

The *Godly* Grandparent

LIVING FAITHFULLY AND INFLUENCING
YOUR GRANDCHILDREN FOR CHRIST

by Dennis Ellingson
with Kit Ellingson

STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by Catherine Lawton



**CLADACH
Publishing**

INTRODUCTION

“I love being a grandparent.”

“I enjoy my grandbabies even more than I did my own children.”

“Grandparenthood is great! You can spoil them and send them home.”

We’ve all heard ourselves and other grandparents gushing over the wonders of this new experience. Truly there is nothing quite like this experience of grandparenthood.

Some of us have uprooted our lives and moved halfway across the country to be near the grandbabies. We all want to be part of the lives of these little people. We want to know them, and we want them to know us.

In all our gift-giving, picture-taking, and park outings, we may need to take time to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider our purpose and goals as grandparents. Could it be that just as other parts of our lives are winding down, God has given us a fresh, new start and purpose in life — that of helping to love, nurture, and guide a new generation into a meaningful relationship with their Creator?

Now that’s a calling we want to answer and a task at which we surely want to succeed. You may feel the need for guidance and wisdom in this God-ordained task. Well, there is help to be had. Together we will search out with author, Dennis Ellingson, what the Bible has to say to grandparents.

The thirteen chapters make an effective three-month study for your Sunday school class or Bible study group.

Copyright © 2008 by Cladach Publishing

This booklet may be downloaded free of charge at www.cladach.com/TGGguide.pdf. Photocopy rights to this guide are granted by the publisher to groups studying the book, *The Godly Grandparent: Living Faithfully and Influencing Your Grandchildren for Christ* by Dennis and Kit Ellingson.

A Godly Grandparent Is: BLAMELESS

How would you define “blameless”? Read 1 Peter 2:11-12. What is more important, to be blameless before God or to live a blameless life in front of your grandchildren?

Underline or make a list of words the author uses on pages 12-17 to describe integrity or blamelessness. Your list may include the following: *good, above reproach, integrity, respected, deserving honor, obedient to God, uncompromising, pleasing to God, moral, decency, good example, brave, do the right thing, biblical point of view, righteousness, exposing darkness, shining God’s light, doing the right thing.* How is each of these descriptions important in your relationship with your grandchildren?

The author tells of his experience taking young people to a play where inappropriate language and humor was used. Have you ever had a similar experience? What did you do? What might you have done differently?

Read the following Scriptures and tell what you learned from reading about these Bible characters who displayed integrity:

Hanani — (Neh. 7:2)

Job — (Ez. 14:14; Job. 1:20-22, 2:7-10, 23:11-12; James 5:10-11)

On page 21 the author gives a list of four ways of living a blameless life, full of integrity. Applying each one to your life, in what areas would you like to improve? What will you do this week to live a life of greater integrity?

In what everyday, practical ways will you teach integrity to your grandchildren?

A Godly Grandparent Is: FAITHFUL

How does 2 Timothy 1:5 demonstrate both faith and faithfulness? What does the author mean by a “lived-in” faith?

In what ways did the following Bible characters display faithfulness? How might this have encouraged faith in their grandchildren?

Lois _____

Abraham _____

Moses _____

Jacob _____

Gideon _____

Explain the two-way blessing found in 1 Timothy 5:4.

Are you committed to investing in the lives of your grandchildren with the resources of time and finances God has given you at this time of your life? Considering spiritual resources as well, have you “hidden the Word in your heart” that you may share with your grandchildren the “promises, principles, and stories of the Bible?”

Consider starting a Bible memory program on your own, together with a friend or your spouse, or with your grandchild.

A Godly Grandparent Is: PRAYERFUL

Share a memory of what it has meant for you personally to dedicate a child or grandchild to the Lord. In what way are you also dedicating yourself to help train and to pray for the child?

Who, according to the author, were the true heroes in the Bible story of Samson? Read Judges 13:8-12. What was the significance of the prayer of Manoah and his wife (parents of Samson)? Write out a paraphrase of Manoah’s two requests, wording it as a prayer for your grandchildren.

Read the two following Bible stories and look for principles that you can apply to your own intercessory prayers for your grandchildren:

- Elisha healing the Shunammite woman’s son, 2 Kings 4:32-33.
- Hannah’s prayers for her son, Samuel, 1 Samuel 1:11-28.

Why do you think God chose to give the responsibility of bearing and raising the child, John, to an aged couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth?

How do these words of the author apply to you as a Christian grandparent: “Living as a faithful witness in integrity and in prayerfulness may be like saving up an inheritance for not only our children but our grandchildren to come.” What is the best inheritance you can leave for your grown children and your grandchildren?

Share a story of answered prayer from your life, perhaps a prayer your parents or grandparents prayed for you, or that you prayed for your child or grandchild.

A Godly Grandparent Is: MORAL

If you are a Baby Boomer who was a youth during the 1960s and '70s, how do you think your “generational view” has affected your personal moral choices? Does the current generation take sin seriously enough? Why or why not? In what way are previous generations responsible for this generation’s lack of a biblical moral compass?

Have you experienced a mid-life transition? How might this period of life bring new temptations? Have you let down or lowered any of the moral standards you held to during your child-rearing years?

How is personal morality related to self-discipline?

Can you relate to Lot’s wife’s dilemma? If so, in what way? Are you holding too tightly to the pleasures of your current life? What are they? (e.g., comfortable home, traveling, shopping, free time, etc.) How do the words of James 1:21-22 relate to this discussion?

Read Timothy 4:7-8. Are you challenged by Paul’s words about finishing well? Explain.

How can we counteract, in our grandchildren’s lives, the immoral influence of the media? Will knowing and recognizing the “stages of moral development” help? At what stages are your grandchildren?

In what concrete, everyday ways might you use Spurgeon’s guidelines (listed on page 73) to teach your grandchildren?

Determine to “fight the good fight” to the end and finish well!

A Godly Grandparent Is: COMPASSIONATE

After reading chapter 5, how would you define compassion? How was compassion demonstrated by Jesus?

Read Isaiah 52 - 53, about the Suffering Servant. The author takes key words from this Scripture as topics in his discussion about compassion. How does each of these topics, on pages 80-88, show a different facet of compassion:

“Act wisely” —

“Exalt” God —

“Grow up” —

“Tender shoot” —

“Not driven by beauty” —

“Despised and rejected” —

“Taken up and carried” —

“Smitten and afflicted” —

“Crushed” —

“Iniquities” —

“Punishment” —

“Peace” —

“Healed wounds” —

“Astray” —

“Oppressed and afflicted” —

“Closed mouth” —

“Cut off” —

“Death” —

“Deceit” —

“Prosper” —

“Light” —

“Satisfied” —
“Knowledge” —
“Servant” —
“Intercession” —

Meditate on how God may be asking you to show compassion.

In communicating your love to your grandchildren, seek to be more effective, sincere, and creative. Can you identify the “love languages” of your grandchildren?

In what sense is loving others selflessly an act of worship?

Prayerfully look for ways to be aware of your grandchild’s needs and help to bear his or her burdens, as Christ would do. Teach them to cast their burdens on him. Let them see you giving your burdens to the Lord, and also helping to bear the burdens of others in Christ’s name.

Read aloud the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.

A Godly Grandparent Is: SOBER

Why must a Christian elder, or grandparent, live sober-mindedly?

The consumption of alcoholic beverages may be an area where many contemporary Christians have changed or lowered their standards. Why might this be true? Discuss whether this is “compromising with the world,” “fitting in” in a good way, or enjoying “God’s good gifts.” Where do you personally stand on this issue? What is the stand of the Christian tradition in which you fellowship and worship?

It may be difficult to identify with other people’s beliefs and practices, even within the community of believers. As you read this chapter, consider honestly the author’s position on alcohol consumption.

If there has been alcoholism in the past few generations of your family, how does this fact influence your present choices about alcoholic beverages?

What choices do you hope your grandchildren will make concerning alcohol and sobriety? How can you help to positively influence their choices?

To help you in your own decisions in this area of life, make a list of the pros and cons of drinking:

Pros

Cons

A Godly Grandparent Is: PEACEABLE

What types of violence — whether actual or “make believe” — might your grandchildren be exposed to on a regular basis? List ways you can become involved in counteracting that violent influence.

Consider/Discuss areas in which we as a society have become desensitized to violence of all kinds.

Discuss the author’s statement, “In this fallen world, controlled aggression is necessary to keep evil in check.”

What are two main causes of aggression in children? (See p. 113.)

What, as seen in Ezekiel 45:9, can be considered the root of the problem of violence? When is “being right” actually wrong?

Read through the twenty guidelines for living peaceably and teaching peace. Put a check mark next to the ones you want to implement in your own life.

List some advantages of living peaceably.

A Godly Grandparent Is: DISCIPLINED

In this chapter the author discusses two forms of discipline: what he calls “Christian discipline” and “personal discipline.” Why is it important for the Christian life to be a disciplined life? What daily disciplines should the Christian believer exercise?

A few challenging and helpful books to read on the subject of the disciplined Christian life are:

Celebration of Discipline by Richard J. Foster (Harper & Row)

The Disciplined Life by Richard S. Taylor (Beacon Hill Press)

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald S. Whitney (NavPress)

Discipline and Discovery by Albert Day (The Parthenon Press)

If you have read one of these books, share with your group how it helped you.

How might your personal discipline begin to slip after your children are grown and gone from your home?

Explain the author’s statement, “A full life is a disciplined life that is ordered by the Lord.” In what ways is such a life more full or fulfilled than an undisciplined life?

While he is speaking of discipline, the author also deals with the topic of child discipline. Discuss methods you have used to discipline your grandchildren when they have been under your care and supervision. What worked or didn’t work?

How can living a disciplined life yourself help your grandchildren to choose such a life?

9
A Godly Grandparent Is: WISE

We receive godly wisdom from two sources. What are those? The author also mentions a third source: experience.

Have you allowed your growing knowledge of the Scriptures and communion with the Holy Spirit, together with your life experiences to increase your store of godly wisdom?

In regard to our grown children and our grandchildren, then, we have two goals: 1) to pray for them and guide them in experiencing a personal relationship with God and His Word which impart wisdom for life, and 2) to demonstrate wisdom before them through our own decisions, attitudes and actions. Pray that God will help you in these areas, and that he will help your grandchildren as well.

Discuss the author's eight ways of demonstrating wisdom as described on pages 140 to 146. How does each of these considerations pertain to your relationship with your grandchild(ren)?

Share what the following statement by the author means to you in regards to your family: "The reality is, wisdom isn't always appreciated and is sometimes hated, but it always proves itself to be right." Why is it important to temper this with the trait we will study in the next chapter (humility)?

10
A Godly Grandparent Is: HUMBLE

List six character traits of Moses that start with the following letters:

H _____

B _____

K _____

S _____

F _____ of G _____

D _____ on G _____

Discuss the following statements by the author found on pages 152-153:

- "It appears that humble people do the best for God because their own personalities, desires and ambitions don't get in the way."

- "Where does total dependence start and end when you are a busy and motivated American living in a world that is performance-based and consumer-oriented?"

- "The key lies in our obedience to the Holy Spirit."

Try to memorize Philippians 2:6-7.

Which of the activities described on pages 155 to 160 will you try with your grandchild(ren)?

How may your habit of respectful speech help your grandchildren learn humility?

A Godly Grandparent Is: GENEROUS

Think of some generous people you have known. What did you admire most about them?

Discuss the authors' statement (on page 166), "We have come to believe that the abundance of God is beyond measure."

Share with your group a story of a time when God provided to you or through you, in a time of need, out of his abundance.

Choose from the activities listed on pages 168 to 170, those that you would like to implement with your grandchildren. Begin making plans to do this.

How will lessons in, and opportunities for expressing, generosity and altruism actually help protect your grandchildren?

How can we teach children the joy of helping others because they *want* to, not just because they *have* to?

In what sense is the act of giving also an act of worship? Can you share an example from your personal experience?

What attitudes and practices will help you not to become weary in doing good?

A Godly Grandparent Is: A LEADER

What is the difference between the secular world's definition of a leader and the Christian view of leadership?

What positions of leadership have you held in your lifetime? Do you have more or fewer leadership responsibilities at this time of your life?

The author describes a scout leader he had as a boy. Can you recall a leader who influenced you positively as a child? Share a memory of that person with your group.

Read John 10:3-14. How will you use the Good Shepherd's style of leadership with your grandchildren?

Discuss these statements by the author:

- "Will they know that we are Christians by observing what we have or don't have, and what we do or don't do in our home, as well as by the love we show them?"

- "We can do our best to let our grandchildren know us, what we stand for, what we believe in, our hopes and dreams. By communicating this, our grandchildren can be prompted to think likewise."

Read Joel 1: 2-3. In what practical and creative ways can you tell your grandchildren the story of what God has done in your life? Will you be intentional about doing this?

EXTRA: Encouragement for Long-Distance Grandparents

Many of us don't live close enough to our grandchildren for them to see our daily lives. How can we then influence and encourage them to live in godliness?

My grandparents lived several states away as I was growing up, but they were a very important and hugely influential part of my life. I felt their influence through:

- their visits, about once every year or two.
- occasional letters, gifts, and phone calls.
- photos and memories.
- my mother's love and respect for them.
- my mother's attitudes and ways, which came largely from all she had learned from them (indirect influence passed down).
- the good things other people said about my grandparents.

Love is a strong bond! Knowing you are important to someone, even someone a long ways away, can hold you steady and guide you through storms.

I am blessed that my grandparents never disappointed or let me down. Their lives were consistent and faithful.

I find encouragement in 1 Peter 1:8. Peter writes that, though we don't see God, we love him. And we know he loves us and that we are precious to him. And we are assured that we have an inheritance that is incorruptible.

Similarly, being certain of my grandparent's long-distance

love for me involved faith, believing, hoping, waiting, and knowing I was precious to them. It involved knowing there was a place where I'd be totally accepted, a place always ready and waiting for me.

I believe this relationship actually transferred and contributed to my ability to believe in God my Father, whom I didn't see — to develop faith and hope, belief in his faithfulness; to learn to wait for him, knowing I was precious to him — though I didn't see him.

And even now, as my grandparents are with the Lord in that unseen place, part of the "cloud of witnesses" — still interceding for us, I believe — their faithfulness, their love still help to hold me firm in the conviction that I am precious to God, desired, that I have an "inheritance that is incorruptible," and that there is a place prepared for me where I will be totally accepted, a place that is ready — and people who are waiting — for me.

Added to the influence of my grandparents' lives were the effects of their prayers. As my husband and I look back on our lives and see God's hand at work all along the way, we give glory to God and we believe that much of the blessing and the keeping grace we have experienced have been the result of the prayers of godly grandparents on both sides of our family.

An incorruptible inheritance indeed! And now we have the opportunity to be part of that faithful living, giving of ourselves, and praying, that will extend the inheritance of faith to future generations.

