

Why a Child May Reject You

There is something profoundly painful about a child saying they want to leave. It cuts to the core.

I know that when my children say things like, "I'll just go live with Dad," or, "I'll just go live with [insert name]," or even, "I want a different mommy," it's more about being frustrated than actually leaving ... at least, I hope so.

Lately two of my children have said those words to me. It causes me to gasp inwardly. The pain is acute. I believe this falls into the category of you hurt the ones you love. Again, at least I hope so.

Children can use words frightfully well to hurt, and they certainly know the words that push the most buttons. Oh, how I wish they wouldn't push this button. It hurts too much.

My teenage daughter said it last night. She's in a tough spot in lots of ways, and I know I'm a safe place to vent, but dang it—ouch! It hurts because it means I'm not enough. Just me being mom isn't good enough. And instantly, I go to "Just like me being wife wasn't good enough." I know that those things aren't necessarily true, but they are thoughts I have—thoughts I need to take captive.

Maybe for children of divorce this is a "weapon" in their arsenals? It would make sense. It's a stronger version of pitting parent against parent.

When my daughter uttered those words, I didn't respond. I didn't know what to say, and I feared I'd just start weeping buckets if I opened my mouth. Thankfully, I was driving, so I kept my eyes on the road. And I prayed.

I don't want my children to think that leaving our family is actually a viable option—a reasonable option. It's absolutely

not. Their father used that option with disastrous results for all of us. I refuse to let this be a generational sin. It will stop with him!

So what do I do?

I know my first course of action is to pray and pray hard. And I need to trust God. Trust Him with my children and their future.

And I will try to hold my tongue and my temper. And I will listen. And regardless of how unkind my children are, I will love them. Regardless of how tired I am, I will love on them. And I will model that love is a choice—a choice to stay regardless of how you feel or what you want to change or not change.

Maybe I need to share openly with my children about how their comments hurt. I'll have to think about that one. Maybe I need to tell them gracefully and gently that leaving is *not* an option. Period. Ever.

And I definitely need to remember that my children are hurting. That my children are confused and scared. Just like me, Lord, they long for life to be different. I pray that my children will find their hope and strength in the Lord and Him alone and that they know with certainty that their heavenly Father will never leave them nor forsake them (Josh. 1:5).

And no matter how often they declare they will leave me, I will not leave them.

Father, my sweet children are living such a different life than I had hoped and planned. We're all struggling. God, I need wisdom to do this well. I need strength and patience I don't feel capable of exhibiting.

Father, I pray that you will protect my children and guide their decisions. Please reveal your love to them in unexpected

and amazing ways. Please help them to know that you have a wonderful plan for their lives and that the struggle is doable with you. In Jesus' name, amen.

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