

How Christian Parents Produce Backslidden Children: Part 1

Editor's Note: This is part 1 in a two-part series. Read part 2 [here](#).

As a pastor for over 30 years, I am amazed that such a small percentage of the children of Christian parents actually serve the Lord when they reach their teenage years and beyond, including the children of Christian leaders. Since nurturing covenantal children is the primary method God uses to establish His dominion on the earth as it is in heaven, there aren't many subjects more important than the one I am addressing in this article.

In this article, I correlate Christian parental behavior with likely outcomes related to the faith of their children. That is to say, each of us could read this article and most likely tell if our children will serve the Lord with all their hearts in the future, or be lukewarm or unbelieving when they get older. The following are my observations on why many children of Christian parents do not serve the Lord when they are older.

Many Christian parents often do not emotionally connect with their children.

I learned through having five children that it is not enough to read the Bible and pray with my children. I need to have fun with them, learn their particular love languages (read Gary Smalley's book *The Five Love Languages of Children*), and try to reach their hearts and establish deep relationships with them while they are young. I learned this the hard way because I didn't really emotionally connect with one of my children the way I should have when they were young (we are close now). This resulted in a great struggle of faith in

spite of all the Bible teaching and prayer we shared together. Children without an emotional connection to their parents can have a trajectory of unhealthy soul ties with ungodly people who will pull them away from the Lord.

Many Christian parents don't intentionally pray with their families as a habit in their households.

As I have surveyed Christian families, even the families of some leaders, I have found it a rare thing when the altar of the Lord has been established in a house with regular, consistent prayer. Often when there is prayer it is perfunctory and superficial, or only one of the parents prays while the other doesn't actively engage (thus showing their children that prayer really isn't important). Children of these parents will be on the trajectory of a nominal Christian who doesn't know how to seek God or walk in the presence of God.

Many Christian parents don't have an intentional approach to biblically catechize their children.

Most parents are clueless when it comes to training their children in the Word of God. I tell parents that one easy thing to do is teach from the book of Proverbs on a regular basis. Proverbs is the primary instructional book parents can use to train their children to live wise lives in the fear of the Lord.

Unfortunately, many independent evangelical churches have jettisoned everything about the historical denominations, even good things like the concept of catechisms. We can take a catechism (for example, the Heidelberg Catechism) and revise it to fit our doctrinal perspective so we can use it to give our children a great overall understanding of the major doctrines of Scripture.

I believe all churches should institute some form of catechism training for their children. One church I know uses it when

their children are very young, resulting in them not having Sunday school classes that separate the children from the parents; the children are so well-versed in Scripture they can understand the adult preaching as well as their parents!

Children of parents who don't train them in the faith will be children without a biblical worldview. This will leave them vulnerable on a trajectory toward a kind of syncretism with false religious views based on spirituality and not on Christ as the truth in all of life.

Many parents allow their children to miss church on Sundays so they can participate in team sports.

Somehow in this nation, there is an unwritten law that teaches, "Honor the sabbath day except if your child is involved in sports"! Parents who allow their children to consistently miss Sunday services because of sports programs are on a trajectory to nurture backslidden children who are being taught that sports and hobbies are more important in life than worshipping God! Mark 4:19 says the desire for other things will come in and choke the Word of God.

Many parents would rather stay home if their spouses are working or unable to attend Sunday services.

There are some parents who will not attend church on Sundays if their spouses are not attending church, because it is too much of a hassle to get the children ready to attend church on their own! Parents who do this are putting their children on a trajectory of serving God only when it is convenient, which would classify them as lukewarm Christians, something Jesus said He would vomit out of His mouth (Rev. 3:14-16)!

Many Christian parents live a compromised life at home.

Many parents regularly watch ungodly television shows, listen to ungodly secular music, tell racist or dirty jokes and use foul language in front of their children in the confines of

their homes. Then they go to church and act spiritual on Sundays. This duplicitous behavior will place their children on a trajectory of either hypocrisy or disdain for God, the church and Christianity!

Many Christian parents don't properly supervise their children.

Many parents allow their young children to have televisions in their rooms, computers, smartphones and even go out on dates when they are young teenagers! Consequently, these parents have no clue as to what their children are viewing or whom they are connecting with in person or on social networking websites. Unsupervised children are being indoctrinated by the world 60-80 hours per week; this is something an hour per week in church cannot compete against! It is possible for these children to be on a trajectory with no focus or with addictive/compulsive behaviors from too much texting, social networking, video games or even pornography.

Many Christian parents talk bad about their churches or church leadership in front of their children at home.

Many parents are in the habit of badmouthing their pastors or churches, or speaking critically about other Christians. This puts a critical spirit in their children, which eventuates in their children thinking that church is for hypocrites! These children are on a trajectory toward being critical of everything regarding church, which will result in them staying far away from corporate worship participation.

Many fathers show more enthusiasm for sports than for seeking God

I know of many fathers who will scream and shout during a football game but will have a lethargic attitude when it comes to prayer, attending church and serving God. I even know of one pastor who would cut his services short during football

season so he could go home and watch football on Sunday afternoons! Jesus told us that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Thus, when parents show they are more fascinated about something than they are about God, or value something more than God, their children are on a trajectory of thinking that God is unworthy of their passion, time or attention!