

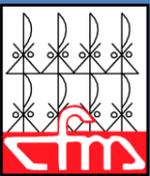
The Grand Adventure

A New Call to Grandparenting



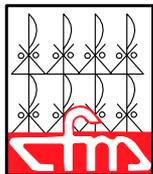
*A Six-Meeting Program
for Grandparents*

By Gary and Kay Aitchison



*Christian
Family
Movement*

"Grandparents are a precious resource for families, the church and society." –Pope Benedict XVI, April 2008



The Grand Adventure

*An Inquiry Book
Published by the
Christian Family Movement*

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The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition, copyright 1993 and 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in the USA.

Acknowledgments

The Grand Adventure was written in response to an observed need in today's society to make better use of the grandparenting connection in family life. The program was inspired by and modeled from the many dynamic and committed grandparents who share their time, talent, gifts and charisms with their grandchildren. We are especially grateful to Fr. Donald Conroy, President of the National Institute for the Family, for his insights and encouragement and to author Carolyn Gutowski for her vision and expertise in the field of grandparenting, that are so well expressed in her book *Grandparents are Forever*.

Introduction

The Grand Adventure is a six-meeting program designed for small discussion groups of about 8-12 grandparents. The program is easy to use and needs only a facilitator to organize the group and guide each meeting. The 1½ to 2 hour sessions could conveniently be held in either a home or a church. Each meeting provides an opening prayer, scripture reflection, discussion material and action suggestions that challenge grandparents to do something that will make a difference in their grandchild's life.

Society has placed nearly super-human demands on today's families. Parents are struggling to succeed in the multi-arena of family, jobs, church and community while also dealing with the effects of a diminished economy. In many homes, family life is getting only left-over time. Obviously, today's families could use more support than most of them are getting.

Grandparents are perfect candidates to fill in the gaps in the fabric of family life- not to supplant the parents but as unique reservoirs of knowledge and experience who bring a valuable dimension to the lives of their grandchildren. Most grandparents care deeply about their grandchildren and want the best for them. In April 2008, Pope Benedict XVI recognized the value of grandparents when he said that grandparents are a precious resource for families, church and society. *The Grand Adventure* is designed to tap the grandparent resource and provide greater assistance to busy and stressed families.

The Grand Adventure helps grandparents to realize their true grandparent potential as they explore new ways to enhance the grandparent-grandchild relationship. They assess their many gifts and talents and ways to use them to benefit their grandchildren. This like-to-like ministry gives

grandparents support and friendship while it empowers them in their grandparent vocation

How to Get Started

- Sell the program to your pastor and parish faith formation committee.
- Choose a facilitator to organize and run the program.
- Advertise through your parish bulletin, bulletin boards, retirement groups, phone calls, word of mouth. Invite new, seasoned and prospective grandparents, grandparent singles, grandparent couples. Ask interested grandparents to bring a friend.
- Gather interested grandparents for an information meeting to meet one another and to explain the program and distribute program material.
- Eight to twelve participants make a comfortable size group.
- Set a meeting time frame of 1 ½ to 2 hours followed by a brief social time.
- Decide on a meeting time schedule. Once a month or every other week are preferable, however the program could also be used as a once a week Lenten program.
- Decide on a meeting time that works well with grandparents or give a choice of meeting times. Consider a morning meeting that follows daily mass or an afternoon meeting for retired folks. An evening meeting would be best for younger grandparents.
- Choose a meeting place: a church meeting room, the leader's home or rotate among participants' homes.
- The facilitator or another designated leader should lead the meetings.
- Nametags may be helpful in the beginning.
- Each member of the group should be invited to share and every person's contribution should be accepted and appreciated.

- Meetings should be on time and conclude promptly but be followed by a social time.
- If the meetings are held at the church, ask for volunteers to host the meetings by bringing treats and making coffee.
- The purpose of the program is two-fold: 1) It will build community among grandparents and empower them in their vocation. 2) It will help grandparents to take a more active role by consciously sharing their talent, faith and wisdom with their grandchildren.

ONE

Job Description: Grandparent

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for this opportunity to come together. Today we begin a new adventure in our grandparent role. Please send your Holy Spirit to walk with us. Guide our conversation, and inspire us to be the best grandparents we can be. Help us to discover our grandparenting charisms and use them in the best way to enrich our grandchildren's lives. Empower us and guide us on our grandparenting journey. We ask these things in the name of your son Jesus Christ. Amen

Scripture Reflection

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather
stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from
embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

- What are the characteristics of this time and season in your life?
- In what ways do you see God working in this time of your life that are different from the past

DISCOVER

Many of us carry an idealized image of grandparents that might have sprung from a Norman Rockwell painting. The grandma from our past memories is decked out in her print apron serving the Thanksgiving turkey to her large family gathered around the huge dining room table. She can be counted on to whip up a delicious home cooked meal at the drop of a hat. She can bake chocolate chip cookies or a loaf of homemade bread, darn a pair of worn sox, soothe bruised egos, rock a crying baby and still keep a special place in her heart for each of her grandchildren. Grandpa, her companion, is a jolly, friendly soul with a pocketful of stories and another filled with hard candy. He is always ready to share either with a grandchild. He is a jack-of-all-trades who can build a birdhouse, whittle a wooden whistle, and fix anything.

Share and Discuss

1. Bring pictures of your grandparents to the meeting.
2. Introduce your grandparents to the group by showing their pictures and telling their stories.
3. What do you remember about your relationship with your grandparents?
4. How was love and affection expressed by your grandparents? How was love and affection expressed in your family of origin?

DISCOVER

Grandparenting is not a role that we necessarily choose, instead it is chosen for us. For some it comes too soon, and for others the wait is far too long. Many are delighted to arrive at this next stage in life, but for others it is a challenge that brings them face to face with their own mortality and aging process. For some, it is an ambiguous time. Whatever one's feelings about this new role in life, there is no choice but to accept it. Surely, grandparenting is a vocation that God calls us to, much as we are called to other vocations. For those who embrace this new role in life, grandparenting can be a transformative experience with new adventures and wonderful opportunities. The relationships we create with our grandchildren can make a huge impact in their lives and in our own.

Share and Discuss

1. How has the image of grandparenting changed since you were a child?
2. Why have grandparents been important in your life?
3. What are your feelings about being a grandparent?
4. How has grandparenting changed you? for the better/the worse?

Act to Make a Difference - *Choose one or more of the actions listed below or create a new one.*

1. Begin a written, audio or electronic grandparenting journal. Tell the story of your grandparents and your relationship with them.
2. Write a job description for a grandparent. Share at the next meeting.
3. Read a book on grandparenting.

4. Call your grandchildren and tell them why they are important to you.
5. Show your grandchildren the pictures of your grandparents. Make copies of the pictures and put in a book for them.

Long-Distance Grandparenting

Many grandparents and grandchildren are separated by miles or even family differences. This can be a challenge. Long-distance grandparents can still keep connected but must be more creative in their approaches. Technology is a boon for both long-distance and close-by relationships. Telephone your grandchild. Find out what is going on in his/her life. Ask specific questions. Keep the conversation short so that they don't get bored. Even a baby can learn to recognize grandpa's and grandma's voices.

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, son of the Father, thank you for this new adventure begun today. We are grateful for the opportunity to explore and enrich our grandparenting vocation. Help us to recognize the many ways that we can bring your spirit into the lives of our grandchildren and guide them in their journey to you. May we be your instruments and make a profound difference in their lives. Amen

Helpful Resources

Grandparents are Forever by Carolyn Gutowski, Paulist Press, 1994 , 2007.

Creative Grandparenting Across the Miles by Patricia Fry, Liguori, 1997.

Note to Leader: Sharing pictures may be so enjoyable that it takes up a major portion of the meeting. If this happens, don't rush through the rest of the meeting material. Instead, close the meeting with a prayer and use the remainder of Meeting 1 for your next session.

TWO

Blessings and Anchors

OPENING PRAYER

God our father, thank you for the opportunity, once more, to share the joys, the challenges, the responsibilities of being a grandparent. Please open our ears to hear more distinctly, our eyes to see more clearly, our hearts to love more fully. Empower us with your love that we might share that love with all that we meet but especially with our grandchildren. Amen

Scripture Reflection

You did not choose me, but I chose you and I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another
John 15:16-17

- How has God commissioned you to bear his fruit in your grandchild's life?
- In what ways are you a conduit of God's love for your grandchild?

Report on your actions from the last meeting.

DISCOVER

Grandparents are blessings and anchors in a family. A grandparent's place in the life of a child is unique and should never be underestimated. There is something of a magnetic

attraction between grandparents and their grandchildren. A child who has loving grandparents is blessed, empowered, enriched and nourished. Grandparents often have time that parents don't, for special one-on-one interaction. They anchor a child with stability. Grandchildren are so easy to love and nurture. Could it be because they carry a bit of our DNA? Grandparents and grandchildren understand each other in a way that no one else can. Humorist Sam Levenson once said that the reason grandchildren and grandparents get along so well is that they have a common enemy!

Share and Discuss

1. Bring photos of your grandchildren to the meeting and introduce each of them to the group.
2. Share any concerns you might have for any of your grandchildren.

Inspiration and Challenge

The late news commentator, Paul Harvey, once commented on his wishes for his grandchildren. Mr. Harvey lamented the fact that parents of his generation tried so hard to make things better for their children that they only made them worse by lavishing them with too much and making life too easy. In reflecting on his wishes for his grandchildren, he said that he would like them to know about homemade ice cream and left-over meatloaf. He'd like them to learn humility by being humiliated and honesty by being cheated. He hoped that his grandson would learn to make his bed, mow the lawn, wash the car, and that no one would give him a brand new car when he was 16. He went on to say it would be good for him to see a calf being born, experience his old dog being put to sleep and get a black eye fighting for something he believed in. He hoped he would have to share a bedroom with his younger brother, even if they had to

divide the room with a line drawn down the middle. He hoped he'd read books and learn to add and subtract in his head and get sick if someone blew cigar smoke in his face. He went on to say he hoped his grandchild would make time to sit on the porch with his grandpa, go fishing with his uncle, feel sorrow at a funeral and joy at holidays. He concluded by saying, "These things I wish for you - tough times and disappointment, hard work and happiness."

Share and Discuss

1. Do parents and grandparents do too much for today's children? Explain.
2. How would you compare your grandchildren's lives to yours as a child?
3. How would you compare their lives to those of their parents?
4. What do you wish for each of your grandchildren?
5. How can you make it happen?
6. How are you an anchor for your grandchildren?

Act to Make a Difference - *Choose one of the actions or create a new one.*

1. Make homemade ice cream with your grandchildren.
2. Following Paul Harvey's example, compile a list of what you wish for your grandchildren.
3. Do something from that wish list with or for your grandchildren.
4. Teach your grandchild a game from your childhood.
5. Write a letter or e-mail to your grandchild explaining *When I was Your Age*. Tell them what your life was like when you were their age. Weave your faith story into your letters.
6. Create a family calendar with pictures of each family member, highlight birthdays and special events. Have it printed at a local copy shop.

7. Compile a picture book or write an adventure story about your grandchild.
8. Give a Gift Certificate for an overnight at your house or a trip away.
9. For your grandchild's birthday, create a special birthday card using a picture of him/her from the past. Write your own verse. Cut and paste or use your computer.
10. Create your own action to make a difference.

Long-Distance Grandparenting

Keep in touch with your long-distance grandchild in up-to-date and creative ways. Investigate Skype. This technology allows you to speak to your grandchildren and be seen via your computer. It's almost like being there.

CLOSING PRAYER

Gentle Jesus, you have given us the responsibility of being both blessings and anchors for our grandchildren. Help us to bless their lives with our care, our love and our concern. May our presence give them security and ground them with stability. Guide us and support us in our significant role as grandparents. Amen

Helpful Resources:

The Essential Grandparent by Dr. Lillian Carson, Health Communications, Inc., 1999.

Chicken Soup for the Grandparent's Soul by Canfield, Hansen, McCarty and McCarty, 2002.

THREE

Models, Mentors and Memory-Makers

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, you have renewed our spirits by gifting us with a new generation. We are grateful for another time around to share our lives with your creation. We pray that in your goodness you will empower us, enrich us, and walk with us on our grandparenting journey. Amen

Scripture Reflection

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord: and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Cor 12:4-7

- What gifts do grandparents bring to the Christian community?
- What gifts do **you** bring to the Christian community?
- What gifts do **you** bring to your family/grandchildren?

Report on actions from the last meeting.

DISCOVER

Grandparents are models for the younger generation. Their witness teaches a great deal about how to build a meaningful life. They have lived many years and have accumulated a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to draw from. The way they live their lives can be a positive example of aging and maturity.

Grandparents are mentors who are most successful when they have earned their grandchildren's acceptance and trust. They have a storehouse of experience to share. Over the years, they have honed their gifts and talents, learned valuable skills and developed interests that are advantageous, educational and beneficial to their grandchildren. Their life experience can guide and teach their grandchildren and help them to avoid many potential pitfalls.

Grandparents are memory-makers. By spending time and mentoring their grandchildren, they can build a wealth of memories. When grandparents teach a skill, facilitate a new experience, create an opportunity, share a memorable event or just hang out and have fun, they are creating memories to last a lifetime.

Share and Discuss

1. How have you observed others being models, mentors, memory-makers?
2. How were your grandparents models, mentors and memory-makers for you?
3. How have you been a model, mentor, memory-maker for your grandchildren?
4. What skills, talents, and expertise do you have that could be shared with your grandchildren?

5. What gifts and talents do your individual grandchildren possess that you might nourish? How?
6. Share something you have done to make memories for a grandchild.

Act to Make a Difference - *Choose an action below or create a new one.*

1. Create a memory for your grandchild.
2. Teach your grandchild a skill that you have learned: bake cookies, chop down a tree, knit a scarf, bake a loaf of bread, build a birdhouse, create a quilt, plant a garden. Share with him/her how you learned this skill.
3. Develop a mutual hobby with your grandchild.
4. Ask your grandchild to teach you something that he/she excels at.
5. Write a poem about all the individuals in your family. Ask your grandchild to illustrate it, then make copies for the family.
6. Play the game “Two truths and a lie” with your grandchildren.” Full instructions can be found under that title online.
7. If your grandchildren are far away, get involved in an “Adopt a Grandchild” program in your community.

Long-Distance Grandparenting

Bridge the miles with e-mail. Compose a continuing e-mail story. Send an installment daily or weekly. OR, tell the story of your childhood or that of the child’s parent. Let them know what life was like in “the olden days.” Where did you live? Who was in your family? Where did you go to school? What were your chores in the family? What was life like when you were their age?

CLOSING PRAYER

Gentle Jesus, you love the little children - all the children of the world. You love our precious grandchildren even more than we do. Guide us to be bearers of your love. Help us to show our love in ways that will be most beneficial to them and to their parents. Empower us with a love that will help us to embrace and grow in our grandparenting vocation. Amen

Helpful Resources

Letters to Grand Children by Elaine Mayer, Trafford, 2009.

Subscribe to *Family Fun* magazine, <http://familyfun.go.com>, for many activity ideas to share with your grandchild.

Go to grandparent.com for more ideas for building memories.

Note for the Leader: Consider inviting your pastor to the next meeting.

FOUR

Shepherds of Faith and Traditions

OPENING PRAYER

God our father, thank you for the grandchildren that you have brought into our lives. You have given us joy, responsibility, and the challenge to be living witnesses of faith to them. May we always be a shepherd of your faith for our entire family, and may our witness strengthen and guide them. Amen

Scripture Reflection

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Luke 15: 4-7

- What is the message for us in this scripture reading?
- How are we called to shepherd the faith in our families?
- How does our witness make a difference?

Report on actions from the last meeting.

DISCOVER

Wise and faith-filled grandparents are part of God's plan. They are carriers of faith, traditions, morals and values. Grandparents are living examples and can be a tremendous witness to their grandchildren. Not all grandchildren are being brought up in the faith of their grandparents and this may be challenging. Still, the subtle example of grandparents living their faith can be a powerful influence. Grandparents teach faith by all that they do including:

- Praying for their grandchildren
- Telling Bible Stories
- Sharing stories of the lives of God's holy people
- Doing good works
- Creating Christian traditions in the home
- Teaching prayers - both traditional and spontaneous
- Praying at mealtimes
- Displaying religious pictures/symbols in their homes
- Providing books that tell stories of God and his people
- Taking grandchildren to church

Share and Discuss

1. How are you a spiritual guide for your grandchildren?
2. How do you share and teach faith to them?
3. What Christian traditions have you established in your home?
4. What Christian traditions are being carried out in the homes of your grandchildren?

Act to Make a Difference - *Choose an action or create a new one.*

1. Do something listed in the Discover section.
2. Teach your grandchild a prayer or tradition from your childhood.

3. Create a new tradition; involve your grandchild.
4. Write a prayer for each of your grandchildren.
5. Pray for your grandchildren (and their parents) daily.
6. Invite your grandchildren to join you in a service project.
7. Give your grandchild a children's Bible. Create games, riddles, puzzles from Bible stories.
8. Give your grandchild a book of saints or research favorite saints with them online. If they have a saint's name, be sure they know something about that holy person.
9. Teach your grandchildren the five finger prayer:
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/fivefingerprayer.html>.

Long Distance Grandparenting

Keep connected with "snail mail." Kids love to receive mail. For small children, send a picture word letter where pictures substitute for some of the words. For older children, write your letter on a piece of poster board and then cut into puzzle pieces for assembly when received. Be creative - write from the bottom of the page to the top, or start in the middle of the page and write in a spiral.

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, shepherd of our faith, thank you for walking with us on this journey. Sometimes the path has been wide and easy to travel, other times narrow and treacherous. Sometimes, we have fallen and lost our way. Thank you for guiding us through the dark valleys and searching for us when we have wandered astray. Thank you for always guiding us back to the true path. Thank you for giving us this new mission in life to be a presence and influence in the lives of our grandchildren. Just as you have been our shepherd, help us to be a shepherd of faith to them. Amen

Helpful Resources:

Catholic Customs and Traditions by Greg Dues, Twenty Third Publications, 2000.

Prayers for the Domestic Church by Edward Hays, Forest of Peace Books, Inc., 1979.

Catholic Family, Catholic Home, by Mary Kathleen Glavich, SND, Twenty Third Publications, 2000.

Family Prayer for Family Times by Kathleen O'Connell Chesto, Twenty Third Publications, 1995.

FIVE

Links between the Past and the Future

OPENING PRAYER

God of our ancestors, thank you for the continuity of life and family. You have created each of us in your image and yet made us uniquely one of a kind. We are a piece in an unbroken line that stretches through the ages. We are grateful for the family that is ours and cognizant of our role as a formidable link that ties the past generations of our family to the future. Help us to be good stewards of our family heritage and pass it on to those who follow. Amen

Scripture Reflection

And he blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has led me all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and in them let my name be perpetuated and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

Gen 48:15-16

- What is the significance of the blessings that Jacob gives to his son Joseph and to Joseph’s two sons (referred to here as the lads)?

Report on Actions from last meeting

DISCOVER

Grandparents are the keepers of the family stories. They are living links between the past and the future. These elders of the family carry a heavy responsibility for passing on the stories and history of the family to future generations. Unless they share the family stories, a part of the family's soul and identity is lost. With the arrival of the first grandchild, family history often takes on a new relevance. Through the telling of the family stories, children are given a sense of belonging. They learn who they are and develop a family pride and spirit. Studies shows that knowledge of one's background can be a valuable tool in building self-esteem and a sense of security in young people. Grandparents are strong and significant links and have a valuable role in perpetuating the continuing history of their family.

Share and Discuss

1. Who passed on the family stories and heritage in your family?
2. Share a family story that has been passed down in your family.
3. What does it mean to be a member of your family?
4. Who keeps the family spirit alive in your family?
5. How have you shared the family stories with your grandchildren?

Act to Make a Difference - *Choose an action or create a new one.*

1. Bless your grandchildren, when they come to visit or you visit them, by tracing a cross on their foreheads and repeating the words, "I bless you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

2. Tell your grandchild a story about your childhood or a story about their parent's childhood.
3. Create a family tree.
4. Make a Family Time Line. Begin with your birth, or earlier, and let each grandchild place his or her name in the appropriate time frame.
5. Write the family history and share with your family.
6. Purchase a Grandfather's Book or Grandmother's Book and fill in the blanks. When you are finished, you will have a brief history of your life for your grandchildren.
7. Tell your grandchild a family story that you heard as a child.
8. Write the story of your grandparents.
9. Frame pictures of your ancestors and create a heritage wall to share with your family.
10. Introduce your grandchildren to their ancestors through pictures and stories. Make a book for them. Help them to know what it means to be a member of your clan.
11. Create a Family Cookbook for your family. Include traditional and favorite recipes and stories about the recipe. (Such as: Your dad really liked this dish when he was growing up. He always requested it for his birthday.)
12. Create a Family Trivia game with questions about living and deceased members of the family. Play it with your children and grandchildren.
13. Prepare and bury a time capsule with your family to be unearthed at an agreed upon time in the future. Include photos, writings, and important information about the family.

Long Distance Grandparenting

Send cards for all occasions. If you are creative- make your own. Include "Just Because" gifts: a joke, a balloon, stick of

gum, stickers, dollar bill, coupons, gift card, baseball cards, childhood photos of their parent. Send a “You Are Special” gift: a joke book, box of crayons, pair of sox, hair ribbon, or book. Send a box of homemade cookies to your grandchild in college.

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, you were part of a family. You, too, had grandparents. Surely, Anne and Joachim were a big part of your life. They are a model and inspiration to all grandparents. Bless the grandparents gathered here today. Help us to remember and tell the family stories to our children and grandchildren. May these stories honor those who have gone before us as they build our family spirit and give our children and their children a sense of belonging. We pray that our family story will continue to be told to future generations. Amen

Helpful Resources:

Families Writing by Peter R. Stillman, Calendar Islands Publishers, 1998.

Grandma Knows Best But No One Ever Listens by Mary McBride, Meadowbrook, 1987.

A Grandparent’s Book by Milton Kamen, HP Books, The Berkley Publishing Group, 1977, 1987.

Life Stories - a game from TaliCor (There is also a Christian version)

SIX

Passing on the Wisdom and Legacy

OPENING PRAYER

God of wisdom and light, you have given us many years and a multitude of experiences in which to accumulate a wealth of knowledge. Help us to share our wisdom with our grandchildren and others in a kind and gentle way. Show us how to be wise and careful stewards of this treasure and to pass on the wisdom of the clan in such a way that it will benefit those who are here now and those who are to come. Amen

Scripture Reflection

My son, from your youth up choose instruction, and until you are old you will keep finding wisdom.

Sirach 6:18

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of sons is their fathers.

Proverbs 17:6

O God, from my youth thou hast taught me; and I still proclaim thy wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me till I proclaim thy might to all the generations to come.

Psalms 71:17-18

- How do religious faith and practice bring wisdom?

- What faith message would you like to leave to future generations in your family?

Report on Actions from last meeting

DISCOVER

Grandparents have been described as wisdom with wrinkles. They have navigated the “good old days” of youth and middle age. They have survived trials and tribulations. They have experienced successes and failures. After having lived many years, they have had a myriad of experiences and accumulated a wealth of knowledge. Grandparents are like a treasure chest filled with fine and precious jewels. Their lived experience and developed insights make them the sages of the family.

As the “wisdom generation” and leaders of the tribe, they have much to share with the younger generation.

Grandparents are models for the third age in life. They exhibit virtues, values, faith and maturity. Their example, their presence and their wisdom are invaluable gifts to their grandchildren.

Share and Discuss

1. Who are the wise men and women in our church, family and society? What makes them wise?
2. Share an example of wisdom that was passed on to you by a grandparent or another older person. How has this wisdom influenced your life?
3. What wisdom have you shared with your grandchildren?
4. What is the responsibility of the wisdom generation?
5. What legacy would you like to leave your grandchildren? How can you make it happen? What difference will it make?

Act to Make a Difference - *Choose an action or create a new one.*

1. Share stories from a book of virtues with your grandchildren and discuss the wisdom found therein.
2. Help your grandchild with a job or project where your wisdom will make a difference.
3. Compile a notebook of your important sayings and beliefs for your grandchild.
4. Write a letter of wisdom to each of your grandchildren, to be opened on their 21st birthday or another milestone event.
5. Leave a legacy of your thoughts, words, and wisdom. Create an Ethical Will that outlines your beliefs, values, life lessons and hopes for the future.
6. Compile a medical history of past generations of your family. This could be of great value to future generations.
7. Plan a group social event to mark the completion of this grandparent program.
8. Explore options for continuing your grandparent group or for organizing a grandparent ministry in your parish.
9. Plan a special liturgy to recognize the grandparents in your parish.
10. As a group, watch and discuss the movie/DVD "The Ultimate Gift". Information about the film is available online.

Long-Distance Grandparenting

Telephone - text - travel. Make a weekly telephone date with your grandchild. Inquire about his/her activities, sports, music lessons, friends, school work and the like. Send texts to let your grandchild know you are thinking of him/her. Plan a trip to a half-way point to meet your grandchild and his/her parents for a weekend or longer.

CLOSING PRAYER

God our father, Jesus our brother, Holy Spirit our guide, you have been with us through these six sessions in which we have explored the exciting and challenging vocation of grandparenting. You have enlightened us, empowered us and helped us to assess our grandparent charisms. Bless us now and show us the best way to serve as spiritual guides, models and mentors to our grandchildren. May we be both blessings and anchors in their lives. Amen

Helpful Resources:

The Child's Book of Virtues, edited by William Bennett, Simon and Schulster, 1985.

So Grows the Tree - Creating an Ethical Will by Jo Kline Cebuhar, J.D., Self-Published 2009, available on-line.

<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov> helps people create a family health history.

Prayer for Grandparents

Lord Jesus,
You were born of the Virgin Mary,
the daughter of Saints Joachim and Anne.
Look with love on grandparents the world over.
Protect them! They are a source of enrichment
for families, for the Church and for all of society.
Support them! As they grow older,
may they continue to be for their families
strong pillars of Gospel faith,
guardians of noble domestic ideals,
living treasuries of sound religious traditions.
Make them teachers of wisdom and courage,
that they may pass on to future generations the fruits
of their mature human and spiritual experience.

Lord Jesus,
help families and society
to value the presence and roles of grandparents.
May they never be ignored or excluded,
but always encounter respect and love.
Help them to live serenely and to feel welcomed
in all the years of life which you give them.
Mary, Mother of all the living,
keep grandparents constantly in your care,
accompany them on their earthly pilgrimage,
and by your prayers, grant that all families
may one day be reunited in our heavenly homeland
where you await all humanity
for the great embrace of life without end.
Amen

Pope Benedict XV

A Prayer for Grandchildren

Gracious and Heavenly Father, you have gifted me with these beautiful and unique grandchildren made in your image. Please surround them with your love and keep them safe. I pray that you will send your angels to watch over them night and day and keep them from all harm and that they may walk always in your light. Guard them, guide them, protect them from all evil. These things I ask in Jesus' name. Amen

A Grandparent's Prayer

Heavenly Father, you gave me another opportunity to love and be loved when I became a grandparent. Thank you for allowing me to be a presence and an influence in my grandchild's life. Please send your Holy Spirit to guide me in this awesome task. Give me wisdom, patience, energy and understanding. Empower me with love and knowledge. Help me to be a spiritual friend and a guiding presence to this beautiful child. Surround me with your love and show me how to be a channel of that love for my grandchild. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gary and Kay Aitchison are a diaconate couple from Ames, Iowa with a long ministry to marriage and family. They both write and present on the subjects of marriage enrichment, family spirituality and grandparenting. The Aitchisons have co-authored, with Lauri Przybysz, a 13-meeting program for small groups entitled *Your Marriage...the Great Adventure*.

Gary and Kay are currently serving as presidents of the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements. They were invited to present *The Grand Adventure* grandparenting program at an International Congress on the Family sponsored by the Pontifical Council on the Family November 26, 2010 in Rome, Italy. They are grandparents to 14 grandchildren.

Contact Us:

The authors of *The Grand Adventure* would like to hear from you regarding your experiences with this program. How did it impact you and your group? Did it make a difference in your approach to grandparenting? How? Did the group continue? Does your group need additional programming? What additions or suggestions would you suggest for this program?

Please contact us at:

office@cfm.org or families1stforever@gmail.com

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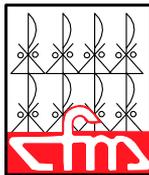
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The Mission of CFM is:

To promote Christ-centered marriage and family life,
To help individuals and their families live the
Christian faith in everyday life, and
To improve society through actions of love,
service, education and example.



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