



**ONE OF THE  
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UP TO BECOME  
DISCIPLES OF JESUS  
IS A "BONDED"  
RELATIONSHIP WITH  
ADULTS IN A FAITH  
COMMUNITY.**

**Awana**

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## Generational Guardians

**VALERIE BELL**

"Is anybody praying for my kids?" This question tore at the heart of a man who had led children's ministry in his church for 38 years. He shared that as his own children grew, he wondered if anyone remembered them, if anyone from church knew what path they had taken in life, if anyone cared.

Through the years he had prayed with hundreds of children to receive Christ. But who was praying for them now? In 1988 he felt compelled to start praying regularly for the high school graduates from his church. There are over 130 names on that list that he prays for regularly to this day.

"Is anyone praying for my kids?" That question made him realize that many parents must have the same question in their hearts that he did.

Who is praying for those kids? Who remembers them? Who knows the path they have taken in life? Does anyone care?

I was part of a group recently where a father shared his heartbreak with his "drop out" adult son. His son had frozen both grandparents out of their grandchildren's lives because of their faith. This son was withholding relationship between them as if these children were weapons to be used against his own parents. If his intent was to deeply wound, his goal had been met. As this grandfather shared the pain they had carried for years, around the room others were weeping.

Behind the tears were unspoken stories about adult children who had become lost, or were being beaten down in failed marriages, children who had be-

come addicts or self-destructive in other ways. The pain parents bear over their adult children's lives can be so tragic.

Here is a strategy that every church could adopt:

We know that one of the major factors in children growing up to become disciples of Jesus is a "bonded" relationship with adults in a faith community. The role of a loving caring adult is strategically important in kids becoming followers of Jesus. Perhaps the sense of this need is why the church practiced assigning adults to babies as godparents for centuries.

What child couldn't thrive if some Christian adult was promising to pray, to be there for you regardless, to fill in the spiritual gaps, to tell you their faith stories, to help you build resilience in the face of the world's challenges, and to care enough to chase after you when you got lost?

We need more than leaders who run children and youth programming. We need more than curriculum or exciting spiritual teaching. We need generational guardians, Christian adults who will "bond" with a child through their childhood, into their teen years and young adult years and beyond—some loving, caring adult who sends birthday cards, prayer notes, congratulations on your first baby presents, and knows the path this young person is taking.

"Is anybody praying for our kids?" Is a crucial question we need to ask and answer for the future of faith, the future of the church, and the future of our kids. ●

### Valerie Bell

Valerie is the CEO of Awana, a global nonprofit children's ministry focused on building resilient disciples who are the future of the Church. Her latest book *Resilient: Child Discipleship and the Fearless Future of the Church* is now available on Amazon and at [awana.org](http://awana.org).