

# Why God Has No Grandchildren

Recently I was holding my five-year-old in the midst of a dynamic worship service. The powerful stirrings of the Holy Spirit could literally be felt throughout the room. Some were on their face and others were fervently crying out to God. In my own body, it felt like “*electricity*” was shooting through my bloodstream. Everything was so invigorating and vibrant.

Then, as things began to subside, I asked my son, “*Could you feel the wonderful presence of God?*” A sheepish look came on his face. He turned away and finally muttered, “*No, didn’t feel anything.*”

I must admit, It was disappointing. That certainly wasn’t the response I’d hoped for. Since God was moving so dynamically, I naturally assumed that my son was having the same encounter I was. From my point of view, the glory was readily evident, but somehow my son didn’t experience it.

In that moment, I was reminded of something I heard years ago: “*God doesn’t have any grandchildren.*”

It doesn’t matter who a person is or what background they come from, no one can enter the kingdom indirectly. If God’s not their Father, they’re not in the family. The Lord’s glory certainly can’t be carried by “*well-wishers*” and “*guests*” standing along the periphery. This role is reserved for sons and daughters.

In many ways, this brings up questions of transmission and continuation. Spiritual awakening should go beyond a single generation, but it rarely does. One group will walk in revival, but their children, who have been “in” and “around” the glory, won’t experience the same outworking. This can truly be difficult.

**Generational Transference In The Bible**

The immense challenges of passing “revival” on to the next generation isn’t just a recent struggle. There are also examples of it transpiring in the Bible. Though the Lord would reveal His word, and tell them to “*teach the truths diligently to your children*” (Deut. 6:7a), things didn’t always work out as expected.

One sees that, after the deaths of Joshua and his closest elders, the nation of Israel had to wrestle with a lack of transference.

*“Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua and of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the deeds that the Lord had done for Israel” (Josh. 24:31).*

As long as those who encountered the presence of the Lord remained at the helm of leadership, all of Israel endeavored to serve God. Breakdown took place later as leaders emerged who didn’t know God’s glory.

Tragically there was a similar crisis during the era of the Judges. After those who truly encountered the Lord passed from the scene, many of their children didn’t follow in their footsteps. Scripture declares,

*“That entire generation passed away, and after them grew up a generation who did not know the Lord or the deeds that He had done for Israel” (Judg. 2:10).*

This was a disastrous crisis in the past and it continues to plague families in the 21st century. God moves in the hearts of men and women, intending to impact the whole lineage. Yet, something goes wrong along the way. We forget that everyone has to have a personal encounter. If we don’t help our children discover God for themselves, they may not choose to walk in the ways of righteousness.

God doesn’t have any grandchildren—only sons and daughters.

## What We Must Do

If we're going to counteract this tendency, then our tactics must be changed. Each of us must be willing to do things that past generations were unwilling to do. Mothers and fathers must be willing to transcend our "religious sensibilities" and reveal the true heart of the Father. We must enable our children to encounter God and comprehend Him on their own terms.

Below are three ways that we can begin doing this:

*1. Tell A Better Story* It's important for Spirit-filled parents to frame their encounters within a larger redemptive narrative. We simply must tell better stories. How do our experiences intersect with the accounts of scripture? Could our stories be told in a way that our families observe a better continuity with the past? After all this time, God still intends for the Word to become flesh (John 1:14).

Throughout the Bible, the righteous were instructed to keep the testimony. "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, and who seek Him with all their heart." (Ps. 119:2). Keeping the testimonies—both past and present—enabled the children of Israel to hold on to the faith of their fathers.

In order to pass this on to another generation, it's important to rehearse these narratives. Parents must continually recount the past and present works of God (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 4:9; Deut. 11:19; Ps. 78:4; Is. 38:19).

I'm convinced that better storytelling, grounded in the unchanging discourse of scripture, will enable greater encounters for our kids. They need more than just "moralism" and rigid precepts, they crave dynamic narratives that can actually be "*seen*" and "*felt*."

We rightly long for our children's stories to have continuity with our own. We want them to carry on in our beliefs and practices. Yet, if our chronicles aren't compelling or connected to the ancient metanarrative, then there's not much to grab hold of. Nothing is changed by empty words.

In the end, the lives of our children are probably going to line up with whoever offers them the most compelling story.

*2. Create Anointed Environments That Are Flexible* Parents also need to cultivate anointed environments that are characterized by great flexibility. This is done so our children can have their own experiences with God.

As our kids age, it becomes obvious that they can't be controlled. Under strong injunction, they may do the right thing. However, if it doesn't ultimately come alive in their hearts, it's only an exercise in futility. We don't want them going through the motions while they're young only to walk away after high school. We can't control them, but we can work to develop a compelling culture of breakthrough and encounter.

Continually intercede over your home and play anointed worship. Push out the darkness and forces of evil. Enable joyful expressions of the Lord to be demonstrated and felt. You should cultivate atmospheres where there is an invitation to the goodness and love of the Father. To the best of your ability, create a context where your kids can "come and see."

These are obviously the same kinds of things we want to see developed in our churches. We want to get our kids in and around the presence of God, creating an atmosphere for encounter. We need to cultivate a culture that calls out their destinies and offers them an incorruptible hope.

However, we must remember that, when our kids experience God, it probably won't look like our experiences. There may be entirely different manifestations and phenomena.

Holiness parents had to wrestle with their children speaking in “tongues” in the early 20th century. A generation later, Pentecostals had to deal with their children being “*slain in the Spirit*.” Then in the 1990s, Charismatic mothers and fathers had to deal with their kids experiencing “holy laughter.”

Older generations are seldom comfortable with the newer phenomena. Yet, they must loosen their grip if they want their children to encounter God. New generations will always experience new dynamics. So, it is important to allow a reasonable amount of space. Amazing things can happen when parents allow a little breathing room for their children.

*3. Don't Hinder New Developments* Finally, parents must allow opportunity for new developments and outworking. Sometimes our methodologies and practices get confused with divine mandates. What we focus on says more about us than what God is actually concerned with.

We certainly want to pass on our faith and values, but we can't make carbon copies of ourselves. If we attempt to form our children into narrow replicas of mom and dad, they'll often be out of sync with what's next.

New moves of God have a unique emphasis that resonates with the emerging culture. God often speaks to primal concerns that grip a generation. We see this happening during the Second Great Awakening. Beginning a few decades after the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), this revival renounced Calvinism and its hierarchical approach to salvation. Instead, it focused on individual salvation as a matter of personal choice. This emphasis on liberty was rejected by many of the theologians and religious elites. Yet, multitudes of frontier families came into the kingdom through this message.

As we age, we no longer comprehend what the younger

generations are facing. For example, many of the “baby boomers” who grew up with a nuclear family don’t understand the needs of the “Gen Xers.” Many of the younger generation never had a father at home. Some of what’s interpreted as “*humanism*” or “*hyper-individualism*” is simply people wrestling with identity issues. Whether you like it or not, God has ways of speaking to these complex issues.

If we want our children to experience the glory, then we cannot renounce the genuine concerns of their generation. More importantly, we cannot reject what God may be doing to speak to those issues.

Each of these dynamics has unpleasant implications. I understand that reality. I’m not saying that it’s always easy or even sensible. Many times a move of God will be quite unsettling to the older generations. It just won’t go back into the neat little “boxes” that we designed for it.

While revival can be extremely disruptive, isn’t that what we say we want for our children? We know that God doesn’t have any grandchildren, but are we willing to do what it takes enable true sons and daughters?

## **Conclusion**

As I held my son and imagined what things might be like in the future, I made a firm commitment. I will do all I can to create an atmosphere of glory. I’m sure that there are going to be things in the future I’ll struggle with. I’m not always going to be comfortable with where things are going. The “revivals” on the horizon will probably disrupt my sensibilities and sense of propriety. Nevertheless, I trust in the Heavenly Father and His incredible goodness. I know that He will do amazing things with my son.

I’d like my son to encounter God through me. On some level I know that he has. Yet, there are limits to how far my experiences can take him. There’s no way around it, God simply

doesn't have any grandchildren.

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