

# Should Christian Parents Disinherit a Rebellious Child?

Should Christian parents remove a child from their will if that child abandons the faith and values taught at home?

Pastor Josh Howerton addressed the emotionally charged question during a recent episode of “Live Free,” responding to a viral conversation between financial adviser Dave Ramsey and a Christian mother whose adult daughters had embraced socialism.

Howerton argued that children are not automatically entitled to the wealth their parents spent a lifetime building. For Christians, he said, an inheritance must be viewed as a stewardship responsibility before God.

“I have decided I am not going to fund rebellion against my Lord,” Howerton said. “That’s a principle for me.”

He pointed to Jacob’s decision to remove Reuben’s birthright after his son committed a serious act of rebellion. Howerton also noted that some Christian theologians have described disinheritance as a permissible response to open and unrepentant rebellion within a family.



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However, he cautioned parents against turning their wills into weapons.

“What we are not allowed to do is sort of just revenge disinherit kids that are kind of ticking us off a little bit,” Howerton said.

He also highlighted the parable of the prodigal son, in which the father gave his rebellious son an inheritance despite knowing the condition of his heart. Howerton said the story introduces an important picture of grace into the discussion.

"You might be seeing there kind of a shape of the gospel," he said. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Howerton said he and his wife, Jana, have decided to leave the first 10% of their estate to God's kingdom. They intend to leave the remainder to their children if they are "generally walking with the Lord."

The standard is not perfection, he explained, nor does it require their children to enter ministry or agree with every point of their theology. Instead, they want their wealth entrusted to descendants whose lives are oriented toward God and His kingdom.

Howerton said parents should communicate those expectations early rather than allowing children to discover them after a parent dies. Otherwise, the decision could appear impulsive or vindictive.

He also acknowledged that other Christian parents may reach a different conclusion, including providing for a rebellious child's basic needs as an expression of grace without financing a lifestyle that openly rejects God.

Rather than creating a universal rule, Howerton urged each family to seek God personally.

"Open your Bible, pray, ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom, and do whatever He tells you to do," he said.

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