

PERSPECTIVE

A photograph of a grandfather holding a laughing baby. The grandfather is in the foreground, looking up at the baby. The baby is being held up and is laughing. The background is a warm, textured wall.

DECEMBER 2019

GRAND PARENTING

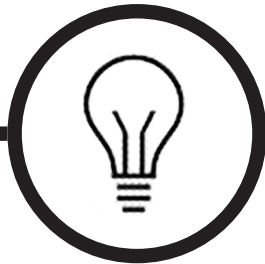
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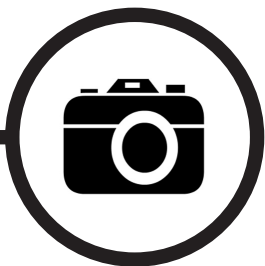
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Grandparenting

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged – Proverbs 17:6a

Connie and I have been blessed with 17 grandchildren, ranging in ages from three weeks old to 19 years old, and our greatest desire is that they come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We want to be able to say what the apostle John said to his faithful and generous friend Gaius in 3 John 3–4:

For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Likewise, as grandparents we would have no greater joy than to hear of our grandchildren coming to saving faith and walking in the truth.

OUR ROLE AS GRANDPARENTS

As we have reflected on what we can do as grandparents to influence this “newest generation” in our family to walk in the truth, we first looked to God’s Word.

In Psalm 78, God commands his people to tell the stories of his mighty acts in Israel’s history and to teach God’s law to their children *and* on to the next generation:

We will not hide them from their children, but also tell the coming generation of the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the work of God, but keep his commandments (Ps. 78:4–7).

Why does God command his people to teach their children and grandchildren God’s law and to tell them all he has done? It is to help *each generation* learn to obey God and set their hope on him. Through this passage, God makes it very clear that it is not only his desire but his command for us to pass the truths of Scripture on to our children *and* our grandchildren, so they might walk in his ways.

In 2 Timothy (which Paul wrote to instruct and encourage Timothy) Paul reflects on what God has done in Timothy’s life through his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice

and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (2 Tim. 1:5).

In this passage, Paul expresses his gratitude that the faith he sees in Timothy’s life has been shaped by both his mother’s *and* his grandmother’s faith and prayers. This illustrates what we are to do as grandparents—pray that our grandchildren have opportunities to clearly hear the gospel message and respond with repentance and faith.

OUR PRIORITY AS GRANDPARENTS

With these Scriptures in mind, Connie and I have determined that our priority as grandparents is to come alongside our own children and their spouses to:

1. **Pray** for our grandchildren.
2. **Train** our grandchildren in the ways of the Lord.
3. **Model** the gospel to our grandchildren.

1. Praying for Our Grandchildren

I’m sure we are like most grandparents. Among other things, we want to hear about our grandchildren’s accomplishments and honors; we want to know what they have learned at school and at church; and we want to become acquainted with their friends. Each of these is important, but they pale in comparison to the *eternal* significance of our grandchildren coming to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Foremost, we pray they will have an opportunity to hear the gospel message, that the Holy Spirit will soften their hearts and convict them of their sins, and that they will repent and believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. This is the most important thing we want to pray for our grandkids. In fact, God has shown us that the first thing we need to pray for is that each one of our grandchildren develop a heart for God. This is the work of God. We must pray for it.

In Matthew, when Jesus is asked, “Which is the great commandment in the Law?” He responds, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is great and first commandment” (Matt. 22:36–38).

In addition to praying for our grandchildren’s repentance and faith, we believe we need to pray consistently that this Scripture would become a reality in their lives. Specifically, we can pray for our grandchildren to:

Believe that they were created by a loving, all-powerful God. “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable” (Isa. 40:28).

We pray that each of our grandchildren will come to know that they are not the result of some cosmic accident, but that they were created by a loving God who is to be honored and glorified as the eternal, all-powerful sovereign Lord of the universe.

Value the Bible as the Word of God.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

We pray they learn that the Bible is the holy, inspired Word of God which will lead and guide them into all truth. We pray they will come to know and value God's Word and that in his timing, the Holy Spirit will use it to open their hearts and minds to the gospel.

Honor and obey their parents.

"Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land'" (Eph. 6:1–3).

We pray that they will learn to love, respect, and obey their parents as God's instruments to guide, direct, and encourage them in all areas of their lives.

Choose their friends wisely.

"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm" (Prov. 13:20).

Knowing the power of peer influence on young people either for good or bad we pray that each of our grandchildren choose their friends wisely. We have been encouraged to see our oldest granddaughter, who is now a sophomore in college, making wise choices by befriending and being involved with peers who have a heart for God and for ministry.

2. Training Our Grandchildren in the Ways of the Lord

In this year of focusing on family ministry at Mount Vernon, we have been exposed to a variety of resources to help us as parents and grandparents as we seek to train our children and grandchildren in the ways of the Lord. One of the most helpful has been a booklet by J.C. Ryle, a 19th century English pastor, entitled *The Duties of Parents*.

Ryle begins by quoting a very familiar verse from Proverbs: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6).

In this booklet, he outlines 17 ways Christian parents and grandparents should go about training our children and grandchildren in "the ways they should go." These have been the most helpful to us:

- Train them in the way they should go, and not the way they would like to go. If you want to deal wisely with your grandchildren, you need to guide and direct them and not let them guide themselves.
- Train them with all tenderness, affection, and patience. Ryle writes that the secret to successful training is love. Children will be willing to receive your instruction if they know they are loved.
- Train them with the thought that their soul is the first thing to be considered. Ryle writes that whatever you do, you need to continually ask yourself, "How will this affect their soul?"
- Train them with a knowledge of the Bible. They not only need to come to believe the Bible is the inspired, spoken Word of God; they need to read it regularly and reverently. Taking time to come along side our grandchildren to do this may be one of the most important and influential things we do as grandparents.
- Train them to develop a habit of prayer. They need to understand that prayer is what feeds their soul. Ryle writes that private communion with God is the secret to spiritual prosperity. Teach your grandchildren how to pray.
- Train them to see regular church attendance and being under the preaching of the Word as necessary for their spiritual growth.
- Train them to a habit of faith and obedience. They need to learn to obey when spoken to by their parents and their grandparents.
- Train them by being careful *not* to over-indulge them. Your role is not to spoil them but to train them and to when necessary, with the approval of their parents, to correct their behavior.
- Train them remembering the power of sin in their lives. Remind yourself that they have a fallen nature, and it is not strange and unusual that their hearts are full of pride and sin.
- Train and teach them the many promises of Scripture. Ryle writes that we should remember that our trustworthy God, not man, makes these promises.

To summarize, grandparents should play a significant role in training their grandchildren, but always with a continual prayer for God's blessing. Ryle writes

that God has the hearts of all men in his hands, and unless he touches the hearts of your grandchildren by his Spirit, your best efforts will come to naught.

3. Modeling the Gospel to Our Grandchildren

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he writes:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you (Phil. 4:8–9).

And in his letter to Titus he writes, “Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:7–8a).

As grandparents, we can pray for and train our grandchildren, but our *personal example* will speak the loudest to their hearts and minds. Our “walk” needs to match our “talk” or all our efforts will be in vain. If our actions contradict what we say, our grandchildren will not hear what we say or teach. Our personal example is what provides credibility to the words we speak.

When I was a little boy, I remember visiting my grandfather who lived in east Tennessee. When he put me to bed at night, he would usually rock me and sing some of old gospel hymns like “Rock of Ages” or “The Old Rugged Cross.” Looking back, I believe that this special experience with my grandfather prepared my heart to “hear” the gospel message later when I was in college and came to faith. But it wasn't just hearing the words of these songs that impacted me; it was the example of his life and his walk with the Lord.

In the same way, Connie and I want to have a positive, gospel-centered influence on the lives of our grandchildren. We not only want them to hear our words, but we want them to see our lives as an example of what it means to walk with Christ.

Here are a few ways we seek to model the gospel to our grandchildren:

- ✦ Tell them how the Lord saved us and changed our lives— how he gave us a love for his Word, for his people, and for the church. Then “practice what we preach” by regularly praying for them, being in the Word, and faithfully attending and serving the church.
- ✦ Continually “speak” the gospel to them. Let them hear us talk about the Lord, how he is working in

our lives, and how he has continually provided for us.

- ✦ Be generous with our time and financial resources ... not only with them but also with our church and with gospel-centered ministries God has led us to support.
- ✦ Be a model that they can “see” as we spend time in the Word and in prayer. When possible, read the Bible to them and with them and pray with them about concerns they have.
- ✦ Let them see how we treat their friends and other people in their lives, how we help those in need, and how we deal with disappointment and adversity.

In summary, we want our grandchildren to be influenced by our lives and to remember us as grandparents who had a heart for God and for his people. We want them to know that the gospel is true because they will have seen it in our lives.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

For those at Mount Vernon who do not have grandchildren, you may be wondering how this all applies to you. Our suggestion is simple—“adopt” some of the children in the church as your spiritual grandchildren and apply these same principles to them.

In recent years, Mount Vernon has been blessed to have many young families and their children become a part of its ministry. In many cases, their grandparents either live out of town, attend another church, or have passed away.

In our case, our grandchildren live in five different cities including Atlanta. Even though all attend gospel-centered churches, none of them attend Mount Vernon except when they are here visiting. But in all five situations, we know there are those in their home churches who are praying for them, helping train them in the ways of the Lord, and modeling what it looks like to live a Christ-centered life.

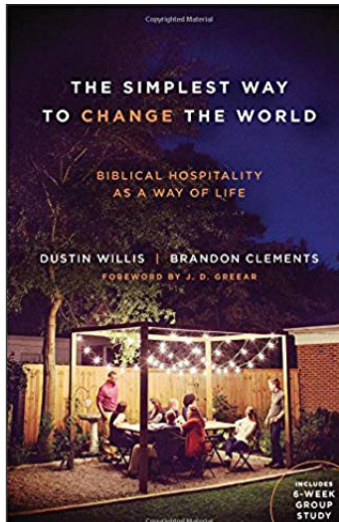
In this year of family ministry at Mount Vernon, we've been challenged to do the same with the children at Mount Vernon—become spiritual “grandparents” to them. There are many opportunities to come alongside their parents and to pray for, train, and model the Christian life.

In all cases, remember that our ultimate goal is to be able to say this about our “adopted” grandchildren: “I have no greater joy than to hear of my children walking in the truth” (3 John 4).

– Jim and Connie Heiskell

The Simplest Way to Change the World

Written by Brandon Clements & Dustin Willis



College was an exciting time for me. Everyone had a vision for changing the world and it seemed possible. When I graduated and was thrust into the working world, I was still excited for the role I would play in God's kingdom. Then, slowly but surely, the ordinary everyday tasks of life started to wear me down. My enthusiasm to do something meaningful faded as my calendar began to fill. It got to a point where having an impact seemed more like a distant thought. If you are like me then *The Simplest Way to Change the World* is here to tell you that there

is a real, biblical, and sound way to have a tangible impact on the world. This impact is through biblical hospitality.

The book is divided into two primary sections. Willis and Clements begin by focusing on "The Potential" of what is found in a biblical view of hospitality. They break down some of the misconceptions concerning hospitality (29). Willis and Clements then show how God has been hospitable to the people who deserve it the least (37) and we in turn should be hospitable to others (45). They sum it up well: "Hospitality is not some stuffy, outdated practice. It is clearly a Biblical idea of utmost importance, because it is the primary way we tell the astounding story that God hasn't given up on us. Any time we practice hospitality we follow in the steps of our lavishly hospitable God" (42).

During the last few chapters of the book, Willis and Clements look at the nuts and bolts of hospitality, or as they call it, "The Plan". They answer practical questions such as: how do I meet my neighbors (93); how do I make this a normal routine with a busy schedule (103); and how do I turn a conversation towards the gospel (119)? These question and others are addressed with a logistical and practical focus, all while keeping the heart of hospitality at its core.

The Simplest Way to Change the World is a practical and biblical book on a Christian view of hospitality. It encourages you to take ordinary things of your life and use them for the glory of God. College may be long gone, but the hope of being able to have a real impact on the world through biblical hospitality is right at our doorstep.

— RECOMMENDED BY MATT WILLIAMS

Excerpts From the Book

1

"It only takes your willingness to open your home and life to others. Many Christians believe that in order to be a part of God's mission, they have to do something drastic. But the reality is you can be an integral part of God's mission from right where you are, without leaving the home you sleep in each night."

— *Small Things Can Change The World*, p.19

2

"Any time we are practicing hospitality we follow in the steps of our lavishly hospitable God."

— *The Hospitable God*, p.42

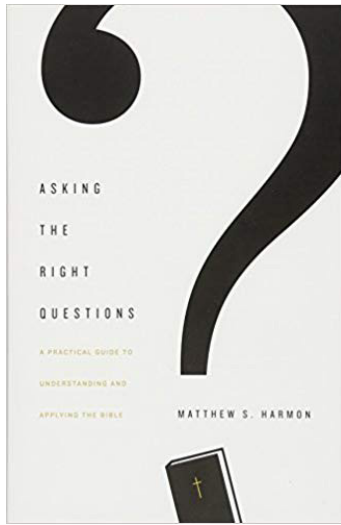
3

"The good news about hospitality is that it's not about image management—it's about sharing your real life with others."

— *Setting Yourself Up for Success*, p.82

Asking the Right Questions

Written by Matthew S. Harmon



Is there a wrong way to read the Bible? There most definitely is. Just take a quick look at how the Bible is used throughout our culture and you will see it misconstrued almost everywhere. In addition to the onslaught of false teachings, the Bible in its entirety can appear difficult to understand and apply to our lives. This is why Matthew Harmon's book *Asking the Right Questions* is extremely useful for all believers, as it teaches you to read the Bible as Jesus did. Harmon provides a simple, easy to follow, guide to assist in understanding the main idea of a

biblical text and how to properly apply it.

There are two sets of questions Harmon gives to analyze a passage. The first set leads to understanding the Bible through asking what you learn about God, people, relating to God, and relating to others in the passage. The second set helps apply the Bible through asking what the author wants you to think, believe, desire, and do. In these questions, Harmon also pulls out two major themes found throughout Scripture: *the fallen condition* and *the gospel solution*. Reading the Bible through these lenses helps see Christ through the whole Bible.

The most helpful aspect of Harmon's book are the practical examples using the structure questions and thematic lenses to analyze passages of Scripture. It's very useful to see the insights he gained and applications he drew from the text. He gives a simple template to follow with plentiful examples and guidance that anyone would benefit from as they incorporate this practice into their Bible study.

I recommend this book to anyone looking to enhance their study of the Bible. My first thought was this would be a book only useful for new Christians learning to read the Bible, but I think it is helpful for Christians in all stages of maturity. I particularly appreciated reading it as someone who wants to become a better teacher of the Bible, as the tools laid out in this book would be extremely useful in preparation to teach. Harmon ends the book as every good book instructing our actions should: he turns our attention to God's action. He reminds the reader that it is truly God who does the illuminating of Scripture. Regardless of our fancy Bible study techniques, we should pray for his enlightenment.

– RECOMMENDED BY MATT TILLMAN

Excerpts From the Book

1

"Jesus expects his people to understand the Bible in a certain way. So if we read the Bible in a way that doesn't see Jesus and what he has done through the gospel as central, we are not reading the Bible the way Jesus tells us to read it."

– p.50

2

"We tend to think largely or even exclusively about what we should do in response to what God says in his Word. That is indeed an important aspect of application. But the Christian life is about more than what we do. Since the goal of reading and applying the Bible is life transformation, we need to make sure that we apply the Bible to our whole lives, not just actions."

– p.101

3

"The Bible is a treasure because it shows us who God is, who we are, and how we should live. It lays out the story we live, the true story of the world. It shows us the beauty of Jesus Christ, who is the fullest revelation of God's glory."

– p.120

DECEMBER

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

December 1	1 Kings 19:9–18	December 16	Acts 12:18–25
December 2	Mark 14:32–42	December 17	2 Samuel 7:1–17
December 3	Acts 11:1–18	December 18	Isaiah 9:1–7
December 4	Acts 11:19–30	December 19	Luke 1:1–25
December 5	Acts 12:1–17	December 20	Luke 1:26–45
December 6	Luke 22:47–62	December 21	Luke 1:46–56
December 7	Psalms 33:1–9	December 22	Luke 1:57–80
December 8	Psalms 33:10–22	December 23	Luke 2:1–20
December 9	Acts 12:1–17	December 24	Psalms 111
December 10	Acts 12:1–17	December 25	Psalms 92
December 11	Acts 12:18–25	December 26	Psalms 104:1–13
December 12	2 Samuel 24:1–9	December 27	Psalms 104:14–30
December 13	2 Samuel 24:10–17	December 28	Psalms 104:31–35
December 14	2 Samuel 24:18–25	December 29	Philippians 4:1–9
December 15	Psalms 110	December 30	Psalms 111

*Sermons in bold

TAKE UP & READ

NEW MEMBERS



Rachel Cottrell



Ben Davis



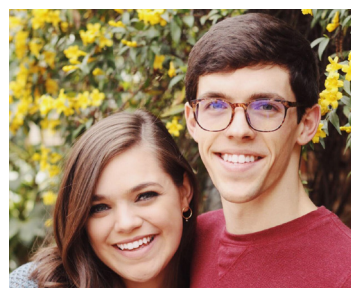
Phillip & Shaye
Rawson



Zachary Roe



Keaton
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Mount Vernon
BAPTIST CHURCH