



THE PASTOR'S VOICE

Insights from Church Leaders

The Pastor's Voice Podcast: Episode 3

Transcript: Connecting Grandparents with their Grandchildren

Reuel Sample: It's good to talk to you. Steve has enjoyed a diverse career with experiences spanning for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations. He was employed in the pharmaceutical industry from 1977 through 2006, with roles covering sales, marketing, R&D and operations. In 2006, Steve joined Prison Fellowship Ministries and was later appointed Vice President of the newly formed Colson Center. Steve left the Colson Center to begin consulting work with Three Chords Strong, an LLC he set up with his daughter, Christine. Steve and his wife Tina have three children and six grandchildren and live in the great state of Maryland. He is now the Director of Operations for the Legacy Coalition, which connects grandparents and grandchildren. Steve, I think we can say you've been there, done that.

Steve Bradford: Yeah. Yes, sir. And I just realized as you were going through the bio, we have two brand new grandchildren, two twin granddaughters.

Reuel Sample: Twin granddaughters!

Steve Bradford: We're up to eight now. But yeah, it's a blessing. And we've got some experience now with grandkids up to the age of about 10.

Reuel Sample: So you know what you're talking about when we talk about Legacy Coalition and connecting grandparents and grandchildren?

Steve Bradford: Well, we're still learning, but we try.

Reuel Sample: Tell us about your ministry with the coalition.

Steve Bradford: The Legacy Coalition was formed about five years ago, and the ministry really is just to convince grandparents in today's culture to be more intentional about sharing their faith with their grandkids. And so we provide resources and events in a way to bless grandparents, and we try to do that through the local church. And very few churches today have grandparent ministries, not that they ever did. And so one of our goals, Reuel, is to really convince churches that this is a vital part of your church. It's a vital part of your ministry family and a grandparent ministry would be great.

Reuel Sample: You use an interesting term - "Intentional."

Steve Bradford: Yeah, I am. And you know, like you said, it's it's easy being a grandparent, a grandfather or grandmother, and you just think, OK, I can do this. I play with them. I maybe pray for them occasionally. But one of the most important jobs that we as grandparents have is just to see that generation come to know Christ. And speaking as a grandfather, I would say that most grandparents I talked to, if they're Christian, no matter where they are on the spectrum of intentionality, want to see their grandchildren come to know Christ, because that's the most important thing. But very few of us really have a good, solid strategy to do that. And that's what intentionality is all about. We don't want to just throw it, although sometimes that's what you have to do. But we want to have intentional strategies to lead them to Christ and disciple them.

Reuel Sample: You operate through churches. Have you been embraced by churches? Have you met some resistance from churches?

Steve Bradford: Well, Larry Fowler, our founder, talks about when he started talking about this five years ago, he would go to conferences of pastors and say, "How many of you have a grandparent in ministry or a Sunday school class in your church?" And he said usually it'd be one or two hands in the audience. And he'd say how many of them given a sermon on grandparents in the Bible - the importance of that? There would be another one or two hands. And so that's been our goal is to convince churches that there's a whole segment of this population. They're not just senior adults, their

grandparents, and they can be reached and can be a vital part of your ministry. So that is growing. We're finding pastors as we talk to them, you know, kind of do the slap in the head thing and say, Oh man, I never really thought about that before. But you're right. And really, at its heart, Legacy Coalition is a kid's ministry, a children's ministry. But instead of using youth workers or youth pastors, we use grandparents to get to the kids of the church, and we have found that grandparents are second in influence to youth behind their parents far more than youth workers, pastors, teachers, anybody else because they have that natural relationship with them,

Reuel Sample: Which kind of goes against the whole idea of youth ministry. I was a pastor, and so you had to go through the whole ladder of what you've got to be a youth minister first and you've got to do all this stuff. And youth ministers are often the younger ones who can take a beating and go out and rough house with the kids and everything else, what you're saying is that in this type of ministry, that is less important than the wisdom that grandparents bring to their kids.

Steve Bradford: Yes, exactly. And Larry was also he was also in AWANA, and he used to say that he would look around their AWANA clubs and find out that the kids who were the most faithful were not there from with their parents all the time or youth workers or bus ministry. It was the grandparents who who brought them to church. And so grandparents just had this natural relationship with grandkids and have that influence and their ability to reach them over time. And you want to make sure that you've got that, especially as they get older.

Reuel Sample: Now you you do all this through churches. Do you provide training for grandparents in those churches that want to start this ministry?

Steve Bradford: Yes. Well, we have a number of resources and events aimed at churches and so on our website - legacycoalition.com - we have a package for churches on how to set up and start a grandparent ministry. We also have a seminar called Grand Parenting Matters, and that's available if you want to schedule a live seminar in your church. It's about a six hour thing with a live speaker. You can do it virtually via Zoom or some other way if your church doesn't want to bring a speaker in. Or it's also available in a DVD and it comes in 11 sessions, which totals about six hours. And then, for instance, for Grandparents Day, which was just this past week, we

provided a whole toolbox for churches to honor grandparents. There were sample prayers in there where there were bulletin inserts, there were sample sermons and other things that they could print out and get the grandparents just to bless them. So the long answer there is yes, we try and work closely with churches and provide them materials that will really help them start as well as bless their grandparents.

Reuel Sample: If people want to start this ministry in their church, just contact you folks through the website.

Steve Bradford: Yes, sir. Legacycoalition.com And there's a many pages there that you could go to.

Reuel Sample: What makes this generation link so important? We think that it's the parent's responsibility to teach their kids. In many denominations in the baptismal vows it's the parents who are given that complete onus for teaching their kids, and they teach their kids a whole bunch of other things. Why is this generational skip so important?

Steve Bradford: Well, you know, that is a great point, and it's something that we often talk about. And the number one reason really is the Scripture kind of commands it. In Deuteronomy 4:9, where there's a command of grandparents where it says only be careful. Watch yourselves closely so you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. And then the next phrase teach them to your children and to their children after them. So Scripture in this in Deuteronomy 4:9 seems to be talking directly to grandparents and say, You know, this isn't a relay race. You don't teach your parents and hope that they pass it along to your grandkids or their children. But you also have a responsibility to teach your children. And then there's another place in Psalm 78:5 where David is talking to Israel and it says, Teach these things to your children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born. And they, in turn, would tell their children. And so it seems like the mandate is really, you know, we want our grandchildren to be Godly, intentional grandparents to their grandchildren someday. And so that's that's the first reason is it's commanded in Scripture. And the second is really that God has provided grandparents to assist their parents in raising up this generation. And grandchildren, it seems like no matter what their age, are naturally drawn to their to their grandparents, who as they play with them, as they make cookies, go fishing and things, those are all

great things. But when grandparents are doing that, it'd be great to have a strategy to say, How am I going to use this time to impact my grandkids and their faith?