

Calling All Grandparents!

Who will tell them the wondrous story?

by MICHAEL JAMES DOWLING

WHEN I WAS a sixth grader in public school, we sang “Fairest Lord Jesus” in our morning assembly just about every week. The same two girls requested it so often that, frankly, I got tired of singing it. This was back in the early 1950s. At the time, America was fighting a war in Korea, and another boy

and I were appointed to ring a bell a few times a week so students and teachers could bow their heads and pray for peace.

Oh, how I wish we could hear some of today’s public schoolchildren complaining about having to sing “Fairest Lord Jesus” too often! What we all considered to be simply a normal expression of our faith back then is now challenged. As freedom of religion has been increasingly curtailed in our nation’s public square, teaching God’s Word in our homes has become increasingly important.

Biblical instruction in the home has always been important to God, as we know from passages like Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7, and 11:19. But in far too many homes today,

Christian discipleship is relegated to the back burner. This is obviously true of homes where no parent is a believer, as is increasingly the case in our culture. So who will fill the gap? How will these children learn about the wonders of God?



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Christian Grandparents to the Rescue

In these challenging times, God is doing something wonderful. He is calling grandparents to the vital role of teaching a biblical worldview to the next generation. For too long many in our culture have regarded grandparents largely as providers of hugs and babysitting services. Regrettably, many grandparents also have come to view themselves this way. “We try to make ourselves available and not interfere,” they say.

To be clear, grandparents who offer love and support to their grandchildren should be applauded. These are vitally important and praiseworthy roles. But God has given Christian grandparents an additional role that is eternally important. The apostle Paul acknowledged this when he wrote to Timothy: “I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois” (2 Tim. 1:5).

As a grandparent, you have a wonderful opportunity and awesome responsibility to disciple your grandchild. But how should you go about fulfilling this role? What steps should you take?

Thankfully, God helps us answer these questions by raising up Christian ministries, like Legacy Coalition and Christian Grandparenting Network, to provide encouragement and practical guidance. And some excellent books are available to help you disciple your grandchild, including *Grandparenting: Strengthening Your Family and Passing on Your Faith* by Dr. Josh Mulvihill and *Grandparenting with Grace: Living the Gospel with the Next Generation* by Larry E. McCall. For grandparents new to the discipleship roles, these and similar resources can transform what might initially seem like a daunting task into a thrilling opportunity.

Starting the Discipleship Journey

A good place to start the discipleship journey is by reading aloud with your grandchild. Stories stimulate the imagination, open the heart, and sharpen the mind. When stories are read aloud together, a special bond is created that your grandchild will treasure for a lifetime. Sarah Mackenzie’s website,



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ReadAloudRevival.com, offers helpful guidance about reading aloud with children.

Naturally, the Bible should be the foundation of any Christian reading program. Stories of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, Esther, David, Daniel, and other heroes and heroines of the Bible have captivated and edified generations of children. Stories about Jonah, Samson, Saul, Solomon, and other Bible characters who were less than ideal role models should not be overlooked. In reflection, we can learn something about ourselves, and they show us that the real hero of the Bible is not any created being, but God. Of course, the most important stories of all are the true accounts of Jesus, and His parables are powerful stories within the bigger story.

Stories present opportunities for teaching about character traits, such as honesty, perseverance, obedience, humility, and loyalty. They can spark

lively discussions about important life experiences and emotions, such as fear, disappointment, and bravery. Discussing these is very helpful to children. For children who are a bit older, stories such as the accounts of Naaman being healed of his leprosy in 2 Kings 5 and of Cain's murder of Able in Genesis 4 are excellent catalysts for discussion of issues like anger and jealousy.

Bible stories can be augmented by reading books like *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, *Little Pilgrim's Progress* by Helen L. Taylor, and *The Ology* by Marty Machowski. My own picture book, *Frog's Rainy-Day Story and Other Fables*, helps children and adults recognize and reject

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some of the unbiblical narratives our culture is feeding to families today. Additional book recommendations and reviews can be found at CathyDuffyReviews.com, TheOldSchoolhouse.com, and ReadAloudRevival.com.

Even many books that are not overtly Christian can be useful discipleship tools. When you read the classic *Goodnight Moon*, for example, talk with your grandchild about the vastness of the universe God created. I recommend using a concordance to look up related Scripture passages in advance. For example, you might discuss with your grandchild that the Lord gives the "sun for light by day; the fixed order of the moon and stars for light by night" (Jer. 31:35), that God has established the heavenly lights and the sun (see Ps. 74:16), and that God calls each of the stars by name (see Ps. 147:4). Concluding with Matthew 10:30, in which Jesus talks about how this majestic Creator of the universe numbers the hairs on our head, could really make the story time exciting!

We live in unsettling times, when the influence of the Christian faith in the Western world is diminishing. But God is doing something wonderful. He is reminding grandparents of their vital role of teaching a biblical worldview to the next generation. May we who are grandparents, with God's help, "tell a future generation the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, his might, and the wondrous works he has performed" (Ps. 78:4). 🌿

MICHAEL JAMES DOWLING is the author of *Frog's Rainy-Day Story and Other Fables*, an award-winning picture book for all ages that teaches a biblical worldview (frograinydaystory.com). He has ghostwritten or edited more than 20 nonfiction books for thought leaders (woolstreetwriters.com).



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TENDING THE FAMILY TREE

by

GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS

A tender shoot sprouts from a tree
That's rooted in a trunk called me.
That little branch that bears my name
Will grow into a limb.

And how it grows depends on much —
Parents' guidance, friends, and such.
But, Lord, I know Your grand design
Includes grandparents too.

How straight and strong that branch will grow
Will be determined — I well know —
By words of blessing, loving touch,
And what grandkids observe.

Lord, may my children's children see
Your Holy Spirit's work in me
Through what I do and what I say
And how I make them feel.

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