

# Connecting With, And Empowering Parents And Grandparents To Minister To Their Own Children

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Today's families are hungry for any help the Church offers them. Their local church is possibly the only place they can find biblically-based, practical help as they navigate this challenging world with their children! Family support needs to go beyond simply offering a good children's ministry (CM) program on Sundays and midweek. We need to do all we can to provide specific, practical help and ideas for parents and grandparents.

God is very clear in His plan for leading children to the Lord. He puts the responsibility squarely on the parents' shoulders.

*“Hear O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!  
And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.  
And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart;  
and you shall teach them diligently to your sons (and daughters)  
and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way  
and when you lie down and when you rise up...”*

Deuteronomy 6: 4-9

The presence and value of grandparents cannot be underestimated! A significant number of children are raised by their grandparents.

*“...divorce, drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, death can greatly affect the grandparent generation. Grandparents can find themselves as primary caregivers. ...According to 1997 figures, there are 2.5 million grandparent-headed households in which 4 million children are growing up; one-third of these children (1.3 million) have no parent present in the home. 6% of all children in the US under age 18 are growing up in grandparent-headed households.”*

(Source: *Fast Facts on Grandparenting & Intergenerational Mentoring*, legacyproject.org)

*“About 7 million grandparents lived with a grandchild in 2013, up from 5.8 million grandparents who did so in 2000, according to Census Bureau data. Among these grandparents, a significant share (37%) also serve as their grandchildren's primary caregiver.”*

(Source: Pew Research Center)

*“Grandparents contribute to their grandchildren's well-being by babysitting or by acting as their primary caregivers. One in ten live in the same household as their grandchildren and babysit, and 5% of grandparents provide their grandchildren's primary care, according to the national representative sample.”*

(Source: AARP Grandparenting Study 2019 – aarp.org)



The Church can provide significant assistance and support for parents and grandparents through programs, seminars, or information. To effectively support parents and grandparents, we must first understand their “world.”

## Facts About Our World Today

1. **Electronically-connected** – Research has shown that our connections via text and social media have reduced our ability to talk with each other face-to-face. People are less comfortable and less able to express themselves through conversations.
2. **Noisy** – Our world is filled with background sounds and music. Being quiet is becoming uncomfortable.
3. **Fast-paced** – Because of technology and transportation, our world moves quickly. Being still or going slow are not often experienced.
4. **Frightful** – Both children and adults are constantly aware of the presence of terror. Fear and caution prevent us from resting.
5. **Shallow** – Today’s media presents a shallow perspective on life that influences our definition of “normal.” Deep, contemplative thoughts are not modeled or encouraged.
6. **“Trendy”** – The pressure to look and act in ways that our society deems to be important shapes all we do. Outward appearance has become more critical than character development. Appearance is more valuable than accomplishments.
7. **“Broken heroes”** – We are surrounded by an increasing number of people whose poor choices are celebrated as triumphs. The concepts of “right” or “good” are now replaced by “being who I am,” or “standing up for myself.”
8. **“Home” and “family” changing** – The foundational views of both “home” and “family” are being re-defined. The security and protection found in the home is being eroded by the influence of social media and our fast-paced society. The closeness of a “family” may be disappearing due to our lack of deep conversations about life together.
9. **Financial stress** – Our focus on having more, comparing ourselves to others, and having to work more hours to satisfy those expectations, produces a financial stress that is damaging to everyone.
10. **Spiritual / moral depravity** – Our society has removed God, His scriptures, and attending church from the list of things that are valued. Because of this, we see an increase in moral depravity, confusion, and trouble. We are faced with legalized drugs, the need for more police, an increase in suicides, rising opioid addictions, growing support for killing babies, and an endless struggle with mass shootings.



## The World of Parents (or grandparents)

Today’s parents or grandparents are under increasing pressure to be “good parents,” while facing challenges that parents or grandparents have never faced before. The pressures that parents or grandparents face today are:

1. Pressure to pay bills and provide for the family.
2. Pressure to raise their children better than they were raised themselves.
3. Pressure to appear “healthy” (physically, emotionally, spiritually).
4. Pressure to have “good” children.
5. Pressure to let their children “identify” with who they feel they are.
6. Pressure to look successful.
7. Exhaustion from having to work longer hours.
8. Fear of failure.
9. Anger about not being able to satisfy their dreams.
10. Depression due to the pressures and absence of God’s presence.



## What The Lord Offers



God offers help, security, hope, wisdom, and protection to everyone who honor Him. The problem with today's society is that we, corporately, have removed God from our world. Because of this, parents or grandparents today are facing the challenges of today's complex and confusing world on their own. They may desperately search for help from others or from social media. The Church is the only place where they can connect with God to find His help; but unfortunately, "going to church" isn't something that is popular anymore.

Today's Church needs to go to the parents with God's hope, rather than waiting for them to come to us! God has always offered some powerful help for parents and grandparents:

1. **Peace** – Even in a troubled world with unrealistic expectations and pressures, God offers His "peace that passes all understanding." (Psalm 27, Philippians 4: 6, 7)
2. **Purpose** – If a parent or grandparent's "purpose" to be a good parent or grandparent, or to be successful, those two goals are illusive and potentially damaging. God offers a deeper purpose that is not affected by the conditions or challenges of life. A life purpose of honoring God, loving others, and fulfilling the "Great Commission" withstands the challenges of this world. (Philippians 3:8)
3. **Provision** – God wants us to work hard, but He promises to care for the needs of those who trust Him. (Philippians 4:19)
4. **Proven process** – Parents or grandparents may be confused and frightened about raising children. Many parents or grandparents today weren't successfully parented. God offers a "proven process" for raising children. Every child is uniquely different, but God's principles work! The Church can guide the parents or grandparents to discover and apply God's parenting principles.
5. **Power** – Today's society tells children and parents or grandparents to "be strong," or to "be powerful." Unfortunately, that "strength" and "power" is based on the person's "inner strength" of "inner self." This perspective may lead to depression and discouragement because we are not that strong on our own. God offers His strength and power to help us in our weakness. In order access this power, we must first submit to His power. This is a process that requires guidance. This is where the Church functions well! (2 Corinthians 12:10)
6. **Promises** – This world cannot promise anything for certain. Parents and grandparents know that even if they work hard and "do their best," they are surrounded by stories of failure. God promises to provide for us, and to give us things that we could never "get" on our own. When parents or grandparents submit to God's authority, they connect with His promises! (Deuteronomy 6: 10, 11; Jeremiah 29: 11-14)



*"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD..."*

## What The Church Can Do

Today's Church can connect parents or grandparents to God, who is the only source of help and hope! The Church's "job" is to **GO** and connect with the parents or grandparents. Jesus didn't tell us to "wait" for them to come to us! We in children's ministry (CM) must do all we can to advertise what we offer at the church for them, but also **GO** to where they are and engage them. Here are some on the church campus and in the neighborhood ideas:



## On The Church Campus

1. A supportive, safe environment for their children.
2. Kind, positive adult CM team members who are pro-parent.
3. Training for the parents (printed, online, or in-person) to raise their children in the ways of the Lord.
4. Resources (printed and online) for parent/grandparent help and ideas.
5. Provide support for the parents/grandparents (networking with others).
6. Provide environments in which parents/grandparents can interact with their children.



## In Their Neighborhoods

1. Neighborhood block parties (hosted by church attenders in the neighborhood).
2. Apartment complex summer programs.
3. Apartment complex parent seminars (while children watch an outside movie).
4. Apartment complex family nights (free meal, movie, games, etc.).

**Note:** All these neighborhood interaction ideas should include a table with parent/grandparent help pamphlets. It is critical that the pamphlets DON'T include any "pushy" church text! Identify your church's name, your contact information, and service times, but nothing more! Remember, these people may be "anti-church," so, don't scare them off! Your goal is to provide support for them with no strings attached!



## Traditional Children's Ministry Practices *that may damage or limit supporting the parents.*

1. View the parents/grandparents as "barriers" to the child's spiritual growth.
2. Only communicate with parents/grandparents when needed (discipline problems, transportation, etc.).
3. Provide only a simple one-page "take-home" paper to the parents/grandparents.
4. Plan events and programs without the parents/grandparents in mind.

## Empowering The Parents/Grandparents – During Sunday School or Children's Church

1. Train your CM team to connect with the parents/grandparents during check-in (they're not just transporters!)
  - a. Remember the parent's/grandparent's names.
  - b. The careful use of appropriate touch (on shoulders, handshakes, etc.).
  - c. Personal eye contact.
  - d. Waves across the room.
  - e. Inquire about the week (step aside and pray with them if needed).

**The Challenge:** Be sensitive about their rush to get to the worship service!

2. Train your CM team to minister to parents/grandparents who "linger" after check-in.
  - a. Talk about their child.
  - b. Compliment their child.
  - c. Ask about home, school, etc.
  - d. Ask, "How can we help?"
  - e. Invite them to observe (this may or may not be the best for the child).

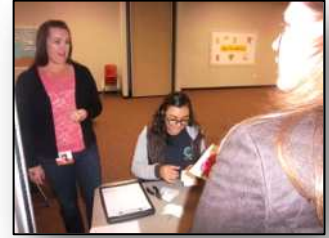
**The Challenge:** The fear of disclosing too much personal information about the child.





3. Train your CM team to minister to parents/grandparents who are called out of the service due to their child's injury or discipline challenges.
  - a. Talk about their child.
  - b. Compliment their child.
  - c. Ask about home, school, etc.
  - d. Ask, "How can we help?"

**The Challenge:** The frustration of being called out of the service.



4. Train your CM team to engage the parents during check-out.
  - a. Talk about their child.
  - b. Compliment their child.
  - c. Give them a CM brochure or card with contact info on it (if it is their first time).
  - d. Tell them you look forward to seeing them, and their child, next week.

**The Challenge:** The risk of being too "pushy" or too friendly.

### **Empowering The Parents/Grandparents – With Printed Materials**

1. Produce a "Continue the Experience" guide for parents/grandparents each week.
  - a. Gives the parents/grandparents a synopsis of the lesson focus (scripture and objective).
  - b. Gives the parents/grandparents a summary of what their children experienced.
  - c. Provides creative ideas for "continuing the experience" at home during the week:
    - "Travel Talk" – Discussion ideas for conversations in the car.
    - "Teachable Moments" – Ways to use daily experiences to discuss the lesson.
    - "Small Bites" – Discussion-starter ideas for conversations at mealtimes.
    - "Snugglers" – Ideas for using bedtime conversations to reinforce of the lesson.
    - "Drop-in Surprises" – Creative, "surprise encounters" to reinforce the lesson during the week (at school, at home, etc.).
2. Produce a weekly newsletter (email or on the church website).
  - a. Creative family adventure ideas (local, inexpensive).
  - b. Upcoming local events (concerts, fairs, etc.).
  - c. Upcoming church or CM events.
  - d. Success stories from other parents/grandparents.
  - e. Enlightening stories from children.
  - f. Creative ideas for ways to understand and use their children's world.
  - g. Current trends (and how to use them).
  - h. Popular songs, artists, television shows, movies (and how to use them).
  - i. Fun food ideas (meals, snacks, etc.) with conversation ideas.
  - j. Websites to enjoy.
  - k. Short scriptural studies.
  - l. Excerpts from books or online articles.
  - m. New resources available through the church bookstore or online.



3. Produce targeted parenting/grandparenting guides and make them available around the church campus:

- a. Helping your child deal with anger.
- b. Helping your child deal with fear.
- c. Helping your child deal with temptations.
- d. Helping your child deal with peer pressure.
- e. Helping your child embrace his/her gender.
- f. Encouraging your child to develop a personal relationship with God.
- g. Developing confident children.
- h. Disciplining your child with love and boundaries.
- i. Staying connected with your emerging adolescent.
- j. Successfully advancing through the “seasons” of parenthood.

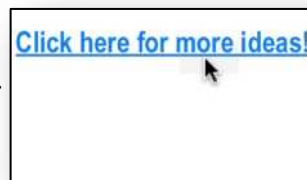


#### **Resources:**

- HomeLife Magazine – LifeWay Publishing – lifeway.com
- ParentLife Magazine – LifeWay Publishing – lifeway.com
- Legacy Coalition (grandparent support) – legacycoalition.com

#### **Empowering The Parents/Grandparents – With Online Communications**

1. Create a children’s ministry website (or section of the church’s website)
  - a. Similar items as the printed newsletter above.
  - b. Parenting/grandparenting blog.
  - c. Using online social media sites to safely connect with your child.
  - d. Links to valuable websites.



2. Create a ministry page on Facebook and Instagram.
3. Create an email newsletter (similar items to the printed newsletter above)

#### **Resources:**

- Christian Parenting Newsletter – Christianity Today - christianitytoday.com/parenting
- Co Parenting International – coparentinginternational.com

#### **Empowering The Parents/Grandparents – With Parenting Seminars**

1. Sunday morning parenting classes
  - a. Staying healthy during pregnancy.
  - b. Caring for newborns.
  - c. Setting boundaries.
  - d. Making love known, felt, and consistent.
  - e. Building a spiritual home.
  - f. Discipline with Godly principles.
  - g. Dealing with rebellious children.
  - h. Encouraging children to embrace their gender identity.
  - i. Developing preschoolers with a desire to learn.



- j. Public or private school?
  - k. Training your child to discern right from wrong.
  - l. Staying involved in your child's world.
  - m. Having fun as a family.
  - n. Making mealtimes life-changing.
  - o. Balancing busy schedules.
  - p. Preparing your child for sexual purity.
  - q. Facing the trends of society.
  - r. Developing racially "blind" children.
  - s. Letting go during adolescence.
2. Sunday evening family series
    - a. "Who is God, and what does He want with me?"
    - b. "If I don't get caught, is it okay?"
    - c. "I want it now!"
    - d. "Who do I want to be when I grow up?"
  3. Family retreats/camps
    - a. Beautiful nature location – helping families connect with God.
    - b. Multi-day service projects with camping "home base."
    - c. History events (museums, etc.) with guided conversations about God and choices.
    - d. Cooking retreat – families cook for each other, share stories about God and heritage.



### **Empowering The Parents/Grandparents – With Events**

**Note:** Each of the "Family Events" should have a printed "Parent Guide," which focuses the parents on the real goal of the event: to connect with their children. The "Parent Guide" should include a description of the event's potential for communication with their children, and a list of discussion prompts for the parent to use to stir conversations with their children.

1. Family trips with guided interaction prompts
  - a. Road rallies.
  - b. Trips to local parks.
  - c. Trips to local businesses (ice cream shops, factory tours, laser tag, etc.).
  - d. Trips to local amusement parks.
2. Family service projects
  - a. Serve at local outreach organizations.
  - b. Homeless people by road (give them pre-packed supplies).
  - c. Free window-washing for local stores.
  - d. Trash pick-up at local parks, beaches, etc.
  - e. Volunteer at church (clean-up, repair, office work, etc.).
  - f. Volunteer in the children's ministry as a family.
  - g. International ministry programs (Samaritan's Purse, Compassion International, etc.).
  - h. Build homes for the poor (Habitat For Humanity – [habitat.org](http://habitat.org)).
  - i. Free yard work for neighbors or elderly.
  - j. Visit local retirement homes.
  - k. Shopping cart collection at local stores.
  - l. Graffiti removal (through local agencies).



### 3. Church-based events

- a. Sunday morning or evening programs for families.
- b. Summer programs and trips.
- c. Family camps.
- d. Weekend or overnight adventures.
- e. Family day trips or adventures (with a meal afterward).
- f. Family movie nights at church with free popcorn, drinks, etc.
- g. “Slumber parties” at the church.
- h. Carnivals.
- i. Snow parties at church.
- j. Skate parties.
- k. Miniature golf tournaments.
- l. “Dad and son” events (rockets, shooting range, archery, monster trucks, etc.).
- m. “Mom and daughter” events (teas, fashion shows, makeup seminars, shopping sprees, etc.).
- n. “Dad and daughter” events (dances, dress-up dinners, etc.).



### **Do all you can to help your families be FRESH!**

**F**amily-focused = Let everything they do be “tested” with a “What’s best for my family?” priority.

**R**elationship-driven = Do all they can to build relationships with and between their children.

**E**xperience-rich = Plan fun, exciting, challenging, enjoyable experiences as a family.

**S**piritually-based = Let the presence and awareness of God be a part of all that they do.

**H**elp-oriented = Creatively plan ways to serve others as a family often.