

## Intentional Grandparenting

Psalm 71:17-18

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When Jeanne Calmert turned 120 years-old, she was asked to describe her vision for the future. She replied, “*Very brief.*” When a reporter asked what she liked best about being so old, she answered: “*Well, there’s no peer pressure!*”

That reminds me of an elderly man who was filling out an application for a retirement village. He very carefully and deliberately answered all the questions. After filling out his current address he came to the word “Zip” and printed: “*Normal for my age.*”

A young child asked a woman how old she was. She answered, “*39 and holding.*” The child thought for a moment and then asked: “*And how old would you be if you let go?*”

No matter how old you are, or whether or not you have much zip left, it’s not time to let go! If you’re in the golden years of life, you have more to give. As we grow older, our responsibilities grow with us. Listen to Psalm 92:14-15: “***They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and stay green, to declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.***”

As we near the end of our Family Matters series, we’ve covered the topic of mentoring moms, marriage as it’s meant to be, serving our spouse, what to look for in a mate, singleness, gospel-centered parenting, and fathers who lead. If you want to watch or listen to any of these sermons, or read the full-text manuscripts, go to [edgewoodbaptist.net](http://edgewoodbaptist.net) or to our mobile app. Today, we’re focusing on intentional grandparenting.

Here’s the main idea: *Before passing on, make sure you pass it on by leaving a legacy because when grandparents are intentional, they will make a grand impact on the next generation.*

We lived in Pontiac, Illinois, for 14 years before moving to the QCA. We enjoyed taking our daughters to many different parks when they were younger. Dargan Park is known for its three huge works of art made out of rusting iron. Each figure represents one of the stages of life – youth, middle age and old age. Below each one is a maxim set in stone.

- Here's what it says under the one that depicts youthfulness: *As children, learn good manners.*
- The saying for the one in the middle reads: *In middle age, be just.*
- And here's the phrase that describes the older man: *In old age, give good advice; then die without regret.*

I like that: *In old age, give good advice; then die without regret.*

### **The Grandparent Boom**

In a special aired a few years back, researchers found that “*The most defining social change taking place is the aging of America.*” Here are some current stats.

- The baby boom has become the grandparent boom. There are now more grandparents in the U.S. than ever before – some 70 million, a 24% increase since 2001.
- Of those 65 and older, 83% say they have grandchildren.
- Of all adults over 30, more than 1 in 3 are grandparents.
- More grandparents today are living with a grandchild. Among those grandparents, a significant share (37%) also serve as their grandchild's primary caregiver.
- Grandparents have an average of five to six grandchildren.
- The number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to nearly double from 52 million in 2018 to 95 million by 2060, with this age group's share of the total population rising from 16% to 23%.
- Life expectancy at the turn of the century was approximately 46 years; today its 78 years
- There are around 30 million Christian grandparents in the U.S.

Steve and Valerie Bell point out, “*Today's grandparents are the youngest, most fit, and most capable generation ever.*”

If we expect the younger generation to grow spiritually, those of us who are older must pass on what we possess. So, here's a question: If you're a grandparent, are you passive or passionate about reaching and teaching the next generation? Cavin Harper states, “*Grandparents are, hands down, the second most powerful influence in a child's life and in many cases, the most significant influencer in their life.*”

Several people from EBC have attended the Legacy Grandparenting Summit. I want to adapt their three purpose statements for our purposes today.

- *Re-imagining grandparents so they align themselves with what Scripture teaches.*
- *Re-igniting a passion in grandparents for their grandchildren.*
- *Re-connecting relationships between grandparents and parents in order to spiritually impact the next generation.*

By the way, the entire 2017 Grandparenting Summit is available for free on RightNow Media. Simply go to the “Sermon Extras” tab on our website or app to find this and other grandparenting resources.

The only way to make a significant impact in the next generation is to be singularly intentional. The American Heritage Dictionary defines intentional as “*something done deliberately.*” We could say it like this: “*Intentional is an action performed with awareness; done deliberately, consciously, on purpose.*”

In the class he has led on grandparenting, Edgewood member and deacon Dale Steele makes this point, “*Grandparents need to be intentional with grandchildren. This does not mean that we preach to them all the time, but that we have thought about things that are going on in their lives at the age they are currently at. Then when the opportunity comes up, we are ready to talk about it.*”

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### **A Psalm for the Aged**

We live in a culture that promotes youthfulness and denigrates the elderly. The Bible calls us to instead honor the aged. Leviticus 19:32: “***You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.***”

Are you aware there’s a passage in the Bible that’s referred to as a “psalm for the aged?” Please turn to Psalm 71. We’re not entirely certain who wrote these words, but many believe it was David in the latter years of his life. Look at verse 9: “***Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is***

*spent.*” He’s older and weaker now and yet according to verse 14, he’s holding on to hope: **“But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.”**

For our purposes today, we’re going to focus on verses 17-18: **“O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.”**

Notice the past, the present and the future...

- **Past** – **“from my youth you have taught me...”**
- **Present** – **“and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds...”**
- **Future** – **“so even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me...”**

His overriding concern is to live long enough to **“proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.”** Do you see the stages of life here? He remembers his youth, then describes middle age and looks ahead to the golden years.

I see three main lessons in these verses.

**1. Know God when you’re young by learning from Him** (verse 17a). David writes: **“from my youth you have taught me.”** The word **“youth”** refers to the early stages of life. Parents, it is never too early to teach your children about the Lord. I hope you’re taking every possible opportunity to intentionally introduce your kids to Jesus and that you are intentionally instructing them.

Sometimes we wonder what children can learn when they are young – it’s more than we think. Look back to verses 5-6: **“For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are He who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of you.”**

One of the ways we’re committed to helping kids come to Christ at an early age is through the ministry of Super Saturday this summer. The next one will be July 18 and is called, “Super Saturday at Home.” Simply drive through that morning and pick up a bag containing everything you need to have Super Saturday in your backyard. Edge Students will be meeting outside by the new lot beginning this Wednesday.

Adults, one way we can support and honor what God is doing is to make sure we're not looking down on the younger generation as 1 Timothy 4:12 states: ***“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”*** Instead of looking down, let's come alongside and mentor them, even as they serve as examples to us. Pastor Tim and Pastor Kyle have been meeting with some people this summer to discuss ways we can implement intergenerational discipleship at Edgewood.

**2. Grow in God now by living for Him.** In the second part of verse 17 we hear David say, ***“I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.”*** The word ***“wondrous”*** refers to something extraordinary. David proclaimed God's praises in the past and he's still doing it in the present.

The temptation is to think we'll get serious with God later and spend time with our families when we get older. My mind goes to the song, “Cat's in the Cradle.” After not being there for his son, this dad, who is now a grandpa, reaches out to his son when he sings:

*I've long since retired and my son's moved away  
I called him up just the other day  
I said, I'd like to see you if you don't mind  
He said, I'd love to, dad, if I could find the time  
You see, my new job's a hassle, and the kids have the flu  
But it's sure nice talking to you, dad  
It's been sure nice talking to you  
And as I hung up the phone, it occurred to me  
He'd grown up just like me  
My boy was just like me*

God's way to grow old is to develop a walk with Him now...because you will be in the future what you are becoming in the present.

Notice how David is daily devoted to God as he uses the word ***“continually”*** three different times. This has the idea of ***“continuity”*** and ***“always.”***

- ***“Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come.”*** (verse 3)
- ***“My praise is continually of you.”*** (verse 6)
- ***“But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.”*** (verse 14)

One of my pastor friends in the QCA used a phrase during a Zoom call this week that really resonated with me. He said believers are “guardians of God’s glory.” As I reflected on this idea, that’s exactly what Christian grandparents are to be in their families – guardians of God’s glory.

John Piper writes, *“Getting old to the glory of God means getting old in a way that makes God look glorious.”*

King David went through a lot of challenges, including friction and fractures in his own family when his son Absalom turned on him. Look at verse 20: ***“You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again.”***

David’s life is filled with troubles, but he can never remember a day the Lord failed him. Here’s something to think about. Those born at the turn of the 20th century lived through World War I, the Spanish Flu pandemic, a decade of the Great Depression and recession, severe drought causing the great Dust Bowl, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War.

Our kids and grandkids will hear stories from us about what it was like to live through COVID-19, high unemployment, economic uncertainty, cultural upheaval and racial tension. Just as the older generation was marked by terrible times, this year is marking us. The question is, *“In what ways are we trusting God during this turbulent time?”* What lessons will we be able to pass along to the next generation?

I appreciated the insight of Keith Mathison in a post called, *“It’s the End of the World as We Know It...And I Feel Fine.”* Here’s his conclusion:

*When unbelievers look at followers of Christ during the times of upheaval and suffering that occur in every generation, let them not see people who are as anxious and as scared and as panicked as they are. Let them see those who confidently trust their sovereign and holy God come what may. Let them see a people who have the true peace of God that passes all understanding. Let them see us showing love to both God and neighbor as we remain faithful to the task to which God has called us. Let them see the Light in this darkness. Let them see Jesus.*

**3. Show God in your years by leaving a legacy (18).** David not only looked back to God’s goodness and faithfulness since birth, he lived it out on a daily basis. When he looked to the future, he saw the *work remaining to be done*. We must

first know God before we can show Him to others: ***“So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.”***

David’s desire is to proclaim God’s power and might to the next generation. The word ***“proclaim”*** is used twice in this passage. Some synonyms include *“declare, report, explain and tell.”*

According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary, one who proclaims is...

- A person who has witnessed something and tells others about it.
- A person who reports about a matter of life-and-death importance.
- A person who explains something to someone who lacks knowledge of it.

Let’s pull these ideas together. If you’ve witnessed the wonder and works of God, then proclaim God’s power to those who don’t know Him and do it with a sense of life-and-death urgency!

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David is proclaiming God’s marvelous deeds, His power, and His might to the next generation. Because he knows he is going to pass on, he’s determined to pass along God’s actions and attributes. That’s exactly what we should be doing with intentional urgency – declaring who God is and all that He has done.

Psalm 9:1 says: ***“I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.”*** Psalm 26:7 encourages us to not be quiet about it: ***“proclaiming thanksgiving aloud, and telling all your wondrous deeds.”*** In Psalm 66:16 we see how purposeful and personal this must be: ***“Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what He has done for my soul.”***

Old age does not provide an “out” for David, nor does gray hair disqualify him. Actually, it’s just the opposite because the older we get, the greater the urgency we should feel to intentionally impact the next generation. God is greatly committed to those in their golden years as stated in Isaiah 46:4: ***“Even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.”***

Gray hair is a great honor according to Proverbs 16:31: ***“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.”*** Proverbs 20:29 adds, ***“The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair.”***

The evangelist John Wesley served the Savior in his senior years. In his lifetime he rode 350,000 miles on horseback and preached some 40,000 different sermons. At the age of 83 he complained because he could only study for 15 hours a day. At the age of 86 he was concerned that he was becoming slothful because he was sleeping in until 5am. At 87, he learned his 11<sup>th</sup> foreign language. At 88, he was worried because he could only preach twice a day six days a week.

Demographers have recently identified a new life-stage between adulthood and becoming elderly. They call it *“the third age,” “midcourse”* or *“my time.”* I’d like to suggest another term and call it *“prime time for proclamation.”* Biblically understood, a longer life is an opportunity for extended ministry impact.

Would you notice David is requesting God would sustain him long enough *so that* he could leave a legacy of faith for the next generation, to all who are to still to come? He’s not just thinking about himself or his ease. He’s determined to declare his faith to those who will follow him.

It’s been said the Christian church is just one generation away from extinction. Professor Gordon Rupp, the British historian, was asked how the church survived decades of persecution and communist propaganda in Russia. His answer was, *“It’s largely due to grandparents.”* The communists made the mistake of thinking that because the church was only full of older people it had no future. They failed to realize the tremendous impact grandparents have on the faith formation of their grandchildren. Because Russian grandparents passed their faith on to their grandchildren, there is a new revival of Christianity in Russia.

We often look at the younger generation as our future, but let’s not forget our future is also in the past because grandparents are uniquely qualified to pass on biblical values and a vibrant faith to the next generation.

This theme of one generation passing along a legacy of faith to the next is found throughout Scripture. God set it up that way. *Before passing on, make sure you pass it on by leaving a legacy because when grandparents are intentional, they will make a grand impact on the next generation.*

- Deuteronomy 4:9: ***“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children’s children.”*** The word “only” is the idea of being exclusive – we’re to be careful to protect our own soul so we don’t lose our love for the Lord and then we’re to pass along that love to our children and grandchildren. The phrase “make known” means to “know relationally and experientially.”
- Deuteronomy 6:2: ***“That you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son, and your son’s son.”*** When I revere the Lord, I’m in position to reflect Him to the next generation.
- Psalms 33:11: ***“The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.”***
- Psalms 78:4-7a: ***“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God.”***

The word “that” and the words “so that” can be translated as, “because of” or “in order to” and express purpose or result. Fathers are to teach their children *so that* the next generation might know, and when they grow up, they are to tell their children *so that* their offspring can set their hope in God. That’s the *purpose* of parenting and grandparenting.

- Proverbs 17:6: ***“Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.”*** When a grandchild is born a new king and queen are enthroned as grandparents!
- 2 Timothy 1:5: ***“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”*** Grandma Lois possessed sincere faith and passed it along to tiny Tim before passing on.

Unfortunately, Judges 2:10 paints a picture that may be prophetic of the state of the church today: ***“And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that He had done for Israel.”***

Have you noticed how culture undervalues and marginalizes grandparents? Josh Mulvihill says grandparents repeatedly receive a couple messages:

1. **Stay out of the way!** When grandparents think they are an *inconvenience* they may choose to live a life independent from their adult children and grandchildren.
2. **Travel and play!** The second message to grandparents is one of *indulgence*, the idea that you've worked hard, you've done your time, so it's time to rest, travel and play.

Instead of seeing yourself as an inconvenience or getting swallowed up by indulgence, the Bible calls us to be *intentional so we will make a grand impact on the next generation*.

God places expectations on grandparents to teach the Word of God and to give testimony about the Son of God. We're to *give* the Scriptures and reinforce their relevance by how we *live*.

I like how someone summarized the goal of grandparenting.

1. *Give a blessing* before you die. Genesis 48:9: “**Joseph said to his father, ‘They are my sons, whom God has given me here.’ And he said, ‘Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.’**”
2. *Leave a legacy* that will never die. Proverbs 13:22: “**A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children.**”
3. *Raise a torch* that can be held high. Matthew 5:16: “**Let your light so shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**”

Instead of only giving admonition today, I want to also suggest some application. Perhaps a couple of these action steps will find traction in your life.

### **Practical Steps**

**1. Pray every day.** As a practical way to help me focus my prayers, I typed out 31 Scriptural prayers for each day of the month for our four grandchildren. For Pip, I gathered verses that speak of Phillip the disciple from the Gospels and Phillip the deacon from Acts. For Ezra, I found verses from the Old Testament Book of Ezra to formulate specific intercessions. For Ruby, I picked a verse from

each chapter of Proverbs to form my prayers. For Dean, I took a passage from the first 31 Psalms and turned them into prayers.

I pray these prayers every day of the month. Recently, when we were FaceTiming with Pip and Ezra, Pip wanted to know what I prayed for each grandchild that morning. I grabbed my laminated sheets and shared the prayers. He just nodded when I read them and smiled when I was done. I want each of our grandkids to know that their grandparents pray for them every day.

**2. Resist the urge to spoil your grandchildren.** This is countercultural isn't it? After all, isn't that what grandparents are supposed to do? Actually, in a me-centered society, we must work at *not* overindulging our grandkids. If we spoil them, we may foil the work of God in their lives. Instead of spoiling, let's work at toiling for their souls. I like what Josh Mulvihill writes, *"If you want to spoil your grandkids, give them something that won't perish or spoil. Give them the gospel."*

**3. See your time with your grandkids not as "watching them" or "babysitting," but as evangelizing and discipling.** I'll never forget a conversation I had with Pastor Tim a couple years ago. He and Carrie were getting ready to see their grandkids and he mentioned he was excited to spend time discipling them. I've never forgotten how intentional he was. Grandparents, God calls us to live on mission by seeing every opportunity we have with our grandkids to help *reach* them for Christ and to *teach* them how to become more like Christ. Dear grandparent, you are a grand disciple-maker!

**4. Use stories to reinforce the gospel.** Earlier this week I heard Beth telling Pip and Ezra on FaceTime about the time she disobeyed her parents and then lied about it. Pip was all ears because he had just shared he had done something wrong. Instead of getting a consequence, he told us his daddy gave him grace. This gave Beth the opportunity to reinforce what his parents are teaching him.

**5. Plan to say something intentional in every conversation you have.** Plan and pray ahead of time that God will give you an opportunity to intentionally make a spiritual impact with something you say or do. For instance, when you tell them you love them, also remind them how much God loves them.

**6. Read one book on grandparenting or watch one Grandparenting Bible study on Right Now Media.** You can get your free account on [edgewoodbaptist.net](http://edgewoodbaptist.net). The Sermon Extras tab on our website or app has a number of recommendations.

**7. Establish good memories.** When our girls were younger, I took them on “daddy-daughter dates.” One of our favorite times was when we were on vacation in Wisconsin and we’d eat donuts in the back of a gas station looking out onto Lake Michigan. I told our girls this week I’m planning to do this with each of our grandkids when we go on vacation later this summer. One of our daughters asked if she could go along and I told her it was just for Pa and the grandkids. She wasn’t too happy about that, though I could tell it made her smile.

**8. Reinforce the Christian worldview.** Because our grandkids are swimming in a culture that is anti-God and anti-gospel, we must do all we can to reinforce what the Bible teaches. One Edgewood grandma shared a handwritten letter with me that she wrote to her teenage grandson about the topic of “safe sex.” She actually reinforced a conversation her grandson had with his grandpa earlier. Here are some highlights.

*“Safe sex should never apply to a young man or woman that is a believer and trying to be an example to others. There is to be no sex outside the marriage commitment...it is a selfish act...you will damage the girl for her future husband...if it happens you can never take it back...God can forgive but it causes heart pain...it is sacred between a husband and wife only...the value of Christ surpasses all the things the world can offer...use God’s Word as your weapon...the strength to do all of this has to come from the mighty strength and power of the Holy Spirit within you...”*

Here’s how she ended the letter: *“All of this I share with you my precious grandson because of the love I have for you and the special young man you are. All was shared in love. Grandma.”*

Twenty years ago, on a damp and gray day, 40,000 college students gathered on a grassy field in Memphis for the fourth Passion Conference. John Piper got up to speak to the restless crowd as the wind picked up, blowing half of his notes away. He challenged them with these words: *“You don’t have to know a lot of things for your life to make a lasting difference in the world...you just have to know a few, basic, glorious, majestic, obvious, unchanging, eternal things, and be gripped by them, and be willing to lay down your life for them.”*

He then told the story of 80-year-old missionaries from their church who had been martyred and asked the crowd this question, *“Is this a tragedy?”* The students knew the answer as they cried out, *“No!”*

And then Piper shared an unforgettable illustration: *“I’ll tell you what a tragedy is,”* as he pulled out a page from Reader’s Digest. *“Bob and Penny...took early retirement from their jobs five years ago when he was 59 and she was 51. Now they live in Punta Gorda, Florida, where they cruise on their 30-foot trawler, play softball, and collect shells.”*

*“That’s a tragedy,”* he told the crowd. *“When you stand before the Creator of the universe to give an account for what you did, are you going to say, ‘Here it is, Lord – my shell collection?’ Don’t waste your life.”* He concluded by referencing a plaque in his home with a quote from C.T. Studd: *“Only one life, ‘twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”*

No matter how old you are, or whether or not you have much zip left, it’s not time to let go!

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**Closing Video:** [“My Declaration”](#) by Larry Fowler.