



## When Your Kids are in the Far Country, How do You Bring Them Home?

*"Every parent is at some time the father of the unreturned prodigal, with nothing to do but keep his house open to hope."*

—James Ciardi. American Poet

Eight years ago, Barna Research Group opened Pandora's Box by reporting that 59 percent of young adults who grew up in the church had dropped out.

In 2022, new research showed the number had increased from 59 to 64 percent. Nearly two-thirds of U.S. twenty-something churchgoers have left the church.

<https://www.barna.com/research/resilient-disciples/>

But those are just statistics...unless your children or grandkids are among that 64 percent number. And here's the sobering reality: If you are an evangelical grandparent, the odds are 90 percent that one or more of your adult children have left the Faith, and two or more of your grandkids are lost to it. So, here's a critical question: When your kids are in the *Far Country*, how do you bring them home?

### **The *Far Country* is Powerfully Seductive**

#### **Parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-32**

...So, the kid grabs his share of the inheritance and takes off for the *Far Country*. This is the story of 64 percent of our adult children and grandkids who are leaving our heavenly Father's houses. Maybe your adult children have left the Father's house, and your grandkids aren't even being raised there. More than 66 percent of U.S. teens never attend church. The vast majority of our kids are already living in the *Far Country*. And 64% of our

church kids will go there. [Religious practices of U.S. teens | Pew Research Center](#)

### **The Far Country Defined**

St. Augustine said that we are in the *Far Country* the moment we are far from our heavenly Father's heart. [The Theme of the Prodigal Son in Augustine's Confessions](#). By that definition, both brothers were in the *Far Country*

### **The Problem of the Restless Heart**

"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace"

"This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with the infinite and immutable object; in other words, by God himself."

Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), P. 75

### **Giving them *Far Country* Stuff Only Keeps them in the *Far Country*.**

"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." [*Confessions of St. Augustine, Book I, Chapter 1*]

Matthew 16:26

## **1. God has No Grandchildren**

Our kids have to come to a place where they put down our faith. And then pick it up as their own. Only when they own it as *theirs* can it really be *theirs*—and not *ours*.

## **2. Pharaoh Will Most Likely Get Our Kid**

At a very young age [Moses] was catechized in the religion of God's people. But then he was taken into Pharaoh's palace and trained to be a prince of Egypt. By the time his Egyptian grandfather had reshaped him, he walked like an Egyptian, talked like an Egyptian, and thought like an Egyptian.

The truth is: we can bring our children up in our Faith, but Pharaoh will eventually get hold of them.

St. Paul was right: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." [Ephesians 6:12] **Satan is out to get our kids by any and every means possible!**

### 3. Keys to Bringing them Home

First, he ***came to his senses***. Secondly, ***he remembered the love in his father's house***—how even the servants were lavished with grace. Luke 15:17-20

1. **Let the *Far Country* do its Work.** [Luke 10:10]
  - **Wait by the Gate.**
  
  - **Don't Wait Passively.**
  
2. **Let *Your Love* Bring Them Home.**
  - **What happens before the *Far Country* determines what will happen afterwards.**
  
  - **Our Churches should be places where grace abounds and unconditional love is a way of life.**

### 4. Don't Ever, Ever, Ever Lose Hope

The Hope of John 4:2—There is a throne, and God is still on it.

"Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in, except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."

--Winston Churchill, *Speech at Harrow School, October 29, 1942*