

## A “PK” (Pastor’s Kid) Prevention Program

*Raising church kids who don’t have rebellious hearts*

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Some “PK” kids grow up loving the church, loving their parents, and never show any signs of the typical “PK” rebellious character. They are the minority. Most children who are raised by pastor parents have difficulty connecting with “church” in their teen years. They may even rebel against the very Christian foundations for living in which they have been raised from birth. One “PK” child may go on to become a pastor, while another “PK” child may choose a life that is filled with drugs, moral weakness, and pain. What makes the difference? What can parents, who are also pastors, do to prevent their “PK” kids from experiencing a life of pain?



If you were to interview the parents of “PK” kids who have chosen a life of rebellion, those parents would say the same thing, “We don’t know what we did wrong. How could this happen? We did all we could to raise our child correctly...” The process of developing a rebellious heart is a slow one. Sometimes, parents are too close to the situation to see the signs. Sometimes parents who are pastors ignore the signs out of fear or denial. By the time they experience the first, or second, encounter with their child’s rebellious heart, the “window” for treatment may already be closed.

Parents whose “PK” kids have rebelled against the church, God, and even the family structure itself, are faced with a somewhat universal, common cause. The lack of time devoted to their children during the formative years. In times of anger, their children, almost without exception, will say something like, “You don’t really love me, you’re too busy at church! I hate that place! You’re never around when I need you!” For some “PK” kids, the pain has driven them beyond the area of verbal expression, and they simply “act out” their anger by getting arrested, becoming sexually active, using drugs, or other behaviors that are guaranteed to cause the parents pain. For the “PK” kid who has always taken a back seat to the needs of others, or the church, there is only one course of action: to finally get the needed attention through rebellion. The desperately sad truth is that it may be too late for both the child and the parent.



Is it really too late? Can we ever face a challenge that is too big for God? The answers to those questions rest solely on the willingness of the pastor parents to sacrifice for their children. God says that “love covers a multitude of sins.” (I Peter 4: 8) No matter how old, or young, your child is, it is never too late to seek God’s wisdom in adjusting your ministry lifestyle to prevent the raising of a rebellious “PK” child. The time, effort, and sacrifice that you devote to this need now will “pay off” later as you celebrate your teen or young adult “child” who honors you with Godly lifestyle choices.

For the sake of graphic dramatization, let’s look at how to create a rebellious “PK” kid.

### **How To Create a Rebellious “PK”**

- Work long hours at the church (beyond normal working hours).
- Bring church-related work home and ignore your family.
- Talk about “church stuff” at home and not about your child’s day.
- Talk on the phone, while at home, about church issues and “waive off” your child while talking.
- Sacrifice family mealtimes due to church work.
- Leave the dinner table to talk on the phone about church work.

- Sacrifice personal attention times (homework, snuggling, etc.) due to church work.
- Welcome church-related adults to regularly visit your home.
- Respond to your child's questions or comments with a "Not now" attitude.
- While at church, treat the child as if he/she didn't exist.
- Visually care for the needs of others at the expense of your own child's needs.
- Permit weeknight church-related events or work to take you away from the home.
- Regularly ask others to care for your child while you perform church work.
- When your child complains about not seeing you, use the excuse of "Ministry is important."



**Results:** A growing jealousy, for your attention, in your child. A focus on "the church" as the "other child" who has captured your love. A growing need for your attention that produces both conscious and unconscious plans to get that attention regardless of the moral or ethical standards. Desperation sets in. Rebellion becomes a tool to accomplish that which "accepted" attempts (talking, crying, sickness, etc.) failed to produce. The ultimate goal is, and always will be, to feel loved, special, and important in the parent's eyes.

### **Ideas For Preventing A "PK" Rebellion**

- Set definite, clear, and obvious restrictions on your work hours (normal working hours).
- Leave church-related work at church (create a no-work zone at home).
- Do not talk about "church stuff" at home.
- Set boundaries for church-related phone calls at home (except emergencies).
- Establish family mealtimes (dinner) at home (use as time to talk and laugh) **TURN OFF PHONE.**
- Enjoy uninterrupted personal times with your child (talking, snuggling, walking, etc.).
- Play with your child regularly (Legos, pretending, Barbies, computer games).
- Limit (restrict?) church co-workers from visiting your home.
- ALWAYS treat your child as the most important person around.
- Verbally compliment your child in the presence of others at church.
- Stop conversations, place calls on hold, or leave meetings for your child.
- Be obvious in your sacrifice of the needs of others for your child.
- Talk about your own needs, fears and dreams as you listen to his/hers as well.
- Ask for prayer from him/her as you pray for his/her requests.
- Enjoy slow, quiet times like coloring or art together. Talk about life while enjoying the quiet.
- Overflow compliments to the child (school work, talents, attitudes, choices, etc.).
- Set clear boundaries that limit or exclude evening church-related meetings or events.
- Only ask others to care for your child in emergencies.
- Surprise your child with "injections" of your love.
  - Love notes in his/her lunch.
  - Cooking his/her favorite meal.
  - Watching a movie he/she likes (no phones).
  - Sending him/her a loving text message on the cell phone.
  - Taking him/her from school for a special, off campus lunch together.
  - Keeping him/her out of school for a day of personal time together at the mall, beach, etc.
  - Experiencing personal fun together (shopping, sports events, video games, etc.).
  - Send him/her a "thinking about you" note at school (via the office).
  - Give "I'm proud of you" gifts periodically (no special occasion, just proud of you).



- Share times of service to others together, then reflect at “Starbucks.”
- Develop a “hobby” or adventure that only you and he/she share together.
- Stay connected with his/her world (listen to his/her music, watch videos, ask about styles, etc.).
- Develop an ever-increasing circle of trust (events, dates, phone calls, etc.).

**Results:** A deep, personal connection that builds trust and respect. Ultimately, because of the powerful personal relationship with you, he/she will make personal choices that will please you. The concept of “awesome respect” will exist between you. This doesn’t mean that you won’t have times of responding to poor choices, but those times will be fewer and more positive as he/she understand that you want the best for him/her.

**NOTE:** If you have a “PK” kid already, the above list of ideas can still be helpful. There is some “damage” that may never be fixed, but your child will recognize your effort to restore a relationship with him/her. At first your child may be bitter and reject your efforts to restore a relationship; keep trying. Remember, “Words are cheap!” Don’t just say that you are sorry, show it by making sacrifices.



Our kids know what they want. They are smart enough to get what they want one way or another. What they want is us. What they need is our attention. They have a very clear awareness of our value system. They know that we prove our values by how we spend our time. If the time we spend focused on them increases, and the time we spend on “church work” decreases, they will know for sure that we value them. If we give them the time and attention they deserve, now, we won’t have to make up for lost time later. The time we devote to them now will cancel out the need to spend time with them in jail, divorce court, or drug rehab later. We have to ask ourselves, “Are the hours I’m spending on ‘church work’ making that much of a difference compared to the effects those same hours could have on my family?” Church work will never be “done,” but our children will only be ours for a few short years. If we have to “take the hit” for our choices about our time and attention, let’s let work take the hit...