

When Children Fall

Proverbs 4:1-6

We love for our children to live Christian lives, but the truth is that many, have and will fall away from God. I have read that being the parent of a teen was the most difficult task of life. The challenges facing our children touch us all. The devil uses every trick and scheme he can to lead young people astray. He might tell them they are the product of evolution rather than created by God. He might tell them to ignore God and introduce them to the pleasures of sin. He slanders what is good and makes sin attractive. He uses their peers and the media to seduce them into ways of thinking and behaviors that ruin their lives. Parents often worry about what their children see and who they are spending time with.

The moral downfall of America hurts our youth the most. More than four in ten children born in America are born to unmarried mothers and fathers. Half of all American children will witness the breakup of their parents marriage. Millions of children today live in single parent or blended families. The traditional home where dad worked and mom stayed home with the kids is rare these days – mostly because it takes both parents working just to survive. No wonder our children are morally and spiritually confused. This is why many young adults stray early in life.

Parents who love their children do all they can to keep their children active in church, but many young adults wander away from the faith when they go off to college or move out on their own. **People fall away from church for a variety of reasons.** Some get their feelings hurt by a church member, and the experience leads them to stray. Some see people they thought were mature Christians living sinful lives and think the whole church is full of hypocrites. Still others get caught up in their own sins and simply drop out, because they are ashamed. Others go to college with professors who do not believe in Jesus and they stop believing themselves. Still others fall away because they are angry with their parents, and they know quitting the church will hurt them.

When children fall away, parents have to figure out what has caused the problem and take steps to bring children back. Sadly, people do as they choose, and you can't make them to what is right. That doesn't mean you are helpless. You can do something to make a difference in your child's life. In **Jude 20-23** we read, ***“But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save***

others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”

First, you can build yourself up in your most holy faith. The best thing you can do for your children is for you to remain strong in your faith. Live what you believe consistently; be true to the Lord and to His cause. When your faith is true and sincere, you will stay close to the Lord. You will also be showing your children your authentic faith. They will respect you for being genuine to your faith.

Second, love them. Everyone needs love. Love doesn't mean that you condone or excuse their sins; it does mean that you won't give up on them. Loving them means letting them know you care for them in spite of the life that they are living, and that you only want what is best for them. While parents must stand firm against what is sinful, that doesn't mean they can't love their children. Young adults need to understand that love doesn't necessarily mean approval of every behavior. God can love us as his children and yet hate our sinful behavior. Jesus hated the sins that we all commit, because he knew how destructive they are to us; and He loved us all enough to go to the cross for us.

The Bible in **Romans 5:6-8** says, *“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Christ acted out of love to forgive sinners. He wanted them to be saved and was willing to bear the cross so that they could come out of their sins.

Some people have the mistaken belief that Jesus' death on the cross allows them to find grace but without change or repentance, but this is not the case. When Jesus rescued and forgave the woman caught in adultery in **John 8:11**, He said, *“go, and sin no more.”* Young people have to learn the grace of God is not license to stay in sin, but that He expects us to change our lives to conform to His will. Too many people think that it is mean spirited to condemn sin, but nothing is farther from the truth.

Paul teaches us in **Titus 2:11-14**, *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness*

and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” God does not save us to leave us in destructive, sinful, lifestyles.

Third, you can pray for them. Some folks must go through hard times before they see where their sins are leading them. Pray they will come to their senses. Pray they will remember the love and grace of God. Pray they will see the need to repent. Pray their hearts will be open to the Word of God. Pray they will see the error of their ways. And pray every day and don't stop praying. We never know all that God is doing to answer our prayers; but we know that God listens and that He wants every person to do what is right.

2 Peter 3:9 tells us, *“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”* He won't twist the arm of our children; but God can use all kinds of circumstances to wake people up to their spiritual condition. Our children have consciences, and He knows what will prick their hearts. They can still turn their lives around.

Fourth, you can talk with them and encourage them to come back to God. We learn in **Gal. 6:1**, *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”* Parents, your attitude toward your young adults may be the real key in winning back their hearts. If you become all self-righteous or get angry, you will certainly end any meaningful communication. But if you gently and humbly approach them in love, they may listen to you.

Approaching other people to lead them back to God is not an easy task. It takes humility, gentleness and patience. When we recognize our faults, it opens the door for others to recognize theirs. Paul in **2 Tim. 2:24-26** said, **“A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants (NLT).”** Let us then not only read this passage, but study it, and meditate upon it, as we strive to be God's servant in reaching out not only to our children, but to all who are lost in their sins.

Fifth, help them find answers to their doubts. When children are small, they borrow from your faith; but when they are older, they must work though the great

questions of life to possess their own faith in Jesus Christ. Don't rebuke your children for asking hard questions; rather help them find the answers to their questions and doubts. And there are answers. No problem you'll ever face is greater than God.

The God of the Bible is still the God of creation and the Ruler and Sustainer of the Universe. Nothing has changed, the Bible is still inspired of God and utterly trustworthy. The problems that people face in life, however hard they may be, does not mean God doesn't care or won't help. The question that people ask about God, Christ, the Bible, or suffering have good, solid biblical answers. They are in God's Word and they can give comfort and assurance to parents, and children alike.

So how does a faithful parent deal with an unfaithful Child? You have probably heard the story of the Prodigal Son. He is what Jesus said in **Luke 15:11-26**, *And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So, he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."*

Just as God forgives His children when they return home spiritually, so parents long for the day when their children come home to the faith. If you are a prodigal, won't you come home to the Lord. If you're a parent of a prodigal, keep an eye out for them. They may be going through a tough time and may need you and the Lord. **Know, this: People can repent and often do! Pray for that day, and be ready for them!**

Your child may come home; and when they do, forgive them and bring out the best robe. If they return home, it will probably be because you and your faith are the only haven they have left. *God extends His grace to us as a magnificent blessing.* Grace should open our hearts to forgive others when they return penitently. *God is in the forgiving and saving business* and when people humbly come to him in penitence, He is always ready to forgive and save. **Psalm 51:17** says, "*The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God (NLT).*

When we come to Him in love and faith, repenting of our sins, and willing to obey, God receives us with an open heart. In baptism God washes away our sins with the blood of Christ. God is always waiting for His prodigal children to come home – his patience is great and His love is wide.

Millions of people have stopped worshipping at church and living the Christian life. Are you one of them? I am grateful that you are listening to me today, this means you have some spart of a spiritual life. But you need the Lord and the fellowship of other Christians to keep your spiritual life strong and healthy. If you are living our life without the help of God, think about your spiritual condition. Would you want to stand before God as you are?

Many young adults return to church when they marry or start having children. But if you haven't returned, you might consider how God can help you face life's challenges. You can face life with God's help or without it, the choice is yours. The prodigal son came home to God, but I can't help but think that there are many more prodigals who still need to come home.

If you haven't yet become a Christian place your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repent of your sins, and come to baptism as a calling on the Lord's name, as God washes away all of your sins. Stop being a prodigal son and return to be a loving and obedient son.