Welcome

Dear Parenting Friends,

A huge **Thank You** to everyone who took our parenting survey. The first 100 will soon receive our thanks in the mail.

In this issue we look at some challenges faced by the growing number of grandparents who find themselves parenting their grandchildren. This increase is due to two factors:

1. More grandparents taking care of grandchildren during a family crisis.
2. Grandparents today are younger and healthier - and more able to take on this role - than previous generations.

In *Grandparents as Parents*, Wilma Lee Kirk shares some challenges and solutions for grandparents. Discover Ten Ways to Say Thank You to grandparents and see what resources are available.

Until next time,
A Note from the NAD

Dear Readers,

Thank you to everyone who completed our survey on parenting. Your responses helped us create the outline for the development of a brand new parenting resource that will target the parents of children ages 0-7.

The parenting resource will consist of:

* 10 DVDs,
* a facilitator’s manual,
* a participant’s guide,
* and rich resources on a dedicated Web site.

This first project will be followed up with successive editions, targeting older age children. We also plan to offer this resource in Spanish.

Now we need your help again - What do we call this project? We invite you to submit your suggestions. If your title is chosen, you'll receive a special gift. So - start brainstorming and send in those suggestions! Please keep in mind that the final name chosen must be one that is available - not one that is already copyrighted.

Please pray that God’s hand will direct the development of this important resource.

Blessings,

Claudio & Pamela Consuegra
Directors North American Division Family Ministries Department

Win a Copy

Adventures in Galilee
by Bradley Booth

tells the story of how life might have been for two children living during the time when Jesus walked the dusty streets.

Read the 1st Chapter

The first three people to write in with a suggested title for the new parenting resource will win a free copy!

SUBMIT YOUR ENTRY

180 PowerTips for Parents
by Dr. Kay Kuzma

You want the best for your family, but your life is hectic, your schedule is crazy, and
Featured Columnist

Grandparents as Parents
By Wilma Lee Kirk, MSW, LCSW

In case you haven’t noticed, families look different today than when sociologists stated a typical American family consisted of a mom and dad and 2.5 children! Today, more households consist of grandparents who are currently raising children from birth to independence. When did this happen and what does it mean? Read more.

Featured Resource

Helping Children Deal With Their Feelings
By Charles H. Betz

There is a direct connection between how children feel and how they behave. How can we help them to feel right? By accepting their feelings. A denial of a child's feelings can confuse and enrage him/her. It also teaches them not to know their feelings - and not to trust them. Read more.

Additional Feature

Ten Ways to Say Thank You

1. Run errands or help around the house.
2. Offer to baby-sit.
3. Give the family a night out or a meal in.
4. Tell them how much you appreciate them.
5. Volunteer your talents and professional services.
6. Drop by their house with a surprise.
7. Go with them to important appointments.
8. Provide transportation for kinship care families.
9. Invite them to events with their children.
10. Be a sounding board. Read more.

Tiny Tots for Jesus, 10 DVDs
Kids will enjoy learning, singing, creating, and having fun on the Tiny Tot farm with Auntie Linda (Linda Johnson). Each volume contains eight 30-minute inspirational programs especially created for children five years old and under.

What Special Challenges do Kinship Care Families Face?

Kinship care families may face a variety of special challenges:

• Physical problems

Many children being raised by
Additional Resources

Where can I find help for kinship care families?

To order additional resource kits or for more information, contact the Child Welfare and Mental Health Division of CDF by e-mailing childwelfare@childrensdefense.org or by calling 202-662-3568.

Click on the link for the Resources kit.

More Resources

NAD
www.tinyurl.com/87rvq9e
www.tinyurl.com/75d62eb

AARP.org
www.tinyurl.com/79y24zh

USA.gov
www.tinyurl.com/73avfr

Child Welfare Information Gateway
www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f_kinshi/

Children’s Defense Fund
www.childrensdefense.org/

grandparents and other relatives have special physical problems, sometimes related to their parents’ alcohol or drug abuse. Low birth weight, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other learning disabilities, and illnesses such as HIV/AIDS are particularly common. Kinship caregivers also may have health problems of their own.

• Emotional issues
Children living in kinship care families also may have severe emotional scars due to a legacy of substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health problems, and abuse or neglect. Their caregivers also may be depressed and have other stress-related conditions related, at least in part, to their caregiving responsibilities.

• Difficulties obtaining benefits and services
Caregivers may find it difficult to enroll the children they are raising in school, authorize immunizations, get basic health and mental health care, stay in public or senior housing, or get certain government benefits for their children.
In case you haven’t noticed, families look different today than when sociologists stated a typical American family consisted of a mom and dad and 2.5 children! Today, more households consist of grandparents who are currently raising children from birth to independence. When did this happen and what does it mean? Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren cover every economic level and every ethnicity. Raising children today is a challenge for parents – imagine the shock of being the grandparent who now has primary responsibility for launching a child into adulthood.

The 2010 census reveals 2.4 million of the nation's families are maintained by grandparents who have one or more of their grandchildren living with them—an increase of 400,000 (19 percent) since 1990. These families comprise 7 percent of all families with children under 18.

Unfortunately, these statistics are not limited to grandparents who have no spiritual, faith-based connection. Sin has taken its toll on families everywhere. When we look at our church congregations on any given week, we will see, if we pause to look, grandparents who are members of our congregation who are now parenting their grandchildren. They may never make a complaint, but the challenges in their lives are overwhelming. Let’s take a look at a couple of those challenges.

Two Important Challenges: Time and Money

1. Adults look forward to the time when they can do what they want when they want. Young parents, caught in the day-to-day demands of child rearing, simply don’t have that luxury. However, when you become a parenting grandparent, that freedom is no longer a part of your life. It is interesting to note the age bracket of today’s parenting grandparents. The census indicates of the grandparents who maintain homes for their grandchildren, 55 percent of grandmothers, and 47 percent of grandfathers are not yet age 55. Additionally, 19 percent of grandmothers and 15 percent of grandfathers are under age 45. In reality, a large number of parents have barely finished raising their own children before they have a new responsibility—that of raising their grandchildren.

2. Grandparents have typically determined the amount of money they need to live comfortably without depending on anyone else to care for them. Television commercials bombard viewers daily with how to prepare for retirement and what will be required to maintain their current lifestyle—a lifestyle that does not usually include the expense of raising a second family. Everyone who has raised a family knows children outgrow clothing before you can blink an eye and they are always hungry. Those two items alone can
wreak havoc to a budget. When you add to that the cost of education and the inevitable medical bills, you’re looking at a serious financial challenge.

**How Can the Church Family Help?**

How can your church become more empathetic to parenting grandparents in your midst? There are some simple things which can be done that do not require a large outlay of funds. Any church can implement these and show Christ’s love in a practical way to those who are members as well as those who are in the church community at large. The love of Christ means all members of the congregation should feel important and noticed. Paul exhorts in Galatians 6:2 to *Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ (NLT)*.

1. **First**, a supportive church is aware of those in their midst who find themselves with the awesome responsibility of raising their grandchildren. Often we worship from week to week and we never actually see or know the people we sit next to regularly. James reminds us in chapter 2, verses 14 – 17 (The Message),

   Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?

We often sit next to people who are overwhelmed and feel certain no one cares about them. Yet because they don’t say anything, we remain unaware. Consider this: how many grandparents would ever complain because they are now raising their grandchildren? It is important to look around us and ask for the eyes of love and the discernment of the Holy Spirit to interpret what we see. This is at the heart of Christian community.

2. **Second**, a church through its *Family Ministries* and *Children’s Ministries Departments* will know about resources available in the community to support these families. One of the ways to share the information is to organize it and place it along with other literature in the foyer for people to pick up. Many will prefer doing it this way than asking someone for help.

Another way to share resource information is through a support group. It doesn’t necessarily need to be called that – it could be a Sabbath School class for grandparents. Be creative. If you know your congregation and those who visit, you’ll know how to address their needs.
**Just the Start**

There’s certainly more to be said about parenting as a grandparent. This just gets the conversation started. The needs are many and vary from family to family. As you pray and ask for guidance, open your eyes and look around and see how the Lord directs you to be the answer to your prayers.

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writes from Houston, Texas. She is the Executive Director of the Center for Family Wholeness (CFW) and is a licensed clinical social worker in the state of Texas. She and her husband serve as the Family Ministries co-Directors of the Southwest Region Conference. She and her husband have been married 45 years. She is GoGo (grandmother) to Samuel Jones and Maxwell Williams. Purple is her very most favorite color and she is a confirmed "bookaholic".

**References:**

*US Census 2010 – [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov); quickfacts.census.gov; factfinder2.census.gov*

*New Living Translation - Tyndale House, Carol Stream, IL*

*The Message – Eugene H. Peterson, Publisher*
Helping Children Deal With Their Feelings

There is a direct connection between how children feel and how they behave. How can we help them to feel right? **By accepting their feelings.** A denial of a child's feelings can confuse and enrage him/her. It also teaches them not to know their feelings—and not to trust them.

Examples:

Child: "I don't like the new baby."
Parent: "Why Billy, you don't really feel that way. You know in your heart you love your baby sister."

Child: "That was a dumb birthday party you had."
Parent: "Why John, how can you say that. I went to a lot of work to put on this birthday party for you."

**To Help With Feelings:**

1. Listen with full attention;
2. Acknowledge their feelings with a word -- "Oh," "Mmm," "I see."
3. Give their feelings a name.

Example:

Child: "My turtle is dead! He was alive this morning."
Parent: "Oh, that is a terrible shock!"
Child: "He was my friend."
Parent: "To lose a friend can hurt."
Child: "I taught him to do tricks."
Parent: "You two had fun together. You really cared about your turtle."
Child: "I fed him every day."

Parents don't usually give this kind of response to children, because they fear that by giving a name to their feelings they will make it worse. In fact, the opposite is true. The child who hears a word describing what he is experiencing is deeply comforted. Someone has acknowledged his
internal experience.

We deny the child's feelings without thinking about it. We might say, "There's no reason to be so upset. It's rather foolish to feel that way, isn't it? You are probably just tired and blowing the whole thing out of proportion. It can't be as bad as that. Come on, smile." Then there is the philosophical response: "Life is like that. You might as well get used to it. Tomorrow we will buy a new turtle." Or we may ask a question, or give undue pity such as: "Oh, you poor thing. That's terrible! I feel so sorry." By identifying the feelings and by listening with your full attention and with your heart you set the healing processes at work.

The hardest part is to listen the child out and then give a name to the feeling. It takes concentration. Use such words as: "You sound very angry," or "It must have been a great disappointment to you," or "It sounds as if you resent all the homework," or "That must have been very frustrating", etc. Hold off giving advice as tempting as it may be. Children don't need to have their feelings agreed with, they just need to have them acknowledged. This is not permissiveness, it is simply saying that all feelings are permitted. When we accept our children's feelings they are much more able to accept the limits we set for them. This is the first step in solving more difficult problems. Your goal is to tune in on what the child is really feeling. Remember, that your empathy must be genuine.

**How To Engage A Child's Cooperation:**

1. Describe what you see or describe the problem. For instance: "There is a wet wash cloth on the bed."

2. Give information: "The wash cloth is getting my blanket wet."

3. If no response, say emphatically, "The wash cloth!"

4. Describe how you feel: "I don't want to sleep in a wet bed."

5. You might write a note above the towel rack: "Please put me back so I can dry. Thank you. Your wash cloth."

**The Power of Listening:**

The listening heart provides parents with awesome power. It "is the supreme communication skill," says Dr. John Drakeford, in *The Awesome Power of the Listening Heart*, p. 15. But listening is difficult for parents because it runs against our natural self-centered tendencies. Listening—especially to children—takes humility, openness, and *agape* love. Yes, listening can be a powerful influence for good. When you truly listen you smooth the way for the child "to say something to himself." *Ibid*, p. 29.
Listening Levels:

Listening is a multi-sensory experience by which these sensory impressions are given and received in a variety of ways.

1. Body-listening (total),
2. Third-ear-listening (intuition),
3. Tactile-listening (touching),
4. Hand-listening (gesturing),
5. Head-listening (positioning),
6. Ear-listening (focused hearing),
7. Eye-listening (looking)." Ibid, p. 54.

So listening with your heart means listening with your total person. The greatest gift you can give your child is your complete FOCUSED ATTENTION.

"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" -- Proverbs 25:11, NIV
Ten Ways to Say Thank You
to Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

Did you know that more than one in 12 American children are living in homes headed by grandparents and other relatives? In many of these homes, “kinship caregivers” are raising the children by themselves, with little outside support. Some of these grandparents thought their days of raising children were over long ago. Now, suddenly, they find themselves changing diapers and helping children with homework all over again.

It’s hard for any family to raise children, but it can be especially hard for grandparents and other relative caregivers. They may be older individuals with health problems of their own. The children they are bringing up may have special needs. It’s exhausting and expensive to raise grandchildren, but these “silent saviors” say they wouldn’t have it any other way. By raising their grandchildren, they are raising the community’s children. It’s a labor of love.

By giving just an hour or two of your time, you can say “thank you” to one of the many kinship care families in your community:

1. Run errands or help around the house
   Raising children is a job in itself. Offering to pick up groceries or help clean the house can give a tired caregiver a badly needed break.

2. Offer to baby-sit
   Offer to watch the children while the caregiver takes care of personal business or has an afternoon out. If the caregiver doesn't want to leave the children, offer to watch the children while she is in the home doing laundry or other projects around the house.

3. Give the family a night out or a meal in
   Cooking after a long day is enough to drive any parent crazy. Offer to take a kinship care family out for dinner or bring a meal to them.

4. Tell them how much you appreciate them
   Recognize and honor caregivers’ efforts and sacrifices on behalf of their children by telling them how proud you are to know them.

5. Volunteer your talents and professional services
   Are you a seamstress, a beautician, a plumber, a lawyer, or do you have other professional talents or personal gifts? Offer to share them with a kinship care family.

6. Drop by their house with a surprise
   A batch of cookies or flowers from your back yard can make a caregiver’s day. Drop by with an unexpected treat.
7. Go with them to important appointments
Caregivers may find it difficult to attend all the meetings with teachers, social workers, government workers, and others that are necessary to get vital services and benefits for the children they are raising. It’s easier when they don’t have to go alone. Offer to go with them.

8. Provide transportation for kinship care families
Caregivers say that they sometimes have trouble getting their children to and from appointments and social events. Volunteer to drive the children to and from school or the caregiver to and from a doctor’s appointment.

9. Invite them to events with their children
Caregivers want to have fun with their grandchildren in a place where they can relax and be with other families. Help a kinship care family feel less isolated by encouraging them to come to special events and outings or to spend an evening or a Saturday with your family.

10. Be a sounding board
Like all parents, relative caregivers may need someone to talk to about concerns and difficulties with their grandchildren. Tell them often that they can call you if they just need to hear a voice on the other end of the phone.

Taken from: Kinship Care Resource Kit, Children’s Defense Fund.

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