

Four Ways To Encourage Your Kids To Leave The Church

I'm never for doing anything halfway. So if you want your kids to leave the church when they leave your home, I've got a list of four ways you can contribute to your child's spiritual demise:

First, make other things a priority over church assemblies. Be sure that you are giving your child the impression that there are some things that are more important than assembling with the church if they are "big" enough. Be sure the church comes second to some things like sporting events, vacations, family get-togethers, and even some forms of working. Only doing this occasionally is sufficient to get the point across to your child. Better yet, cut out Bible class entirely and only come for Sunday morning worship.

Second, don't talk about God, Jesus, or the church when you are at home or in the car. Keep your lips sealed when it comes to spiritual matters. Don't ask, and don't tell.

Third, when you do talk, be sure to complain and nitpick as much as possible. Complain about the preacher, his sermons, the elders, the deacons, the singing, the song selection, the Bible class, the teacher, the materials, young kids, older people, and any other Christian who is different from yourself. Never give your child the impression that you are appreciative of the church, or that you respect those who serve it. Never be satisfied. Plant the seed of dissatisfaction.

Fourth, indulge your child's immaturity. Despite the fact that they have yet to develop a real concept of the value of a dollar, give them full control when it comes to their most valuable asset: their soul. Even though they might want to eat pizza and french fries for every meal, let them make every soul-affecting decision for themselves. If they don't want to do "it," don't make them do "it." This applies to all aspects of participation, including Bible class, worship, and even (for the boys) leading worship. Make attendance optional. For that matter, make everything optional, with no consequences.

Of course no parent really wants to drive their child away from God and the church. But sometimes we inadvertently do just that. I'm not saying that if you ever do one of the previous four things I mentioned that your kids are destined for Hell's fire. But what I am saying is that if you can catch yourself before you keep up some of those pitfalls then you will have a far better

time helping your children to transition from being preteens, to being spiritually minded teenagers, and then to being faithful Christian adults.

Just as arrows need to be aimed in order to have a chance of hitting their target, our children need to be "aimed" in order for them to have a chance of "hitting the target" of righteous and faithful living (cf. Psalm 127:4). Even though the possibility exists that you won't hit the "target" with your "arrows," you definitely won't get anywhere near the target if you aren't at least taking careful aim at it. Here are a few things to consider when it comes to making that aim:

Matthew 6:33: Be sure that the kingdom is really the first priority in your family life. Don't let other things become diversions that take you and your kids away from the church. Even missing or failing to participate a few times can set a precedent in your child's mind that's hard to change. You get bonus points if you take your children to go to gospel meetings, singings, and Bible studies.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7: Teach your children at every opportunity. A nature walk can become a discussion about Genesis. A ride home from baseball practice can become a lesson about always doing your best (cf. Ecc. 9:10). Mealtime can become Bible time. Take those opportunities to teach, as they are all around you.

Philippians 2:14: Don't complain. There's no good reason for it. Complaining doesn't change anything. Only doing something changes things. Complainers often wait for others to do the changing, and inadvertently teach the principle of the "squeaky wheel" to their children. Don't be that person. Be a doer.

Proverbs 22:6: The word "train" in this verse means more than just talking to your kids about God. It literally means "to narrow," and also is translated as "dedicate" in other places besides this passage. Think about dedicating your child's path to the Lord, as well as "reigning in" their immaturity. That's what it really means to train - to narrow the focus of your child's life to not just what they should do, but what they ought to do. There is a difference.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, nor does it cover every facet of raising your children to stay faithful. But I pray that you will take these words, and do some studying and praying on your own.

Adapted From Daniel Howell