

You've Been Promoted!

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with insights from Steve Stroope*

Grandparents hold a unique and exalted position when it comes to the process of spiritual formation in the next generation. Other than mom and dad no one else carries the stature or inherent authority in the lives of children. In fact, not even mom or dad can fill the role we fill. That's why I find it troubling that so many modern grandparents squander their opportunity thinking, "I've finished the parenting task." Hardly.

We are not called "grandparents" because we've been retired from the parenting process. We are called "grand" because we've been promoted! That means your task is to do everything possible to help your family achieve success in their most important assignment. Regardless of what business you may be in, your "family business" includes a clear purpose. Specifically, those blessed with the gift of grandchildren are called to inspire and nurture the faith of the next generation as life's greatest privilege and priority.

The scriptures command moms, dads and grandparents to give the next generation a framework for living rooted in the knowledge of and relationship with God. It is our job to support and reinforce the role of parents as they fulfill the command of Deuteronomy 6...

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up... (vs. 6-8)

It seems that this generation of grandfathers mentally check-out or skim past this vital passage of scripture because they

assume it only applies to mom and dad. When did that change?

Prior generations of grandparents understood this mandate to target them as the patriarchs of faith in their extended families. We need to recapture that understanding today if we are going to fulfill our God-ordained role in the faith formation process.

How do you start? Put in place regular scheduled times when you get to invest in your grandchildren such as:

- Put a weekly "touching base" call or text message reminder on your planner to prompt "spontaneous" encouragement or conversation
- Plan once-a-month, twice-a-month, or once-a-week sleepovers
- Host a once-a-year entire week or more with grandchildren
- Create Grandfather/Grandson, Grandmother/Granddaughter events or dates
- Establish birthday traditions (like breakfasts with them)
- Help grandchildren pick out and purchase Christmas gifts for their parents
- Create a Fall Festival celebration each year
- Observe annual celebration of their salvation
- Establish Easter traditions

The key is creating recurring meaningful experiences that, once they have been instituted, take place fairly automatically. Leverage the tools and resources we've suggested to make influencing the faith of the next generation easy.