

# Lost

by Mike Matthews

I THINK THE MOST anguished words I ever read in Scripture are David's lament, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33, KJV).

I first read these words as a college student, and they have hung over me ever since. As a young man hoping one day to marry, as a newlywed looking forward to my first child, as a father nurturing five delightful children, Absalom's rebellion lingered in the back of my mind.

Could it happen to my children? What steps could I take to help prevent it?

Despite our very best efforts, despite our tears and prayers, children can still rebel against God. They are our own flesh and blood, yet sometimes they walk away from God.

Tragic stories are repeated over and over. In my own adult Bible class, I can't count how many of my friends and acquaintances have asked prayer for their children. I've asked for prayer, too.

Although this magazine issue features the human body, we felt the need to add a section on the exodus of young people from church. We wanted to help readers understand the scope of the problem and to begin exploring ways to make things better.

Each family or church may think they are suffering alone. They're not. We are facing a major culture shift, and the losses are mounting. Fortu-

nately, others have noticed, too, and they are prayerfully seeking ways we can do a better job at home and in the church to fulfill our God-given mission.

It's never too late to begin implementing biblical solutions. The articles in this issue are only a start. Make sure you read some good books, like

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the ones referenced in various articles—*Already Gone*, *Culture Shift*, *The Disappearance of God*, and *Lost and Found*. Watch Al Mohler's hour-long interview at [www.answersingenesis.org/go/4-4-exclusives](http://www.answersingenesis.org/go/4-4-exclusives). These are places to begin, at least, in our quest to do things better.

As always, our primary need is to turn to the Bible, which has the power to change lives. But we also need to recognize—based on God's own Word—that the results of proper training are not guaranteed.

Rebellion is as old as the first man, Adam, God's own son (Luke 3:38). In fact, Adam's story has been repeated in every life, as we have turned every one to his own way (Isaiah 53:6). God has felt a depth of heartbreak

that we can only begin to imagine.

Some stories of rebellion end happily, with the child coming back—like the prodigal son. But others don't turn out well, like Absalom.

We don't know how things will turn out, but we do know that God will settle everything in the end to His own glory.

In the meantime, we are supposed to keep walking by faith, wholly devoted to our Good Shepherd and to His Word, learning through our anguish, never quitting, and always praising Him.

Like David, we must stay faithful to the end of our days, trusting and praising God, no matter how dark the valleys or how tragic the choices of other people whom we love. David's continued devotion to God, to his last breath, is the kind of testimony we all should seek, as children of our heavenly Father. ■



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