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*." Proverbs 22:6 is not a promise, but it summarizes a general pattern. Besides, your child's story is not over. You have made an impression and laid a foundation. Your child's story is not finished yet. Stay engaged in coming days by balancing grace and truth while anticipating a new chapter in your wayward child's life.

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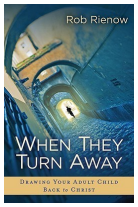
GOING FURTHER — Resources

Recommended Books:



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

Small Groups: A small group is a great place for you to connect, grow your faith, and find encouragement on a difficult parenting journey. Find more info at:

- **staffordcrossing.org/smallgroups**
- or contact **Small Group Director, Debi Schuster** (debi@staffordcrossing.org)

StaffordCrossing Community Church

www.sccchome.org

Prodigal Kids

When They Reject Your Beliefs

When a Child Rejects Your Beliefs

Teens and young adults 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

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 (Luke 15:11-32). Don't interfere with the events God may use to help your child come to his or her senses.