



THE PREACHER'S KIDS

J.J. Turner

Bill: "Do you know why the preacher's kids are so rowdy?"

Ted: "No! Why?"

Bill: "It's because they play with the elders kids."

This bit of humor betrays the fact that the children of preachers are scrutinized more than other children in the church. After all, their father is a saint and their mother is near sainthood.

I wasn't a PK (preacher's kid) but I have raised two PKs, a son and daughter, and have three granddaughters who are PKs. I have trained hundreds of preachers and am aware of the numerous challenges preacher's children face.

When interviewing adult children of preachers, as well as some young children, I discovered the experiences of growing up in a preacher's home varied. Some experienced very little pressure and others were abused; some have fond memories and, sadly, some have left the church because of what happened at home.

Not all abuse and negative experiences come from outside the home; many come from within the four-walls of the preacher's home.

The Voices of PKs

PK: "My father ruled us with an iron fist. Everything was either black or white.

PK: "My father always stressed that we do what we do, not because he was a preacher, but because we are Christians."

PK: "I had it easy as a preacher's kid. Oh, there was some pressure but nothing major; my desire to be a preacher came from home and church."

PK: "We could never play sports like the other kids because we couldn't miss church services or other activities of the church. This was a double standard."

PK: "I never understood why I was held to a higher standard because my father was a preacher."

PK: "Mom and dad lived a double life; they were one way at church activities and another way at home."

PK: "The pressures of trying to live as the perfect family caused our family to break-up. I hate church now."

PK: "I was always lonely because the other kids didn't want to be around miss goody-two-shoes."

PK: "The pressure was always on to become a Christian; regardless of what I thought, it was a positive mark for my father's teaching and example if I obeyed early."

Stress on Preacher's Kids

Stress and burnout aren't the peculiar territory of preacher's and their wives; it affects their children too. They, too, live in a glass house and are expected to be perfect. They are just outside the spotlight but still are exposed to it by how members view them.

I have had numerous preachers tell me that they wish they could go back and raise their children all over again; they would do it differently. I am a member of that group.

The preacher must remember that while he may preach a perfect Gospel, he can't live it; neither can his wife and children. Why pressure them to do so?

Unreasonable Expectations

Careful examinations of some of the expectations of preacher's kids reveal that they are not reasonable. Here are a few of those unreasonable expectations:

1. A preacher's kid is expected to be at all activities of the church except those for senior citizens.
2. A preacher's kid is expected to walk a straight and narrow line relative to conduct.
3. A preacher's kid is expected to know all the answers in class and Bible Bowls.
4. A preacher's kid must wear acceptable clothes; the modern styles reflect worldliness.
5. A preacher's kid is expected to bring friends to church; other kids aren't expected to bring visitors.
6. A preacher's kid must do without if there isn't enough materials in a Bible class.
7. A preacher's kid is expected to date only members of the church; others don't have this pressure.

Positive Tips for Helping PKs

Preachers and church members should do all they can to create a healthy, positive and biblical environment for the boys and girls who are PKs. Here are a few tips:

1. Remember they aren't any different than the other kids in church. Their birth certificate says they are human too.
2. Treat them normal, not as projects or saints; fathers don't use them to boast your ego.
3. Remember the model of Jesus when He was 12-years-old (cf. Luke 2:48-52).
4. Remember they have not been hired to do the work of a preacher; it's your job. They aren't junior ministers.
5. Set aside a regular conference time to get input from your children. What stressors are they experiencing? Listen. Don't be critical.
6. Plan family times together; remember the family that plays together stays together.
7. In loving kindness protect your children. Build a positive prayer hedge around them.

As preachers we have an obligation to "train our children in the way they should go." This doesn't mean in the way of the brethren or your ego dictates; it means in a way that honors and glorifies God.

I invite you to come to this site frequently for great lessons and material related to you and your family. Send us ideas you have about PKs.