

## Ministry of Grandparents

As leader of your class, you have now arrived at the end of Course One. It is appropriate that this course ends with a discussion about the value of grandparents. We live in a culture with a heavy emphasis on the immediate. Yesterday's news is already past history. What is going on today is being discovered and may soon be discarded as of little value. In such a society grandparents may be seen as already having had their turn. People may see them as past their prime. Haven't they climbed the mountain and now are descending on the other side? Many have retired or soon will.

The first question this brings up is - how do grandparents see themselves? Have they bought into the possibility they no longer count for much? Not hearing often of their value, have they positioned themselves as having been 'put out to pasture' so to speak? When they realize their grandchildren are not calling them, does that mean they are free to retire from being family leaders?

As this class session comes together, it is your job as leader to make sure that the challenge of being a grandparent is held up high. We want to make sure grandparents do not get turned off by not being noticed, not being regarded. The reality is that grandparents - if we value the years that have matured them, the lessons they have learned, the wisdom they have gained, and the faith that has sustained them - are immensely valuable.

It is sad that the church has often overlooked the importance of the impact grandparents can make in their families, which also translates to how the children of the congregation are being raised. Grandparents are the great antidote to short-term thinking. They are in the best position to help all those who follow them into reckoning what life is all about. We are all going to grow old. We are all going to die. We are all going to face what is really important in the one life we have to live.

How crucial is it for a grandparent to share themselves with their families, especially their grandchildren? They usually have more time to pray, to play, to share, and to engage in meaningful ways. Do they have hope in life with God after death? Do they have faith that gets them up in the morning? Do they take the time to initiate communications with their grandchildren? Do they pray for them? Have they embraced their calling of passing on the faith, of praying for each grandchild each day? Have they studied the Proverbs and realized the unbelievable value of wisdom? Have they probed into the world their grandchildren are living in? Or, are they completely out of touch and content to stay that way?

This session gives your class the opportunity to wake up and claim the extraordinary importance grandparents can be for their families. Somebody or some things are going to have a great influence on those growing up in the family. It is time for grandparents to make sure they enter the fray and exert the influence they are capable of having on each grandchild. That will usually mean they have to take the initiative to communicate, to share experiences, to stick with those who are having troubles, and with those who are doing well. We never want to underestimate what our grandkids are perceiving in us. Are we persevering with them, showing up at games, recitals, and graduations? Have we put other



## Adults Saving Kids

matters aside to give our relationship with them a major priority? Do they see we really care, that their lives really count? Is our faith directing our lives so that they see how important Jesus is to us? Do our stories reflect for them what Christian living is all about? Do our grandkids see how we have dealt with setbacks and loss? Have we lifted up the cross to them as what makes one's life solid and hopeful?

As grandparents, we are accountable for how we talk, for what we do, and for how we regard others. Our opinions count. How we treat those who differ from us speaks volumes.

As leader, do not let grandparents in the group or those who soon will be grandparents, minimize the calling they have from God. Help the discussion take on a long-range view, shoring up in different ways the challenge of being the best grandparent one can be.

## Introduce Course Two

Any effort worth its salt needs to be sustained and equipped to be effective. When students enter medical school, they are challenged to the max to become the doctors people need them to be. The training they receive will need to prove itself when the doctors produced start to work with patients. Only then will the fruits of their education and hands-on residential program reveal themselves. Sick people look for healing, wanting not just a 'hope this works for you' approach.

In like manner, now that a parent or grandparent has finished course one, have they learned and shared all there is to know and do? Not by a long shot. What they have experienced is how important they are. They have gotten a taste of the challenges they face in being the parent or grandparent they need to be in today's world. They have started to recognize they have major competition when it comes to having a meaningful influence on their offspring.

Course Two will equip them to discover more of what it will take to pass on the faith, to be in prayer for their precious young ones, and to discover the wise skills available to pass on to their grandchildren. There is much more to learn and discuss. Even though a freshman might have done well in his or her classes, that does not mean they can skip over being a sophomore. We know it took Jesus' disciples three years to really catch on to what he was about. They could then share what they had received. As family leaders, we need and deserve to receive and grasp what will enable us to fulfill our callings. We know that will take real effort on our part. This is why Course Two becomes a gift to enable that needed training to happen. God is giving family leaders what will help them mature in their great calling.