

How to Childproof Your Kids Against Rebellion

Luke 15:11-12 HCSB He also said: "A man had two sons. (12) The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.' So he distributed the assets to them.

Text: Luke 15:11-31

Introduction:

Today, the Spirit of God wants to once again tinker around with your family. And haven't you noticed how He has an uncanny knack for knowing where to tinker? What price can you put on your family's growth? Is there anything, next to your walk with God, more important than your family?

In today's message we'll look at the difficult side of the family and what happens when rebellion comes home to roost.

The home is a laboratory where kids can move from dependence, to independence, and finally to interdependence. Today we are going to address a topic that begs for a word from heaven if parents are to survive. We must understand this topic if our kids are going to make it into adulthood and God is to be honored.

Rebellion in the home affects everyone at one time or another. No series on the family would be complete without some insights on this painful part of parenting. My goal is to keep you from drifting out to sea with meaningless insights that have no hope of working in the home.

Children today live in a confused generation. Many have no respect for authority because they don't see it in the home. Others intimidate their parents with requests and demands that shouldn't even be open for discussion. Some transfer this lack of respect and intimidation to the school, neighborhood, and even law enforcement.

A common mistake is that many parents cannot see the high cost of not confronting rebellion. But if not confronted, these rebels will stop at nothing. If parents ever needed a word from heaven, it is now. God has given us a mandate to deal with rebellion. This can be the most unpleasant thing you will ever do. It is gut wrenching, sometimes even volatile, and on occasion you may feel like you're losing your mind. At times you will feel like the whole family is being held hostage, but you must stand firm.

Rebellion in the family wears many masks. It could be the child who grows up in a Christian home and fails to heed the warning about marrying a non-Christian. It could be the son in high school whose parents aren't aware of his struggle with his sexual identity, then one day he announces he's moving to Europe with his boy friend.

Using the beloved story of the Prodigal Son as an outline let me give you a peek into a home that was touched by rebellion.

One Rebelled Outwardly, the Other Rebelled Inwardly, And the Father Loved Them Both. There is more here than most people realize. This story is being played out in the lives of families in your community, county, and even church on a daily basis. You will be amazed at how relevant God's Word is to your need. I have outlined the story around seven concepts:

1. Before We Know It They're Grown Up – Don't waste time. Don't wait to teach those lessons.

- **Luke 15:11-12 HCSB** He also said: "A man had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.' So he distributed the assets to them.

The first day of school; the first time they stood in a little league batter's box staring down a 50-mile an hour fastball from some wild pitcher; and who can forget that first date? The

slicked back hair, Dad's cologne, and the \$50 from Grandpa tucked neatly into the leather wallet. What about driver's education? You just knew your child wasn't ready to get behind the wheel of the family car.

I think growing up is harder on the parents than it is on the kids. In our text, we have a child that stands before his dad as a man. His deep voice says, "Dad, I have some inheritance coming and I'd like to start spending it now." The voice of impatience rings out that day as a young man counts down the minutes until he is free of the restrictions of the home.

All parents know this day is coming but we're never quite ready for it when it finally arrives. And when it comes, there will be no time to make changes. Sometimes you're left with the nagging questions:

- did I spend enough time with them?
- did I do all I could to help create a sense of significance?
- did I give enough attention to the spiritual role that I play?
- did I listen to the things that matter to them?

From the beginning our story drips with rebellion, from the tone of voice to the wild living that follows shortly after the son's departure. Look with me for a moment at how dad handled the request and departure. He graciously responded to his son's request. No lecture. No prophetic warning of storm clouds of failure stirring on the horizon. It isn't easy to do what he did.

Have you ever considered the connection between how you release your child and how they return? In fact, sometimes how you let them go will determine if you ever get them back! Let that sink in for a moment.

It isn't long before the young man is a speck on the horizon. The father's heart was shredded as he wondered if he would ever see his son again. At times like this, a parent wonders if it's worth it all. No job is tougher.

2. When A Child Rebels Is Often Prescribed By Their Personality. - Identify their temperament along with its weaknesses and strengths.

- **Luke 15:13-16 HCSB** Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. **14** After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. **15** Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to eat his fill from the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any.

Why is it so hard to deal with rebellion? Because this is our own flesh and blood - innocence run amuck.

The boy can hardly get out of town fast enough. He sets out for a world that is cold, ugly, and anything but pain free. There is no, "and they lived happily ever after," in a rebel's life. In fact, most dread the coming of each day.

In his mind, he had grown up with too many restrictions, now he wanted the right to call the shots. Free at last! Free at last! With the sound of Dad's good-bye ringing in his ears, the young man stretches his wings and flies off to a world of self-indulgence.

- **Luke 15:13 HCSB** "...where he squandered his estate in foolish living." The young man was on a mission. His mission statement was: Operation Personal Gratification

Soon he acquires a bunch of shallow friends and is off to live "high on the hog." No indulgence is left untried. The web of experiential living has the boy in its grasp. It doesn't take long before the best thing that ever happened to him is staring him in the face - the money ran out!

- **Luke 15:14 HCSB** After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing.

This verse shows us what it takes to turn a rebel's heart to home. Panic and fear must replace boredom, self-indulgence and personal gratification. Notice the text: "...he began to be in need."

Welcome to the real world on the street. No work. No help. No hope. A great formula for transforming a proud heart! Soon things in his heart are going to soften.

3. If You Are Going To Win Over Rebellion, You Must Allow Consequences To Win Over Your Child.

- **Luke 15:15-17 HCSB** Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to eat his fill from the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any. **17** When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger!

Without a doubt, the hardest part of parenting a rebel is realizing the type of pigsty these kids might have to sink into. But a broken heart opens them to truth and God's grace.

Perhaps there is a potential prodigal here today who can be saved by this honest portrayal of what lies in front of you. Maybe you're a naïve' parent who isn't praying for your child's safety and you'll be shaken to your senses when you hear what is out there attracting our kids. I know for some this will be a bit graphic, but it's reality and might save some unsuspecting young person from a life of heartache:

- Kids as young as 5 are sold into child pornography
- Jr. high girls are having sex on a regular basis at age 12
- Youth are being swept into the world of the occult
- Young men are slipping into homosexual practice
- Young girls are abandoning Christian values for a world of "freedom" with an older man and the perceived joy of being cared for

Before they hit their 20s, these kids are often totally confused, emotionally bankrupt, morally corrupted, and physically wasted. The world and street might seem inviting on the surface, but it's a demanding tyrant that takes no prisoners. It's a godless, shameless lifestyle that leads to death. Flee from it! If you are thinking of running, please reconsider your options.

In his letter to young Timothy, Paul announces the heartache of desertion from the Christian ranks when he says, "For Demas, because he has loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica." (2 Timothy 4:10) In other words, the bright lights of Thessalonica drew him away.

If you are the parent of a rebellious child, please be aware of this truth: It could take your child months and even years before they ever realize what they have back at home.

- **Luke 15:17 HCSB** When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger!

As painful as this insight is, before Prodigals return they may fail high school, suffer abuse, or get pregnant. Some may spend time in prison; others may go through a drug recovery program.

It may take the loss of a friend, loss of their mind, loss of their virginity, and even the threat of the loss of their life before they come to their senses. Rebellion is a painful family issue to deal with. Over the years, one thing I have seen is that it may take a series of hard events before the runaway is shaken to his senses.

4. How Will You Handle That Day When Your Child Returns? The Role of Role Play.

- **Luke 15:18-20 HCSB** I'll get up, go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. 19 I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired hands.' 20 So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.

Tucked deep inside these verses is the recipe for the successful return of a rebellious child. Don't minimize these two important issues; they will determine if the child closes the door once-and-for-all. The other option is a series of returns and departure. Unfortunately, this can be the formula for a nervous breakdown.

5. How To Welcome The Rebellious

First, realize they are not coming home to be given the same status they enjoyed before their departure. Rebels know they deserve nothing. They will be satisfied to live in a tent in the back yard. They will accept the leftovers from the nightly meal.

Second, they are not coming home for things and stuff. The rebellious child is coming home for relationships.

- "... I will set out and go back to my father..."

Consider this, the prodigal is not interested in his room, his friends or his trophies. All he thinks is, "just give me dad."

The deepest heartache of the rebellious is for relationship. And the deepest yearning is for that of their family. Just be patient; that child will come back. Your home offers something they can get no place else. One day your wayward son or daughter will long for you above everything. When that happens, the prodigal is on the way home. As one author says, "Parents, the most significant thing you have in your home is you!"

Let me give you a glimpse of the rebel's thinking when he's making a move toward home:

- I'll go back to the one that was there when I was little and hurt myself.
- I'll go back to the one that treated me fair when I was wrong!
- I'll go back to the one that held my hand when I failed.
- I'll go back to the one that stood on principle over person.
- I'll go back to the one that loved me enough to let me go!

6. Rebellion That Results In Restoration Needs Celebration

When the short-lived fantasy of the fast lane is over, be ready to do your part in the return.

- **Luke 15:22-24 HCSB** "But the father told his slaves, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, 24 because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.

What do Prodigals need when they return? Love - and lots of it; the very thing you have been giving all your life. The original text in Greek suggests that when the son and dad finally made eye contact and came to together, that dad "repeatedly hugged and kissed him". This was no shallow form of expression. This was not a son worrying about his peers seeing him cry or watching him kiss his dad. What a story line!

When the child returns—be heavy on the celebration and light on the explanation. The last thing the kid needs is a lecture.

7. Don't be Surprised If Rebellion Is Right Under Your Nose

A Word of Warning: Many parents are not even aware that their own subtle rebellion has sown seeds of rebellion in the heart of their children and now it's germinating into a bumper crop of insurrection. The sad thing is many parents are not even aware this is going on.

- **Luke 15:25-30 HCSB** "Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he summoned one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 'Your brother is here,' he told him, 'and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 28 "Then he became angry and didn't want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 But he replied to his father, 'Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.'

Conclusion:

We need to apply the following principles to our families today if we want to guard against our children becoming prodigals.

1. **Stay Faithful to Your Spouse.** Not just sexually but emotionally and socially.
2. **Be consistent.** Don't apply the rules differently according to your mood, who you're talking to, or where you are.
3. **Be urgent.** Childhood passes by so quickly. Don't wait around to do these things.
4. **Principles come before persons.** The principles found in God's Word are your source, strength, and safeguard for building a winning family.
5. **Balance natural and applied consequences.** Don't always apply your own consequences. Every once in a while, let them fail. It's good for them.
6. **Emotionally coach your child.** Know your child's unique temperament and personality and build on it. Be his greatest coach – not merely his friend. Teach them empathy, sympathy, concern, care, hatred, love.
7. **Be quick to discipline but be willing to forgive as well.** The Golden Rule applies to kids too! You too have rebelled at times. Treat your child as you wish to be treated. Once he's done his time, let it go.
8. **Celebrate their right decisions.** Don't just harp on the bad stuff. Don't just praise the good stuff. Do both – A lot!