



PARENTING... AGAIN?!!

“Just When We Thought We Were

Empty Nesters

God Asked Us to Parent Our Grandchild”



“God, You want us to do this again?” I cried. “Dealing with his mother’s issues almost ruined our marriage, tore our family apart and destroyed our finances. I don’t know if I can do this again. Would you hate me if I said ‘no?’”

Just when I thought I was entering the wonderful season of life as an empty nester, my dreams came crashing down. My daughter’s poor choices led to her losing custody of her son. Suddenly, my husband and I became full-time parents again—this time to a traumatized little boy. Sadly, my story is all too common.

That day, we became statistics in an ever-increasing crisis. Approximately 2.7 million grandparents in the United States, including 64,000 in my home state of Arizona alone, have taken on the task of raising their grandchildren.

The opioid epidemic, parental mental illness, incarceration, and deaths caused by COVID-19 have contributed to 13 million children losing their parents and living with grandparents or great-grandparents. For every child in foster care, there are around 25 children in the care of grandparents.

Many grandparents volunteer to take in grandchildren to avoid the foster system. However, this prevents access to resources tailored for children separated from parents due to abuse, neglect, or dependency. One-fifth of grandparents have incomes below the poverty line and cannot afford the expensive treatment these children need.

A New Opportunity to Be Hands & Feet

The need is huge and it’s right under our noses—these grandfamilies need extra support, especially from the church. The Bible says in James 1:27, the kind of religion God wants involves helping the orphans and widows.

Here are 5 ways a church can support grandfamilies:

1. Start a Grandfamily Mission

Add Grandfamilies as a missions category. Budget funds to support them like other missionaries. Offer scholarships to grandchildren for church activities. Donate gift cards for school expenses. Sponsor grandchildren’s extracurricular activities.

Grandparents raising grandchildren are missionaries to the next generation. These traumatized children need the church’s help and often feel unloved. The church can show them the unconditional love of Jesus.

2. Learn What Grandfamilies Need

Grandparents need financial support and legal guidance.

Invite a social worker experienced with grandfamilies to speak to church leadership about their special needs. Make the social worker available to guide grandfamilies to resources. Ask a legal aid group to answer grandparents’ questions on rights and navigating the legal system. Many states have grandfamily support services to help grandparents—partner with these groups. In Arizona, Duet: Partners in Health and Aging is a resource.

Give grace to grandparents who drop off grandkids at Sunday School without volunteering. They are already in the trenches of ministry and sometimes need to sit at Jesus’ feet awhile.

3. Start a Grandfamily Support Group

The grandparents who have started parenting again have had a big lifestyle change and may not easily fit into their social groups anymore. Their friends may have fallen away because they are no longer as free as they once were. These grandparents often cannot relate to the younger parents but also no longer relate to their peers. They may feel like outsiders everywhere.

Although they love their grandchildren, grandparents may be angry at having to raise them. They may also be dealing with the grief of losing a child or blaming themselves for their child’s actions. A support group will provide others who understand what they are experiencing and give an opportunity to address their feelings without judgment.

4. Form Family Networks

So much has changed since the grandparents raised their children. It might seem like a completely different world to them and may be overwhelming. Connect them with another family with a child in the same school as the grandchildren attend. They can lovingly guide the grandparents on how to maneuver the ins and outs of raising a child in today’s society.

5. Provide Technology Classes

Technology may come naturally to some, but it is not instinctive to the generation of grandparents who are faced with living in this brave new world. Offer classes to teach the grandparents what they need to know about technology so they will be aware of the good and bad aspects of it. Give them the resources they need to protect their grandchildren from those who wish to cause harm on the Internet. Once victimized, children often are more easily revictimized.

To all the grandparents doing the hard work of parenting again, you are not alone. I see you, and I’m cheering you on as a fellow traveler on this unexpected journey.

Although our call isn’t easy, we can be sure we are doing the Lord’s work by caring for the children He dearly loves. Well done, good and faithful servant. ❤️

Read the full article with even more ideas of how you can care for grandfamilies at leadinghearts.com and stacysanchez.com.