

A generation ago, Art Linkletter starred in a TV program called “Kids Say the Darndest Things.” Many of those kids humorously spoke the truth, and we all got the point very quickly. Today we can still say that “Kids (and grandkids) can say the darndest things,” and in the process make some critical points.

I’m a grandpa. A few years back, my 4-year-old grandson, Porter, was sitting on my lap, pointing out all the facial flaws on my face. “Papa, what’s that dark spot right there? Why do you have so many wrinkles? Papa, why does your chin sag so low?” I said, “Papa is old. This is what happens when you get old.” Porter replied: “No Papa, you’re not old.” “Yes, I am, Porter. I’m an old man.” “No, Papa you’re just a big boy.”

Finally, I asked him, ‘Don’t you want me to be old?’ “No,” he said with a bit of sadness in his reply. “Why? Don’t you want me to be old?” With a seriousness beyond his age, he whispered, “Because old men die.”

Yes, at 4-years-old Porter knew that old men die. Even a child can realize that life is short and death is sure. He reminded me that I was going to die. It was a sobering moment. I realized that for better or for worse, one day I would be leaving a legacy which could be either blessed or blasted by my children and grandchildren. This incident began to stir within me a greater desire to leave a legacy of meaningfulness. The question is “How do we grandfathers do that?”

There are at least five roles played by grandfathers in our society today. What style of grandparenting are you exhibiting? Do you see yourself playing any of the following roles?

1. THE DISENGAGED GRANDFATHER. He’s, for all practical purposes, uninvolved in the life of the grandchild. He’s living his own life, doing his own thing, and showing little interest in the development of his grandchild. He is uninvolved by choice. His life revolves around his own interests, his hobbies, and his aspirations. Little time is allotted to a grandchild.

2 THE DOTING GRANDFATHER. He’s involved in the life of the grandchildren but primarily in only one way. He loves to entertain them. This grandfather is satisfied as long as he and “the kids” are having fun. He keeps them occupied by playing games, watching movies, going out to eat, and making sure they are all sugared up when they leave. He delights them and they, in turn, are delighted to be with him. He’s a dream come true. He’s doting.

3. THE DISTANT GRANDFATHER. He’s uninvolved, but not by choice. He is geographically distant from the grandchildren. He cannot have the relationship he desires. His heart is with them, but his physical presence is rarely there.

4. THE DUTIFUL GRANDFATHER. He is highly involved in the life of the grandchild and has actually become the replacement parent for the child. For all practical purposes, he is raising the grandchild as his own. Statistics reveal in America today we have 2.7 million grandparents raising their grandchildren.

Finally, there is what I call:

5. THE SPIRITUALLY DEVOTED GRANDFATHER. He is seeking to be involved in all aspects of the grandchild’s life (physically, emotionally and spiritually). His greatest desire is to communicate in words and in deeds God’s truths as given in God’s Word. He wants to be a spiritual role model and mentor to the child for the ultimate purpose of declaring the goodness, the greatness, and the grace of God to his grandchildren. This grandfather is mindful of the words of David in Psalm 71:17-18: “O God, You have taught me from my youth, and I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come.”

So what does the Spiritually Devoted Grandfather desire most?

- **He wants to be a LIGHT to his grandchildren.** As Christian grandfathers, we are to shine for Jesus day in and day out. The light of God’s Spirit should be visible in practical ways as we act, react, and interact with them. Jesus told His disciples: “Let your light shine before men [that includes grandkids] in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). When our children and grandchildren see our good works, they should be primed to “Glorify our Father in Heaven.”
- **He wants to be a LOVER of his grandchildren.** There is nothing greater than God’s Agape love. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says: “But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” As grandfathers, may love be pre-eminent in our lives. May our grandchildren know that we are crazy about them no matter what.
- **He wants to be a LISTENER to his grandchildren.** The older we get, the more life we have experienced. As a result, we can talk more and listen less. As grandfathers, we can lose the grace of listening.

Proverbs 18:2 says: “A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind.” Listening intently to our grandchildren is how we truly begin to connect with them on a deeply personal level. Being interested in their thoughts, their concerns, and even their frustrations gives them a sense of significance. Grandchildren often open up to grandparents in ways they might not with their own parents.

- **He wants to be a LAUDER of his grandchildren.** We get the word “applause” from the word “laud.” We need to cheer on our grandchildren by pointing out their positive traits and their personal accomplishments and by praising them publicly when praise is warranted.

SO AS GRANDFATHERS...LET’S STRIVE TO:

- make time** for our grandchildren
- do things** with our grandchildren
- show tolerance** of our grandchildren
- teach** biblical truths to our grandchildren and
- trust** God for our grandchildren’s future (*because He loves them even more than we do*)

GOING FURTHER - Resources

Recommended Books: (Available at the Home Center or Library for check out)

Biblical GrandParenting (by Josh Mulvihill) This book provides a biblical overview of the role of grandparents.

Couragagous Grandparenting – Unshakable Faith in a Broken World (by Cavin Harper) A call for grandparents to rise about the conventional view of grandparenting to embrace intentionality.

Extreme Grandparenting (by Tim Kimmel and Darcy Kimmel). Are you ready to take grandparenting to the next level? This book offers timeless and tested principles for grandparenting in the twenty-first century.

Great Lessons and Grand Blessings (by Elmer and Ruth Towns) Discover how Grandparens can inspire and transform their grandchildren

Legacy Grandparenting – How to Influence Your Grandchildren for Christ DVD
Group Study (by the Legacy Coalition)

ENCORE - Jerry Harpool, Pastor of Senior Adults, leads a class for 60+ on Sunday mornings at 10:45 in the Hospitality Suite.

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THE INTENTIONAL GRANDFATHER



Pointers