

## **A Parent's Broken Heart**

It happens much too frequently. A faithful Christian father and a faithful Christian mother agonize over a loss. It's not a loss of life over which they are grieving. Instead, their distress has been brought on by a son or a daughter who has gone into the world of sin and turned his or her back on God.

The circumstances vary. In some cases the child had been a faithful Christian but has since fallen away. In other cases the child never obeyed in the first place and is now hard-hearted. Regardless of the reason, the child is a servant of Satan and Godly parents fear for that soul.

Often the first reaction of a parent in this situation is to blame himself or herself. What could have been done differently? What wasn't done that should have been? What was done that should not have been? Since Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it," the fact that the child is disobedient to God must mean that there was parental failure, or at least this is the conclusion to which a parent might come. Granted there are examples of parents who did not tend to their children's spiritual needs, but is a child's unfaithfulness always the result of errors in parenting? If it were true that a parent's faithfulness guarantees faithful children, then would it not also be true that a parent's unfaithfulness guarantees unfaithful children? Of course, there are several examples of righteous men and women who grew up in ungodly homes. Go back and read the history of the kings of Israel and Judah in the books of Kings and Chronicles to see some Bible examples of Godly men whose sons turned away from the Lord as well as ungodly men whose sons turned to the Lord. Let's also consider families in which there are multiple children, some of whom are faithful and some of whom are not. How can that be explained? Even though the parent of an unfaithful child deeply feels guilt over the child's waywardness, the fact of the matter is that the child has free will just like the parent does. With that freedom to choose, he or she has the freedom to make wrong choices, one of which is disobeying God. Certainly a parent should do some self-examination and if an unholy example has influenced the child for evil, then repentance should be made by that parent. Whether or not this is the case, a frank discussion with the child regarding the parent's influence over the years should be conducted.

Communication plays such a critical role in a parent's attempt to restore a disobedient child. Why would a parent not lovingly yet firmly show that child from God's Word that he or she is lost? Why would a parent not let that child see and feel the hurt that he or she is causing? When a parent is trying to bring a child to God or back to God, it is not a time for timidity or fear of saying the wrong thing that might drive the child away. The child has already left the Lord. Jude wrote, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." (Jude 23).

I invite parents to share this article with their unfaithful children. Hoping that will be done, I make an appeal. Unfaithful friend, not only are you lost in your current state of disobedience, you are also tearing your parents up inside. They are afraid that you will die in your lost condition. They love God and are looking forward to being with Him in eternity. They love you and want you in heaven as well. Won't you at least sit down and talk to them about the direction you have taken in your life? They are hurting. They are heavily burdened by your disobedience. How much do you care about their pain?

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Tonight a heart is shattered,  
A face is wet with tears,  
A mind is heavy laden  
With worries and with fears.

Tonight a soul is praying  
In sad and mournful strains.  
Few tragedies on earth  
Can bring such depth of pain.

“Dear God, I pray, be patient,  
Longsuffering and kind.  
He’s turned his heart toward sin.  
Please, Lord, give him time.

“Lord, it must be my fault.  
I must have erred some way.  
If I’d been a better Christian  
He would not have gone astray.

“Lord, I feel so helpless.  
How can I bring him home?  
I just can’t bear the thought  
Of losing this precious soul.”

Tonight is like the last one  
And all the ones to come  
For the parent of a prodigal  
‘Til he returns to God.

The doubts and fear and anguish  
Keep weighing on the soul.  
There is little rest for the parent  
Whose child has left the fold.

If only sons and daughters  
Who’ve chosen to depart  
Could see how their unfaithfulness  
Breaks a parent’s heart.

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