

EQUIPPING

for intergenerational ministry

Encouraging the faith of your grandchildren

Jesus gave his church the commission, 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.'
Matthew 28:19-20

Studies continue to confirm that parents are the key people who influence whether or not our children will have faith. This means that one of the best places for young people to 'catch' faith is in the home.

Grandparents can also play a vital role in a child's faith formation!

Recent research highlights the enormous impact of grandparents on this particular generation of young people. Data shows:

- That senior adults' health is improving and their life expectancy is increasing.
- Grandparents have new ways to connect with their grandchildren through technology like Skype, Facebook and texting.
- As more and more parents (including mothers) are working outside of the home, grandparents are providing after-school care.

This increased involvement also allows grandparents the opportunity to share their faith with their grandchildren. Sometimes, grandchildren can choose to follow in the 'faith footsteps' of their grandparents despite their parents' choice to walk away from the faith.



Here are five roles that grandparents can play in enhancing their grandchildren's faith formation.

① Be present

Grandparents have the awesome gift of being available, unhurried and giving timeless care. Grandparents have time to listen with open ears and hearts to the wonderings of a young child who has many questions.

IDEAS

- Invite your grandchildren for individual 'sleepovers' at your house. While they are over, do some of their favourite things together.
- Cook with your grandchildren. Play music and sing and cook (maybe even dance) together.

FAR AWAY GRANDPARENTS

- Read a book series together with your grandchildren over Skype or FaceTime. (Ask your children how if you don't know!)
- Send them a text message to let them know you love them.

② Love unconditionally

Unconditional love is caring about the happiness of another person without any thought for what we might get for ourselves.

Grandparents are so good at showing the love of Jesus to their grandchildren.



IDEAS

- Grandma's and Grandpa's hugs are the best!
- Ask them how they are going at school or with their friends. Pray for them.

3 Connect the generations

Tell stories; give your grandchildren 'roots and wings', that is, a sense of identity (who and whose they are). Consciously pass on significant family rituals and traditions.

IDEAS

- Talk with your grandchildren about a family tradition that you enjoyed as a child.
- Bring out the photo albums and talk about when your grandchild was born and how excited you were to have them in the family. Tell them how you prayed for them and how much you looked forward to your first hold of him or her.

4 Support the big kids!

Your son or daughter and their partner need support too! Fill in the spots that parents don't have time or resources for. Give advice when it is asked for and the gift of silence when it's not! Affirm and support the authority of parents, being careful not to undermine them.

IDEAS

- Even big kids need time with their parents. Remember to ask them how they are going. Sometimes we are too stubborn to ask for help.
- Continue to pray for your children and grandchildren.



5 Strong spiritual guidance

'And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people'. Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

Grandparents are amazing prayer warriors! Continue to bring everything to God in prayer. Model faithfulness in worship and church participation; share your personal faith experiences. Help grandchildren to experience and understand the traditions of the church, e.g. the spiritual reasons for Christmas and Easter. Help them to understand 'acts of service.'

IDEAS

- Pray with your grandchildren. As you pray, thank God for the special gifts he has given them.
- Serve together in a local ministry or simply help someone out in their garden or do some baking for someone who is unwell.
- Share times when you have disobeyed God or perhaps a time when you saw Him working in your life. Let them know that God is bigger than any mistakes.
- Use birthdays and other life milestones as occasions for spiritual blessing.

Grandparents have such an important role to play in our church. They bring such rich wisdom and knowledge to our generations.

Thank you for the role you have played in guiding and leading our church communities. May God bless you always as you meet and gather together and share your stories of faith.

*"Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you."
Deuteronomy 32:17*

