

## **PASTORS' KIDS ARE A SPECIAL BREED**

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In American parlance, 'PKs' are pastors' kids. They are a special breed. I know, because I was one. Yes, my father was a pastor for the first six years of my life. In his first church my sister and I set fire to the manse. In his second church my claim to fame was that I was the PK who removed all the pew labels indicating who sat where – on the second occasion the church gave up assigning pews to members! Then my father moved into theological education. In spite of my father's changing roles, much remained the same. Church still dominated the home. Instead of weddings on a Saturday, it was ordinations and inductions. Almost every Sunday my father was out preaching – and often I went with him and heard him preach. We still had a constant flow of visitors around the table. And like many another PK I mis-behaved and so was thrown out of Junior Church and made to sit through the morning service as a punishment! Yet as I look back on my childhood, I have never regretted being a PK.

Later I became a father of four PKs. To my knowledge they have never complained about being 'children of the manse'. For they were the focus of much love and attention. There was, for instance, one family in the church who took a special interest in our family – and at times almost became an additional family for our children. For my children, growing up in my first church was a rich experience. To our great joy, three of them were baptised there.

There are great advantages to being a PK. PKs, for instance, have a special opportunity to develop self-confidence and social skills. It's not surprising that many PKs achieve much in life. The career of Gordon Brown, for instance, is 'par' for the course. PKs often do well in life and contribute much to society.

But life is not always easy for PKs. There are times when churches abuse their pastors – and in so doing they abuse the children too. I fear for the deacons of such churches when they have to stand at the last judgment and give an account of the way in which they treated the 'little ones' in their care. Sadly, many PKs have been driven out of the church. Incidentally, when things go wrong in a church and a pastor has to leave, how high on the agenda of regional ministers is the care of the children of the manse?

Thank God, not all PKs leave the church – and many of those who do leave, return. In both my churches I have had former PKs serving as deacons, and there is no doubt that they understand the pastor's job as no other does. The same applies to those other former PKs in my congregation. They know, they understand, and so they pray.

PKs are a special breed, thank God!

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