills for making decisions. They spend more time away from their family and more time in school and other independent activities—sometimes testing limits of both self and parents. Friends, teachers, and media have a growing influence in their lives.

As children experience more of the world around them, they begin to develop a more defined personal identity. They enter the "age of reason" as they transition from

concrete learner and begin to do more abstract and critical thinking. Transitioning from simply taking things in to developing perspective, they now have in their continuing experiential learning an increasing capability to be evaluative.

Emotionally healthy 9- to 12-year-olds begin to shift from egocentricity and develop altruistic capabilities that allow them to look beyond themselves to identify and understand the feelings and emotions of others more clearly. They become engaged in moral questions of right and wrong, may have occasions to become aware of injustice, and they may seek answers about moral and ethical issues. Complexities such as poverty and prejudice become more important and understandable to them.

Throughout the coronavirus epidemic, many children of these ages have acted on their developing ability to reason and increasing awareness of the pain and difficult circumstances of other people. For example, a 10-year-old girl named Sydney in Washington started to feel hopeless and realized other kids must be feeling the same way. She and her mother pursued helpful, hopeful information, and they worked together to write, record, and animate four “Kids Coping with Covid-19” videos after mastering Story Maker software. A New Jersey boy named Dominic asked for food donations to his local soup kitchen rather than receiving gifts for his 12th birthday, which inspired the largest donation of food to the kitchen in years. Another “middle childhood” girl named Layla grew concerned about the stress and exhaustion of her favorite teacher, so she learned to play his favorite song on her clarinet to surprise him during a Zoom concert.

Faith during middle childhood gains a broadened foundation. With expanded language development and increasing capacity to engage in reason, children can hear biblical stories and reflect on personal application. The importance of the head, heart, and hand approach becomes critical in teaching faith concepts.

The expanding lives of 9- to 12-year-olds can be a delightful time for grandparents to find pleasure in interacting with more capable, independent persons.

ADOLESCENCE

When adolescence sets in (ages 13-18), changes abound. Adolescent thinking takes place on a higher level than that of younger children, who are only able to think logically about the concrete, the here and now. Adolescents move beyond those limits and can think in terms of what might be true, rather than what they see is true. Also, they often display egocentric behaviors and attitudes in their progressing maturity.

Significant emotional and social changes are also taking place during this time. The most important task of adolescence is the intense period in the life-long search for identity. Along with this search comes the more active struggle for independence. While often a trying period for youth and those who love them, this stage, like every stage of development, is important and necessary.

In relation to faith development, adolescence becomes a time when faith can shift to being owned personally, and less defined by parents or other older family members. This is often referred to as moving from external to internal. It is also a stage when the influence of peers becomes a shaping factor.

In *Unconditional Love*, Jane Isay suggests that grandparents of adolescents consciously decide not to take the shrugs, the silences, and the looks of total embarrassment personally. Rather she invites us to recognize such behaviors as a reflection of an adolescent’s struggle for independence and search for identity. Isay likens the period of adolescent years to a six-hour train ride she once took through Norway, with beautiful scenery periodically hidden by many above-ground tunnels that were built through mountain edges or where heavy snowdrifts were known to fall and block tracks in the snow of winter. She writes:

“The train ride is my metaphor for adolescence. We all board the train in fine weather, and then sometimes we enter a tunnel—the child disappears in the darkness—emotionally and spiritually. Then... as little bits of light sift through coming into the full light...you get a glimpse of the young person you love...and then they come fully “back” as the tunnel is left behind.

Tunnels come and go, dark and light, here and not here, this is the ride we take with teenagers. Eventually we arrive at the last stop, and what do we find? We meet that same child, the original wonderful being—no longer a stranger, and almost grown up. The trip is over. We have all survived the trip. Much of this journey was not any fun for us. But...it also had moments of not being a whole lot of fun for the young person, either. So, grandparents, remember that they will come back: wiser, better, and grown.”

YOUNG ADULTHOOD

At the dawn of adulthood, between 19 and up to 35, young people are typically moving gradually into fully adult roles and responsibilities, pursuing a trade, higher education, or a job as they seek to secure autonomy. They are developing a significantly greater capacity for integration of thought and emotion, as well as better developed impulse control. With the ability to consider both the present and the future at the same time, they can weigh immediate rewards against future consequences. This improves their decision-making about the future, including choices about health, relationships, education, and careers. Young adults are also increasingly capable of weighing the impact of their choices on others more effectively.

At this point of life, however, many young adults can be in an unsettled stage that some psychologists call “extended adolescence.” Career paths may be slower to settle in, and many young women and men are marrying later, if at all. Faith development may remain at the same level as in adolescence. If the process of owning their faith (external to internal) has not occurred, there can often be a complete turning away, rejecting that which is externally imposed. If, on the other hand, they have owned their faith, it can be time of questioning. Often this is a time of seeking a church community or group that allows them to express their faith in their own way.

In *Unconditional Love*, Jane Isay writes, “In this stage of life, these young adults at their sunrise of adulthood can turn to those of us who may be closer to the end of the day...in the later season of adulthood.” We can offer them what they need: “offerings of unconditional love.”

- Affection without judgment.
- Plenty of time to spend listening.
- Perspective from our length of days. Our example of survival through life’s twists and turns, aches and joys.
- Recognition that we have been lost and uncertain—just like them.

Similar to Isay’s “offerings” is a psychology concept called “holding space.” Holding space means we are willing to walk alongside another person in whatever journey they are on without judging them, making them feel inadequate, trying to fix them, or trying to impact the outcome. When we hold space for other people, we open our hearts, offer unconditional support, and let go of judgment and control.

Holding space might be exactly what our grandchildren who are in their young adult stage are seeking.

“Sometimes all that is needed from a tree is shelter.”
—Unknown origin

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

Big Idea: DO ORDINARY THINGS WITH EXTRAORDINARY LOVE

SESSION TOPICS

- Overview of Psychosocial Stages
- Lenses for Grandparents
- Exploration of Ages and Stages
- Statement of Intentionality

PRE-SESSION RESOURCES

- o Listening Well/Asking Great Questions—Building Connections at the back of this guide

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS

See me.

Know me.

Share Life with Me.

- Presence
- Touch
- Words
- Play

DOING ORDINARY THINGS WITH EXTRAORDINARY LOVE

My reflection:

Who was involved?

What happened?

How did the experience contribute to developing your relationship with the grandchild(ren)?

CREATING A LEGACY

Big Idea: YOUR IMPRINT WILL REMAIN.

SESSION TOPICS:

- Power of Story
 - Our Story
 - God's Story
- Gifts
 - Tangible and Intangible
 - The Greatest Gift

PSALM 78:1-7 (NIV)

My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth with a parable;

I will utter hidden things, things from of old—

things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us.

We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel,

which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children,

so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born,

and they in turn would tell their children.

Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds

but would keep his commands.

OUR STORY

GOD'S STORY THROUGH US

STORY STARTERS

SHARING CONNECTION, STORY, LIFE, AND LOVE WITH GRANDCHILDREN



LETTERS TO MY GRANDCHILD

Here's a special story about our family...
What I want you to know about me...

The best advice anyone ever gave me was...
It may surprise you to know that when I was young...

When your father/mother was young ...

My brightest hope for you in the future is...

My prayers for you are...

(from Letters to my Grandchild: Write Now. Read Later. Treasure Forever, by Lea Redmon (Chronicle Books, 2015)



MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

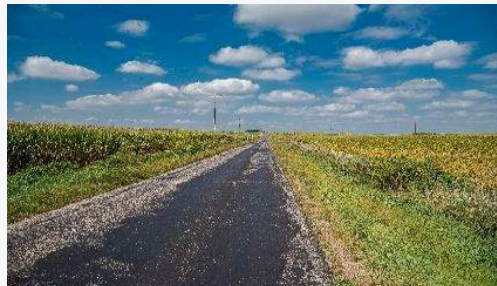
Include inside a corked bottle the most treasured message or story desired to share with a grandchild... perhaps prepare one for each grandchild as a birthday or Christmas gift.



ONCE UPON A TIME

Write a narrative story for your grandchild/children to share family history, tradition, and faith legacy.

Gather photos in a digital photo album or book through any online photo platform.



MEMORY LANE

Record memories of your parents and grandparents—impressions, experiences you shared with them, ways they made you feel happy, words of how they impacted your life or your life of faith. This is a powerful means of keeping their legacy alive.

GIFTS
Tangible and Intangible

The Greatest Gift

THE FOUNTAINHEAD BLESSING

NUMBERS 6:24-26

(This section is adapted from *Blessing Your Children: Give the Gift that Will Change Their Lives Forever*, by Jack Hayford, chapter 7, "Speaking Blessing on Your Children.")

The Lord's HAND: God is unlimited in His capacity to prosper and protect.

THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU.

The Lord's HEART: God's face, shining like the sun and radiating with glory, is forever and always lovingly with us.

THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON YOU.

His HEART is ever willing to show forgiveness we do not deserve and to give daily power.

AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU;

The Lord's PERSONAL PRESENCE: God's smile of approval surrounds us.

THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON YOU,

His PRESENCE, through wholeness of spirit, allows us to live in peaceful security.

AND GIVE YOU PEACE.

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN, CONSIDER USING THE BLESSING FROM INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BIBLE (ICB)

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord show you his kindness.

May the Lord have mercy on you.

May the Lord watch over you.



A BLESSING FOR MY GRANDCHILD(REN)



RESOURCE MATERIALS

SESSION 1

The Legacy Project—<https://legacyproject.org/>

The Legacy Project is based at in Toronto, Canada. They facilitate seven-generation work across Canada and the US (out of Washington, DC), and have participants around the world. See sections on Grandparents/Elders and Grandparents Guide

AARP 2018 Grandparents Today National Study

https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/life-leisure/2019/aarp-grandparenting-study.doi.10.26419-2Fres.00289.001.pdf

SESSION 2

Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority, by George Barna

Unconditional Love: A Guide to Navigating the Joys and Challenges of Being a Grandparent Today, by Jane Isay

SESSION 3

Five Love Languages of Children: The Secret to Loving Children Effectively, by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell

Words Kids Need to Hear: To Help Them Be Who God Made Them to Be, by David Staal

The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon, by David Elkind

The Power of Play: Learning What Comes Naturally, by David Elkind

SESSION 4

Rockstar Grandparent: How You Can Lead the Way, Light the Road, and Launch a Legacy, by Chrys Howard

Blessing Your Children: Give the Gift that Will Change Their Lives Forever, by Jack Hayford

The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others, by Scot McKnight

Courageous Grandparenting: Building a Legacy Worth Outliving You, by Calvin Harper

NOTE: These books are available through most public libraries, <https://covbooks.com/> and other online bookstores.



LISTENING WELL/ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS

A CRUCIAL AND ESSENTIAL GRANPARENTING SKILL— A TREASURED GIFT

WHY IS LISTENING IMPORTANT IN A RELATIONSHIP? (WHAT IS GAINED?)

- Builds friendships
- Strengthens and saves relationships
- Solves problems, conflicts
- Gives access to understanding
- Demonstrates attentiveness, care, and respect
- Develops resourcefulness, self-esteem, and self-reliance.

“A world where we don’t listen to each other at all is a very scary place indeed.” —Julian Treasure, “Five Ways to Listen Better,” TED Global, 2011



HOW CAN I DEVELOP EFFECTIVE LISTENING SKILLS? HOW CAN I BE AN EFFECTIVE LISTENER?

HEARING VERSUS LISTENING


To Hear: The process, function, or power of perceiving sound.

To Listen: To pay attention to sound; to hear something with thoughtful attention.

RECEIVE

1.  Hear the words, the sounds. The speaker is saying, “Hear Me.” Remove outside distractions (cell phones, TV, computer, newspaper, others). Prepare to listen.
2.  Listen lovingly and generously making every conversation count. Be fully present with eye contact, body language and mind—putting aside your own thoughts to be ready to hear and give attention, removing inside distractions, not thinking of what you are going to say, share, or advise.

3. Listening is a conscious effort, an active process using the senses of hearing, seeing, and even sometimes touch to let the sounds, the words, go through the brain to understand and make meaning. Listening requires interest to be involved. It is a skill that must be learned and practiced.

4.  Listen with your eyes and body. The speaker is saying, “See Me.”
 - o Keep constant eye contact.
 - o Use body language, verbal, and nonverbal clues to show you are listening—nods, verbal sounds such as “Mmm hmm,” words such as “Really?” “Oh my,” “Oh no.”
5. Listen *for* emotion.
 - o Recognize and identify the emotion they are displaying.
6. Listen *with* emotion—empathy.
 - o Show excitement when they are excited, understanding and affirmation when they are sad or angry.
7. Listen without bias. The speaker is saying, “Please understand me.”
 - o Put your agenda, opinions, advice aside while listening.
8. Listen to learn.

APPRECIATE

Appreciate and validate what they have shared, including their emotions, reactions, questions, and doubts.

SUMMARIZE

Summarize in your own words, using some of their words to show that you did truly listen and hear them. Let them see that what they shared with you is important to you and you are making every effort to understand what they have shared.



LISTENING WELL/ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS

ASK

- Ask questions periodically that help you gain insight or understanding to what is being shared. Do not be quick to share your own past experiences or advice.
- Ask opened-ended questions. Help the speaker to believe in themselves, to think critically and to have a two-way conversation that is positive, creating a safe environment to share honestly with you.
- Give suggestions rather than advice.

“Good listeners are like trampolines. They are someone you can bounce ideas off of...They amplify, energize, and clarify your thinking.” — Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman, “What Good Listeners Do,” Harvard Business Review, July 14, 2016.

ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS

Great relationships typically share great communication skills, including between a grandparent and grandchild in spite of a great difference in age. Because good communication does not just naturally happen, it is helpful to examine the skills necessary for good communicating and relationship building.

The first and most important step in communicating and relationship building is being a good listener—no, a GREAT listener. (See notes on listening well.) Learn, practice, and develop this skill. It is a gift you can give freely and reaps bountiful rewards.

The last step to listening is speaking. After listening, speak words of understanding, affirmation, interest, and curiosity, summarizing what you have heard, often using the same words that were spoken to you to show you understand, are interested, and are listening. Everyone wants to be heard and understood.

THE PROCESS:



ASK GREAT QUESTIONS

Questions are a powerful tool:

- To LEARN about the speaker, the culture, the world she/he is living in, new subjects, about self.
- To BUILD RELATIONSHIPS between the speaker and listener.
- To MENTOR AND CARE FOR the listener.
- To AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS or defuse a difficult situation.

ASK

- Warm-up Questions (Questions that help clarify what you heard or help to dig deeper)
 - The goal is understanding. This assures that you are truly interested and encourages the speaker to willingly share more detail.
- Open-Ended Questions (Questions that require more than a single word or yes or no answer)
 - Open-ended questions can start with these words: what, why, how, tell me, or describe. Examples: What else did you do? What do you think about those changes? What would you differently? Tell me what happened next?

Use wisdom in the appropriate timing of a particular question or number of questions you ask, being observant and sensitive to the needs of the speaker. Remember the goal is to encourage and build connection, build trust and respect, enjoy the relationship and know and affirm the child/adolescent/adult—leaving an eagerness to continue connecting and sharing, assuring him/her that you believe and value them.



LISTENING WELL/ASKING GREAT QUESTIONS

DON'T ASK

Some questions can be harmful. What to avoid or beware of using:

- Leading Questions (Questions with an assumption, or questions that end with a personal appeal to agree at the end)
- Rhetorical questions: (Questions that draw the listener into agreeing)

JESUS ASKED MORE THAN 300 QUESTIONS.

Why?

- To make a human connection, engagement, conversation
- To build relationships
- To help people he was interacting with to think, causing introspection
- To help them own their own conclusions, thinking and places
- To help them dig deeper
- To get the conversation started

While our questions are usually for gathering information, Jesus asked questions to provoke transformation. We ask questions for answers; Jesus asked questions for awareness. Jesus asked questions to confront the listener with their own thought process, preconceptions, assumptions, and beliefs.

Knowledge of God is connected to self-knowledge and knowing self is connected to knowing God. John Calvin wrote, "Our wisdom...consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves." Self-awareness and God-awareness go hand-in-hand.

Note: Strive to see, hear, and know each child through conversation and questions encouraging self-awareness and God awareness.

FIVE QUALITIES OF JESUS'S QUESTIONS

1. Concrete
2. Connection with others
3. Compassion
4. Curiosity using open-ended questions
5. Courage

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE:

"Why Did Jesus Ask So Many Questions?"
by Josh Hunt

- <https://disciplr.com/jesus-questions>
- "Engaging Through Asking: Five Ways Jesus asked Questions," by Matt Tebe
- <https://www.teloscollective.com/engaging-through-asking-5-ways-jesus-asked-questions/>
- On the skill of listening: <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/healthy-communication/the-skill-of-listening/>

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