

# PRODIGAL KIDS WHEN THEY REJECT YOUR BELIEFS

## GOING FURTHER - RESOURCES

### RECOMMENDED BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM THE FAITH @ HOME CENTER

***When They Turn Away: Drawing Your Adult Child Back to Christ*** by Rob Rienow. This book provides much needed encouragement and practical advice to parents dealing with the grief and challenge of an older “prodigal” child.

## GOING FURTHER - CHURCH SUPPORT

***Life Group Ministry:*** Authentic Christian community and mentoring is available through Riverview’s Life Group ministry. Contact our Life Groups pastor Michael Beene at [Michael@rbclake.org](mailto:Michael@rbclake.org) for more info.

***Faith @ Home Mentoring:*** Mentors who can offer biblical advice and support are available. Talk with a faith @ home team-member at the faith @ home center to learn more.

***Pastoral Counseling:*** Pastors are available to counsel those who would like more Godly wisdom on this issue. Please call the church office for more info: 573-348-3515

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# WHEN A CHILD REJECTS YOUR BELIEFS

Every teen and young adult goes through a season when they try to establish their own identity by distancing themselves from their parents' tastes and preferences. But what do you do when your son or daughter rejects your faith and embraces beliefs or behaviors that you know could be harmful?

## AVOID BLAMING YOURSELF

Rejection brings pain, especially when the son or daughter you've poured your life into walks away from everything you care about or transfers their loyalty to a group of strangers. It is normal to second-guess yourself, wondering what you should have done differently. But even if you did everything perfectly, your child can choose to rebel. They may follow the pattern of Adam and Eve who, despite having the only perfect parent and living in paradise, still chose to sin. "I reared children and brought them up," God says through the prophet Isaiah, "but they have rebelled against me" (Isaiah 1:2b).

## STAY ENGAGED

You may be thinking "They don't listen to me. Everything I say seems to make matters worse. What's the point in trying?" But don't throw in the towel. As far as you are able, stay engaged in relationship. "[They] in fact still very badly want the loving input and engagement of their parents—more, in fact, than most parents ever realize," writes Christian Smith in his book *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. Smith demonstrates that parents have far more long-term influence than they realize – more than friends, youth pastors, professors or anyone else. He explains that "just at the time when [they] most need engaged parents to help them work out a whole series of big questions about what they believe, think, value and feel...parents are withdrawing."

Stay engaged as much as possible by writing brief cards, calling, sending text messages, etc. But use words that demonstrate humility and affirmation rather than hurt and judgment. Your efforts may go unacknowledged for some time, but they still serve as deposits for the future by saying "I will always love you and be here when you are ready."

## BALANCE GRACE AND TRUTH DAY BY DAY

The greatest influence you can have on your son or daughter is to reflect both God's grace and truth. (See John 1:14) It can be difficult modeling both—especially when dealing with prodigal children.

Following God's model of patient love with His rebellious people, you can show love even when facing rejection. Ephesians 5:1-2 explains, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Pray daily that God will use this painful season for good in both your child's life and your own.

But showing grace does not mean subsidizing a child's poor choices. Some parents continue to pay all of the child's bills. Others go so far as to bail their kids out of trouble, letting them avoid the consequences of their sins. Sometimes parents must show tough love by allowing the natural fallout of wrong choices to take effect. Remember the biblical story of the prodigal son. It was not until the boy became hungry that he "came to his senses" and returned home to ask forgiveness. Don't interfere with the events God may use to help your child come to his or her senses.

Parents of prodigal children may experience pain when they read "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from it." But Proverbs 22:6 is not a promise. It summarizes a general pattern.

Perhaps most importantly, remember that your child's story is not over. You have made an impression and laid a foundation. Your child's story is not finished yet. God is more than able to change and redeem any situation. Just one example of God's power to change sinners is found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." God is able to change rebellious sinners. Stay engaged with your child in the coming days by balancing grace and truth, while prayerfully anticipating a new chapter in your wayward child's life.