

An Introduction to Faithful Grandparenting



Older
People's
Ministries

A leader's guide to
support Grandparents
& Grandfriends to
faithfully guide
children through
listening, playing and
living life together



Engaging and discussion-based
sessions that can be led either as a single
extended session or divided into three
shorter sessions.

Living life to the full



Welcome to 'An Introduction to Faithful Grandparenting'

This resource includes different interactive sessions for grandparents to consider their role in their grandchildren's lives. Understanding how life reveals itself to our children and young people in the current age is vitally important.

Tips and practical advice is offered for listening, engaging and faithfully sharing the truths of the gospel in relevant and helpful ways. The resource is written with a suggested script for leaders to follow.

This resource can be used as a standalone resource or as an introductory session to the Bible Reading Fellowship's Book Grandparenting for Faith, which includes ten small group Bible studies and develops at a deeper level some of the themes that flow through this resource.

However you choose to use this resource, we hope you have fun and find new ways to nurture and support grandparents or 'grandfriends' (those responsible for young people or have the adopted role of 'grandma' or 'grandad').

Getting Started

The format of this session can be used in its entirety in one longer session, or you may wish to spread this over 3-4 shorter sessions. If you need any help and support with running this session please contact: olderpeoplesministries@salvationarmy.org.uk.

Note for leaders: As you facilitate this resource, please be mindful of your own wellbeing and personal feelings that might arise from your own personal relationships with family members and grandparents. It may be that you were raised by grandparents, or did not have any relationship with grandparents; so it is important to allow time for you to process beforehand how you may feel when leading the sessions.



- There are three sessions in total. You may choose to complete all the sessions over half a day or as three separate sessions over time.
- Please make sure all participants know who the pastoral lead for the group is. Ensure there is enough time for any topics to be revisited if any pastoral need arises.
- Set up the room in a friendly and inclusive manner, perhaps arranging seating in a horseshoe layout rather than in a formal lecture style. Ensure everyone has access to pen and paper to make notes. There is a PowerPoint presentation to accompany this resource, so if you choose to use this make sure everyone can view the screen comfortably.
- If appropriate in your setting, set aside time to worship through song and prayer during the session.
- Provide light refreshments during short breaks if possible and allow sufficient time for discussion between participants.
- Remember that there could be a lot of different views in the room. So consider introducing a 'committed to listen not judge' disclaimer and promise that all participants adhere to it, so that all interaction is of a positive nature.
- Encourage everyone to consider the world through the eyes of a child at this point in history.

For this session you will need:

- A large glass jar filled with Liquorice Allsorts, placed on a table for everyone to see (make note of the number of sweets contained in the jar)
- Access to a screen or projector, laptop/tablet with the 'Introduction to Faithful Grandparenting' PowerPoint presentation downloaded and saved
- A flip chart or large sheets of paper and Blu-tack for the quiz
- Copies of the leaflet to take away
- A music system or speaker to play music

Icebreaker Activity (10 mins)

There are many different types of grandparents; in fact, there are 'all sorts'! Who wants to guess how many Liquorice Allsorts are in this jar? The one who guesses the closest number wins the jar! Encourage people to guess how many Liquorice Allsorts there are and give the jar to the winner. (They may be willing to share these out with other participants as the session is introduced.)

Introduction

We are all so different from one another – and that is just how God made us. This means it makes sense that all grandparents are different too.

The reality is that there are simply 'all sorts' of grandparents and grandfriends. There are grandparents who want to be involved as much as possible in their grandchild's life, and then there are grandparents who are worried about what that might mean and the responsibility that comes with grandparenting. There are grandparents who fizz with energy, spending endless days taking their grandchildren on trips, walks, adventures, puddle jumping and as many new experiences as they can find.

Then there are grandparents who can barely make it out of their own bed, never mind chase a toddler around the park. There are grandparents who bake, who tell wholesome stories around the warming fire with sweets and scrumptious treats on constant supply. Some grandparents skydive, run multi-national companies or marathons.

There are grandparents who are confident to take their grandchildren on holiday, and there are some who are fearful and stay awake at night remembering how they nearly lost their grandchildren for two minutes in the local shop.

Some grandparents want to spend every waking moment with their grandchildren, while others – whilst being supportive – are still recovering from raising their own children. There are grandparents doing the school run and taking grandchildren to football or ballet classes, and there are others who would give anything to spend time with their grandchildren but are unable to do so due to a family fall-out or because they are living far away.

So, as we journey together through these sessions, we are mindful that grandparenting looks different for everyone. What we hope to gain is an understanding of life for our younger family members in today's society, and how grandparents can respond, support and offer spiritual care that is both meaningful and helpful.



Activity : (30–40 mins)

Leader to be aware of participants' response to their own adverse childhood experiences (ACES). For further support and information about this, visit:

[Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) and Attachment – Royal Manchester Children's Hospital \(mft.nhs.uk\)](https://www.mft.nhs.uk/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces-and-attachment)

Have a flip chart at hand to note down participants' answers. The aim of the quiz is to get participants sharing, to have fun and allow the opportunity for them to reflect on growing up from childhood to adulthood. You could have the questions displayed using the supporting PowerPoint presentation.

What words would you use to describe grandparenting?

- When you were six years old, what did your world look like?
- When you were 11 years old, what did your world look like?
- When you were 16 years old, what did your world look like?
- Can you think of some examples that are of interest to your grandchildren? (*This will vary depending on the different age ranges.*)
- If you had grandparents or a similar figure when you were growing up, what did you learn from them?
- What is one piece of advice you would like to give to your grandchildren or to other grandparents?

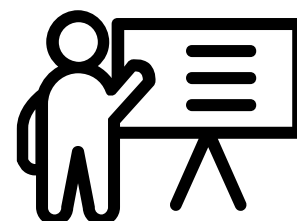
Grandparent conversation top tip:

Explore Parenting for Faith's '101 ways to start intimate conversations':

www.parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/post/101-questions-to-ask-your-kid-to-spark-an-interesting-conversation/

Facts & Figures (10 mins)

You may want to ask participants to take turns in reading each bullet point using the PowerPoint presentation; or ask someone else to volunteer to read them all.



Did you know that ...?

- There are approximately 14 million grandparents in the UK.
- One in every three people over the age of 50 years old is a grandparent.
- Around nine million UK grandparents help look after their grandchildren, spending an average of more than eight hours a week as child carers.
- One in six grandparents have taken early retirement or left paid employment to help out with their grandchildren.
- Grandparents providing childcare for their grandchildren saves working parents approximately £6.8 billion nationally in childcare costs.
- 51 per cent of UK grandparents regularly look after their grandchildren all year round, and a further 10 per cent say they help out during school holidays. Most often they're looking after two grandchildren for one or two days a week (56% of grand-carers), although a minority (7%) provide childcare five days a week. Nearly two thirds (63%) of grandparents say looking after their grandchildren gives them 'an amazing chance to spend time with them'.

(Source : Gransnet 2021)

Talk : The World of the Grandparents (10-15 mins)

The sheer wonder, honesty and unpredictability of being a grandparent/grandfriend is what we want to explore today. There are all kinds of grandparents or role models of adopted or extended grandparents with all sorts of hopes, fears and expectations. Some of us here may already be familiar with the different feelings towards this role, whether that's relishing the role, being petrified by it, having not much choice but to take this on, or perhaps just wishing they had any role at all.

Life in a modern family can range from being rewarding and amazing to being cruel and unforgiving. Grandparenting can be that bridge to provide the tools and strength that any family will require when faced with unexpected, inevitable and challenging moments. The encouragement and acknowledgment of accomplishments of younger family members, and support for their endeavours, could sustain them as they grow and find their own way in the world.

It is important to recognise the emotional wellbeing of grandchildren as they journey from childhood to adulthood. If you are aware that your grandchild, for whatever reason, is struggling emotionally in some way, there is a leaflet available to take at the end of this session that may be helpful. Life can be difficult at times for our young people, and letting them know that they are never alone and always have someone on their side is vitally important.

So, what is family? (Allow time for those who wish to answer)

Today across the UK and most western countries, almost half of all families do not meet the definition of a nuclear family. Not all families are made up of a mum, dad and two children. There are blended stepfamilies; single-parent families; families headed by two unmarried partners, either of the opposite sex or the same sex; households that include one or more family members from different generations; adoptive families; foster families; and families where children are raised by their grandparents or other relatives. Each kind of family has distinctive advantages and challenges.

The role of the grandparent, therefore, must be to simply love. Listen to these wise words from a lady called Juliet whose eldest child went through a divorce, giving her lots of time to care for her three grandchildren:

'I say to our oldest three children over and over again, "Whatever you do and whatever happens, I will offer advice if you ask, but only if you ask. I will love you for ever without question, and I will do everything in my power to be there for you in any circumstance. And I will always believe in you ... because in the end this is what Jesus will do."' (Faithful Grandparents – Hope and love through the Generations by Anita Cleverly 2019, p109)



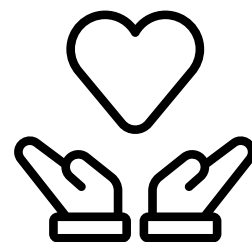
Time for Worship (Optional) (5–10 mins)

An option would be to have music playing any of the suggested songs in the background using a speaker, giving participants time to reflect on the session.

Suggested Songs:

- 'Lord of creation' by John Copley Winslow (SASB 380)
- 'Take my life' by Frances Ridley Havergal (SASB 623)
- 'I would be true' by Howard Arnold Walter (SASB 648)
- 'I will follow' by Chris Tomlin
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lohvhmGSfxI>)
- 'My Lighthouse' by Rend Collective
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFBZJGSgyVQ>)
- 'Build your Kingdom here' by Rend Collective
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqZX08DDWiA>)

Prayer



Father God,

Thank you for gifting us with our grandchildren and the young lives that we can influence for good. We seek your guidance and wisdom as we take time to consider how we can faithfully uphold your truth and light to those we care for.

As we share together, we pray that you will open our hearts to the reality of life for our young people in this world today. We pray for children and young people everywhere, that they will seek you and find you.

May we be guiding lights for those in our own family and friendship groups that do not know you, and may our words and actions always reflect the beauty of Jesus.

Amen

Session 2 : When I was your age

For this session, you will need:

- **Flipchart paper and coloured markers**
- **Copies of 'A Virtual World' leaflet**
(created by The Salvation Army's Children and Youth Department)

Activity : When I was your age (20–30 mins)

Preparation

Move people into small groups or either twos or threes and give each group flipchart paper and markers (two different colours). Ask each group to choose a spokesperson to feedback to the whole group.

Explanation

We cannot say 'When I was your age ...' because we have never been our grandchild's age today, and they have never been our age at the time in which we grew up.

Let us take some time to think about some of the generational differences we may have experienced growing up compared to young people in society today.

We need to acknowledge that life is very different for our grandchildren. That is not their fault, and neither is it ours, but it is a reality. So as we discuss together, let us agree to remember and accept this fact. Let's watch this video of a 16-year-old sharing what it is like living in today's society.

Activity

Play the video 'A 16-Year-Old in Today's Society (2024)' via PowerPoint or online (salvationist.org.uk/resources/discipleship/faithful-grandparenting)

Ask the groups to write down their answers to the following questions on flipchart paper using a different colour mark for each question's answers. You could also display these questions on a screen using the PowerPoint presentation (see slide 18).

Group Questions

1. What were the roles and expectations of you when you were 16 years old?
2. What do you believe to be the roles and expectations of a 16-year-old living in this generation?
3. Are there any key themes that stand out?



A Virtual World: Young People and Social Media (5 mins)

Share with the group the *Excerpt from the leaflet 'A Virtual World' from The Salvation Army's Youth and Children's Department*:

'We've already explored how the use of the phrase 'When I was your age' is unhelpful for children and young people today. When it comes to the online world, this is even more so, as even the youngest parents today find it challenging to keep up with what's going on in the world of technology! Social media and online gaming has become an integral part of the lives of our grandchildren. Research shows that over half of 5 to 15-year-olds spend the majority of their time online. With numbers almost reaching 90% for 12 to 15-year-olds, it's no surprise that teenagers are heavy users of social media.

In a recent survey by the BBC in Wales, children as young as seven and eight are using social media regularly. Responses from more than 32,000 children, aged 7 to 11, suggested almost half used social media sites or apps a few times a week or every day.

For children and young people today, social media is totally integrated into their daily lives. They live in both worlds – offline and online. Social media plays a crucial role in maintaining relationships with family and friends. Young people can continue to socialise and feel connected with their loved ones, at any time and anywhere.'

We are also aware of the challenges that social media can bring. And so the Youth and Children's Department have created a helpful leaflet for you to take away. It also includes an activity/discussion starter that you might find helpful in talking to your grandchildren/grandfriends about social media and understanding their perspective on this. It is important that we try to understand how social media and the virtual world impact the lives of our young people. Please take a leaflet at the end of this session to begin those conversations.



Children who need additional support

As we journey through this session, we want to remember that as there are many different individual grandparents, so there are also many different individual grandchildren. For some of us, our grandchildren will be living with additional needs, and so understanding the uniqueness of each individual grandchild is very important. However, it can be hard to navigate through this as it is an often difficult and complex topic.

If your grandchild is living with additional needs, you might find it helpful to find out more about those needs. 'Additional needs' is a broad term which is commonly used now instead of 'special needs.' In Scotland the term is 'additional support needs', and in Wales 'additional learning needs'. The terms encompass a wide range of disabilities as well as long-term medical or health conditions, or anything else that means a child or young person needs extra support to learn and develop alongside their peers.

There are many kinds of additional needs that children or young people may have. Some examples are: eating disorders, learning difficulties, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), mental health disorders such as anxiety/depression, and being on the autism spectrum.

If your family is dealing with any additional needs, you can find helpful information sheets on 25 different additional needs online: www.urbansaints.org/invitedtobelong. *(Allow time for participants to note down the URL or remind them to approach you at the end.)*

The Salvation Army, as part of the Christian Church, is committed to understanding the importance of offering a welcoming, accessible, supportive and inclusive environment for all children and young people, no matter what their needs might be. So understanding our young people's needs helps and informs our understanding.



Storytelling (3 mins)



We have already heard some stories in our groups earlier when sharing answers – real-life stories from a time in our own lives. Stories are powerful, more than we know, and you hold within you a variety of life stories that can be used wisely to help nurture your grandchildren. The very fact of how you live your life tells a story of who you are, what you believe in and what you believe to be important in life.

Becky Sedgwick, author of 'Grandparenting for Faith' says: 'We often get nervous about answering kids' spiritual questions. What if we don't give the right answer, or put them off God? ... It isn't about having the right answer. It's about creating a culture where it's OK to ask big questions about God. It's about modelling how we can explore and wonder together and sharing how we answer those questions and what we do when we just don't know.'

So the next time you are asked a question or you are relaying a story, remember it's about 'creating a culture where it's OK to ask the big questions about God'.

Perhaps when you next see your grandchild or grandchildren/grandfriends, you can let them ask you an honest question about God – and remember that it's OK to explore and wonder together. I encourage you to go on and give it a go!

Also why not start to keep a journal of your own 'God story' to share with your grandchildren when they get older? Ron Hunter, in his book 'Recalibrate', talks about keeping 'your family's God story written down so that you can remember all the things God has done for you and your family and teach them to your children and grandchildren'. Isn't that a wonderful idea and legacy?

(Recalibrate: A New Measure for Family Ministry 2023, p95)



Bible Talk (10 mins)

Read Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV):

'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.'

We all once were hidden from sight, then brought into the world, continuing to grow, experience, learn lessons (both good and bad) and find our place in the world. Our grandchildren are no different. If you are just setting out on this grandparenting journey, then you may have just come through the emotions of the season of pregnancy, childbirth and the newborn stage, supporting your children through sleepless nights and endless nappy changes. Or you may be at the stage where your grandchild is starting school and is starting to learn what it means to make friends in the world of education. Again, your grandchild may have grown and entered the world of secondary school, college or university.

You may be grieving a grandchild moving away to another town or city to experience a new world and adventure without you there. The scenarios of life for you as a grandparent are vast, varied and wide. You will journey through many changes of need for you as the grandparent – but what we believe does not change is your love for your grandchildren and your responsibility to recommend and represent Jesus to them.

In her book 'Faithful Grandparents - Hope and love through the generations', Anita Cleverly writes: *'Every human life contains the experiences of triumph and tragedy, celebration and commiseration, and has times of peace and steadiness and times of conflict and turbulence. Every human being is born into a family of some kind, and so every family is visited by the panoply of trial and testing as well as blessing that is given to humankind.'*

Most of today's grandparents recognise that they face different challenges that previous generations did not. Older age is often regarded with less importance than younger ages, and the construct of family is changing rapidly.

What does it look like for grandparents to 'live as fully as possible for God's glory'? Well, we believe it means an attitude to serve with grace and flexibility. In a disconnected world where families are often fragmented and separated by distance or circumstances, it can be challenging for grandparents to connect with their grandchildren. Paul specifically mentions Timothy's grandmother when he wrote his second letter to him as a young man. Paul reminds us that even one parent or grandparent can have great influence on a family.

Bible Talk continued...

I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also' (2 Timothy 1:5 NKJV).

In biblical times, grandparents were a vital part of the household, and in societies where this practice is still observed, it can be so beneficial. Beginning with Timothy's grandmother Lois, and then his mother Eunice, Timothy was taught by these women as a boy; they influenced him, and Timothy grew up to be one of the early ministers of the Church and a faithful companion and co-worker to Paul.

Research by Oxford Professor Ann Buchanan indicates that a high level of grandparent involvement, whatever the activity, greatly increases the overall wellbeing of grandchildren. In a study of more than 1,500 children, Buchanan found that grandchildren who have more involved grandparents have less emotional and behavioural problems than children who do not have a regular connection.

(Source : https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/field/field_document/Grandparents_Contribute_to_Children%E2%80%99s_Well-being.pdf)

In Genesis we hear a conversation between Joseph and his father Jacob, as Jacob asks for his grandchildren to be brought to him for blessing: ““They are the sons God has given me here,” Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, “Bring them to me so that I may bless them.”” (Genesis 48:9 NIV)

That blessing is critical to the spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing of children. There is a greater family purpose beyond their immediate relationship with their parent(s). The blessings of confidence and courage, and an ability to navigate our complex world, are all enhanced from being around grandparents who care.

Grandparents have the unique privilege to inspire grandchildren with a legacy of love for God and people. Bless them with Bible reading and prayer. Bless them with worshipping together at church. Bless them with stories and adventures. Bless them with generosity. Bless them with obedience to God. Bless them by intentionally being a role model that they will want to emulate.

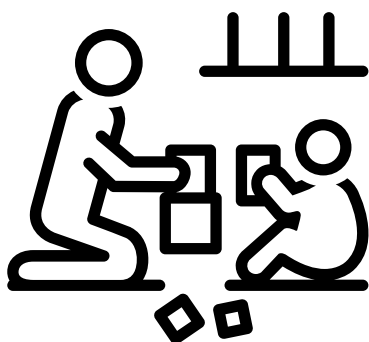
Being a faithful grandparent can bless a child's life. God can change a life, and a generation of lives, using the gentle, consistent, sincere lives of people who love and serve him.

‘Grandparents seem to have a particular role to play in families. They aren't just a second pair of hands to help with child-rearing. Their presence is a link with the past, with family history, values and traditions to pass down to the next generations, and crucially, grandparents have a lifetime of accumulated maturity and experience that brings so much to share with grandchildren just starting on their life journeys.’ (Grandparenting for Faith, Bible Reading Fellowship 2023, p20)



Bonding through play

As we continue to look at the role of grandparents and grandfriends, we are next going to consider one way of bonding with our grandchildren, and that is through the medium of play. It may be when you are 'playing' with your grandchild that you can ask questions, pass on traditions and share your experiences as we have just heard. The thought of playing may fill you with enthusiasm or unnerve you a little, and that's OK. Let's start to think about why play is important, and that may help you reflect on how you may be feeling.



'When I became a grandparent for the first time, I felt "timeless". As I held my granddaughter in my arms, I realised that my place in the family linked me with my family's past and future generations.'

Stephanie Gauntlett,
Sale Salvation Army Corps

Introducing the Interactive Learning Areas

Dr Daniel Siegel and Dr Tina Payne Bryson in their parenting book 'The Whole-Brain Child' talk about the importance of family play and building relationships through play, and for family members to take time to simply be with the child. Siegel and Bryson say: 'Be silly. Take an interest in what they care about. The more they enjoy the time they spend with you and the rest of the family, the more they'll value relationships and desire more positive and healthy relationship experiences in the future ... with every fun, enjoyable experience you give your (grand)children while they are with the family, you provide them with positive reinforcement about what it means to be in a loving relationship with others.'



Taking time to play with our grandchildren and one another actually releases a chemical in our brain called dopamine, which is a neuro-transmitter when we are having fun! You may be a grandparent who chooses to be Peter Pan and has the energy to pretend to fly, or you may prefer to read to your grandchild, or take the time to write letters to a grandchild. All of these are different forms of play, and there are many more besides these examples, but each one speaks about 'positive reinforcement about what it means to be in a loving relationship with others'.

In the book 'Grandparenting for Faith' (Bible Reading Fellowship 2023, p27) the idea is that building and growing connection is very important in building relationship with grandchildren. They highlight three parts: emotional closeness; regular contact; and the grandparents being a source of social support. Hopefully as you interact with the different areas of 'play' you may find different ways of growing that emotional closeness with your grandchildren.

It may also surprise you to think outside of the box when it comes to 'play' with teenagers and adult grandchildren. We acknowledge that if you are grandparents to those who have flown to university/work and are based in a different part of the country or world, you may be experiencing feelings of grief and loss. You may find it helpful to read the 'No one said it would be easy' section 3 found in BRF's book 'Grandparenting for Faith', which talks about grief and loss, the art of being 'unshockable' and the changes that come as children grow into adults. We highly recommend this.

But for now, as you experience the different interactive areas, take time to consider how this might work for you in your unique family experience. Notice the quotes about play, and feel free to discuss these with your fellow grandparents here. Take time to think about what might work well and what you may struggle with. It's OK to be honest with yourself and those you are sharing with in groups today, as long as you feel comfortable to share.

Important Note for Leaders : Explain to the participants that some of us may feel more at ease than others in certain areas, as some of us find the art of playing more natural than others. Reaffirm that no one is expected to do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Encourage the participants to engage in the different activities; but if this is difficult for anyone, they can simply watch and listen to others. You may find that they will join in once they have seen others participating. In the creation of these 'play areas', support and guidance was sought from a Salvationist Educational Mental Health Practitioner.



Leader – Preparation of the interactive areas

To set up 'play area' tables, you will need:

- Print-outs of area explanations (see pages 23–30)
- Print-outs of pictures for areas 3 and 4 (see pages 31 & 32)
- Print-outs of speech bubble quotes (see pages 33–36)

The 'area explanations' need to be printed and placed on each table for people to understand what is expected of them in each area.

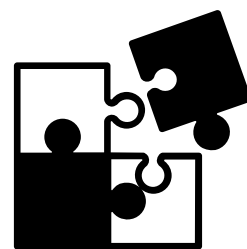
Print the pictures at the back of this resource for Areas 3 and 4. Print the speech bubble quotes at the back of this resource and randomly place on all the area play tables to spark discussion. Set up different tables for each area.

Top Tip for Leaders:

Work your way through the different areas on the next few pages to find out what materials you will need to set up Areas 1–5. Print the Area Explanation Sheets and if appropriate create some of the activities yourself as a 'show how to' for each area which may help to encourage participants to engage in the areas, understanding what is expected of them.



Area 1 – The Art of Play



You will need:

- A board or card game – (eg Dobble)
- Colouring sheets or paper for drawing
- Lego bricks
- Clay modelling print
- Print-out of the area description (see page 23)

Note: All of these activities are suitable for ages 4+. Set up an area large enough for all of these activities, or a few tables depending on your group size.

Area 2 – Imagination & Creation

You will need:

- A giant craft box (which can be purchased from Amazon or Hobbycraft or similar retailer for less than £15)
- Print-out of the area description (see page 24)

Area 3 – The Tweenager & Teen Years

You will need:

- Printed pictures
- A range of sticky note pads (at least two colours)
- Pens
- Print-out of the area description (see pages 25–28) or display on a screen using supporting PowerPoint presentation



Area 4 – Early Adulthood : Time to Fly!

You will need:

- Printed pictures from the end of this resource (see pages 31 & 32)
- Sticky note pads
- Pens
- Print-out of the area description (see page 29)

Area 5 – Similarities & Differences

You will need:

- Coloured felt-tip pens
- Two large (A3) pieces of paper: on one sheet of paper write or type:

‘What did you play with as a child?’ On the other sheet of paper write or type:
‘What do children play with today?’
- Print-out of the area description (see page 30)



Talk:

We live in a world where some of our grandchildren will be ‘brought up’ in church. However, the reality may be that most of our grandchildren may not. Therefore we have a calling and a challenge as Christian grandparents to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them in a way that encourages and builds their faith in God, and gives opportunity for ‘faith talks’. Here are just a few tips to think about how to engage in a Christian way that will be appropriate for our wide-ranging grandchildren, some of whom may already know Jesus and some not. Every grandchild is different, and these are simply suggestions.

The Bible

There are lots of Bibles out there and finding an age-appropriate version is vitally important. Giving a baby a leather-bound Bible might not be the most helpful start to their faith as a small child, as the graphics will be too small and too detailed. A pop-out Bible story book, however, may be a simple way of introducing the gospel stories. A teenager will prefer a modern version of the Bible that is written in a language that speaks to them. So have a look at what’s out there – you may be surprised!

There are many children’s, youth, and journal-based Bibles available to order online via Amazon and Christian stores such as Eden.co.uk. If your grandchild is more of a visual learner, there are animated children’s Bible story videos and songs available to watch together on YouTube – though many have an American background.

Praying with and for your grandchild

Each of us will be in very different circumstances when it comes to how to pray with our grandchildren, but here are some ideas and suggestions:

·Prayer walk: Teach your grandchildren that praying to God is simply talking with the one person who loves us most in this world. Prayer doesn’t have to be just about closing our eyes and kneeling in a quiet room. You can teach your grandchild to pray as they walk with you, as you push the pram, as you walk them to school or park. Pray out loud, thanking God for the creation you see around you and praying for others as they walk along the street.

Telephone Prayers: We may shy away from praying with our grandchildren if they're not in the same room, but this might be very helpful for some of them, especially if you live miles away from each other. Demonstrate boldness and pray a simple prayer over the phone with them. If you struggle to think of a prayer, you may use something like the Serenity Prayer, the Prayer of Francis of Assisi or the Lord's Prayer from the Bible.

Leader: Distribute copies of the prayers or display them on a screen using PowerPoint. You may want to ask participants to take turns to read them aloud or read altogether.

The Serenity Prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

Amen.

Prayer of Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

Amen.

Paper Prayers: Take a piece of paper and, with your grandchild, write down all the things that they are happy about and the things that they struggle with. For younger children fold the paper into a paper aeroplane and thank God for understanding our hearts as you fly the paper plane around the room. For older children, ask if you can take the paper prayers away with you and promise to continue to pray when you are at home.

Text Prayers: Send a short prayer by text message to your grandchild, if they have a mobile phone (this will work well for those studying at secondary school, college or university). You could even choose a short Bible verse to send to them. When we know someone is thinking about us and is on our side (praying to the Almighty!), this can bring a sense of peace and safety when away from home.

Prayer Cards: If your grandchild is starting a new school or going to university or leaving home, you could prepare some encouraging prayer cards for the first week. Using seven blank cards and envelopes, write a message and prayer to them with the day of the week on the envelope so that every day they know you are praying for them. The prayers don't have to be long, just sincere! You could even tie your pile of prayer cards with a ribbon or place them in a gift box.

If you feel the weight of responsibility to be a godly grandparent, simply turn to the words from Galatians 5:22,23 where you will find all the qualities of a noble and faithful grandparent. Paul writes about the gifts of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If we can show these Christlike characteristics to our grandchildren, then, with God's help, we will be faithful and godly grandparents.

Ron Hunter in his book 'Recalibrate' encourages us to see grandparenting as a partnership with the parents, saying: 'It's not about you, grandpa and grandma, it's about partnering with your kids to build a spiritual legacy within your grandkids' and great grandkids' lives so that they know what God has done and wants to do in their life.' He also reminds us that our life story is still being written, which is important to remember. God is not done with us yet!

However, if your grandchildren are being raised in a household where faith is not spoken about, then you will still be a godly grandparent as you share the gifts of the Spirit. They will feel God's love through you! They will see God through you, and if you keep praying for opportunities to speak about faith, trust that the opportunity will come at the right time. Hold your godly character, and let them see it. Have the integrity of Jesus as a faithful grandparent. Be truthful in your words, patient in your thoughts and loving in your deeds. Vern Bengtson wrote the book 'Families and Faith' and suggests that research showed the *'unexpected importance of grandparents', stating that 'regardless of the parents' faith, grandparents can be highly significant in the development of faith in their grandchildren. They may be reinforcing the parents' influence, or helping faith skip a generation when the parents don't have faith themselves.'* (Grandparenting for Faith, Bible Reading Fellowship: 2023, p21)

Billy Graham said: 'Integrity is the glue that holds our way of life together. We must constantly strive to keep our integrity intact. When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost.'

So how can you be a godly and faithful grandparent? By simply showing the character of Christ in all you do. As you play, play like Jesus. As you push the swings or puddle jump, do it with child-like faith and wonder. As you listen on the phone to endless girlfriend and boyfriend issues, listen like Jesus. That is the best way to be a faithful grandparent.

As the words of Psalm 17:6-8 (NIV) say:

'I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. Show me the wonders of your great love, you who save by your right hand those who take refuge in you from their foes. Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.'



Learning to listen is an art, but it is the way we can truly show love to our grandchildren. Learning not to interrupt, not to rush them, but just to simply listen shows great respect for them and imitates the true nature of God as we are reminded in this psalm. Live in hope as a grandparent! Show hope to your family and friends around you.

Thank you for sharing your life with those you love. They need you just as much as you need them.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, help us to live as loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled godly grandparents, we pray. Amen.

The Art of Play

We all play! Learning to decorate a wall is play. Learning to tend your garden is play. Learning to bake is play. What age are we when play is no longer relevant? There is no age. Play is always relevant and play builds attachment. Have you stopped playing? If so, this area may help you regain the confidence to play and learn what is involved in play attachment.

As you take time to play, think about how you could play with your grandchildren and remember there is no age limit. Taking time to play could help your grandchildren with their emotions and behaviour.

Remember, if you are drawing or colouring, don't ask questions or criticise the drawing, but instead 'narrate' it because it's OK if 'a dinosaur is going shopping with a handbag!'

Set your imagination free!

Imagination & Creation

Using the craft materials, create an animal of your choice. As you create, think about what might be happening if you replicated this activity with your grandchild.

Consider the scope for conversation, the ability to learn about their imagination, the stories you may hear, and the joy of creating something together.

There are endless possibilities – including space to talk about the Creation story in Genesis 1.

The Tweenager & Teen Years

Approaching or living through the teenage years can be challenging (for the child, not just those around them). Trying to find a common ground between a grandparent and grandchild is important and can continue communication. Here are some ideas:

Film nights: The art of 'being' with each other, even in silence, can bring comfort in what can be a busy and loud world for our teens. Let them pick an appropriate film and watch together.

Hot chocolate and cake: A trip to the café for just half an hour could allow time and space to chat and may feel easier outside the walls of home. Never underestimate the joy of cake too!

The Tweenager & Teen Years

Sports: A trip to the driving range, kicking a ball about, or even just practising catching a ball can not only open the doors of conversation but also shouts 'I have time for you!' You may even have the privilege of accompanying them to a sports practice!

Devices (laptop / games / social media platforms): Find out what they are interested in and check they are keeping safe online. Ask questions about the games they play and show interest. You may even find a game you can learn to play together.

The Tweenager & Teen Years

Walk and talk: Walking and talking can help to build trust. Allow your grandchild (if they want) to walk and talk on their terms. Be interested and really listen to what they have to say. Let them share about their hobbies, favourite sports team, friends, TV shows, latest trends, what colour they want to dye their hair etc ... be interested, but never judge.

Life skills: If they are interested and want to, give an opportunity for them to learn different life skills like IT skills, changing a tyre, baking, cooking, budgeting, gardening, wallpapering, painting, woodwork etc.

The Tweenager & Teen Years

Over to you!

Use a coloured sticky note pad to put down other ideas that you can think of that might help us interact and engage with our teenage grandchildren.

Use a different coloured sticky note pad to write down words that describe what such interactions will bring for both grandchild and grandparent (eg relationship building, shared learning, fun, etc).

Early Adulthood : Time to Fly

For some young adults, moving on to higher education can be a transition that some take hold of with both hands and others find quite difficult.

Being 'remembered' is vitally important at this stage for your grandchild. Using the sticky note pads, think about what you might be able to do to support your grandchild as they move out into the world of independence, whether that's for college, university, a gap year to travel, work and for some, even leave home.

Place the sticky notes around the different pictures shown. Some examples may be: small food parcels (or a bar of their favourite chocolate sent through the post), a gift voucher for a coffee or a treat, a positive affirmation card, giving them a (video) call to check in etc.

'Even when my grandchildren are not in my arms, or on my lap, or in my home, they are in my heart and there they will stay for ever.'

(<https://sweetpea.care/lifestyle/grandchildren-quotes/>)

Similarities & Differences

Think back to your own childhood and how and what you played with. Then take a moment to think about what children might play with today. Chat with fellow participants about the following questions:

What do you feel you missed out on as a child that is very normal for a child today?

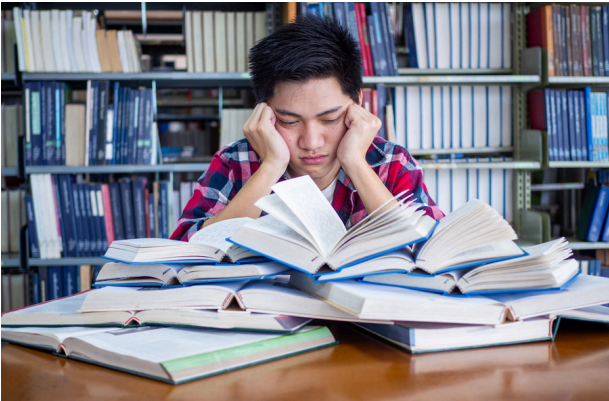
What do you feel children today miss out on and why?

Remember, don't let the difference in age stop you sharing stories of how you used to play when you were younger. It will be interesting to your grandchildren just as much as you are interested in their stories. Let your grandchild learn and ask about what life was like for you as a child, and the lessons you've learnt along the way.

Pictures for printing for Area 3 – Enlarge and Print



Pictures for printing for Area 4 – Enlarge and Print



Quotes for printing for Creative Area tables

(Quotes from www.museumofplaying.org/about/play_quotes)

"It's the things
we play with and the people
who help us play that make a
great difference in our lives."

Fred Rogers, TV Personality

"Play is training for the
unexpected."

Marc Bekoff,
Contemporary Biologist

"Play is the foundation of
learning, creativity, self-
expression, and constructive
problem-solving. It's how
children wrestle with life to
make it meaningful."

Susan Linn, Psychiatrist

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"People tend to forget
that play is serious."

David Hockney,
British Artist

"Adults play too
(or should)."

Julie Lythcott-Haims,
Educator

"Play is foundational for
bonding relationships and fostering
tolerance. It's where we learn to trust and
where we learn about the rules of the game.
Play increases creativity and resilience, and
it's all about the generation of diversity—
diversity of interactions, diversity of
behaviours, diversity of connections."

Isabel Behncke, Field Ethologist and
Primatologist

Quotes for printing for Creative Area tables

(Quotes from www.museumofplaying.org/about/play_quotes)

"The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct."

Carl Jung,
Psychoanalyst

"My childhood play took me to extremes, and all of them I now understand, were a fun way to test the social realities into which one is born. Surely this is a most important evolutionary function of play—finding out what is fun and fair or not fair on the field of life."

Jaak Panksepp, Neuroscientist
and Psychobiologist



An Introduction to Faithful Grandparenting
Produced by
Older People's Ministries
UKI Territory

