

# Group's

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

# Handbooklet:

## REBELLIOUS CHILD



Loveland, Colorado  
[www.group.com](http://www.group.com)

### **Group's Emergency Response Handbooklet: Rebellious Child**

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#### **Credits**

Editor: Roxanne Wieman  
Project Manager: Pam Clifford  
Chief Creative Officer: Joani Schultz  
Art Director: Jeff Storm

Book Designer: Pamela Poll  
Cover Art Designer: Jeff Storm  
Print Production Artist: Stephen Tiano  
Production Manager: Peggy Naylor

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## Introduction

It's not easy being the parent of a rebellious child. But it doesn't have to be lonely.

Christians should never have to face trials alone. Those around them—their Christian brothers and sisters—should rise up and support them.

*“Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).*

Although it isn't easy to struggle with raising a rebellious child, it's also tough being on the outside and trying to help.

You don't know what to do. You're worried about hurting their feelings or stepping on their toes or saying the exact *wrong* thing.

Of course you care—you love them! It isn't that you don't want to help—it's just that you don't know how.

*Group's Emergency Response Handbooklet: Rebellious Child* will help you come alongside your friends and those in your small group who are facing tough times. From care and counseling tips, to practical ideas for your small group, to what to say and what not to say, this booklet offers insight after insight into how to care for parents who are struggling.

Of course, it'd be great if you never had to pick up this booklet! But the reality is that many parents face tough times with their children—including your friends and the people in your small group. And they need your help.

So when someone you love is dealing with a rebellious child, it's time to pick up this guide. Use the table of contents to find the specific section that gives you what you need to be successful in helping them.

In this handbooklet there is a **real life narrative**—a story from parents who've been there. You'll find a section on **care and counseling tips** that will give you practical ideas for reaching out in love. The practical ideas in the **group tips** section will help your entire small group support the hurting parents during their trial. An invaluable section on **what to say and what not to say** to your friend. This section will help you avoid the hurtful comments and use the helpful ones.

You'll also find useful boxes that offer Scripture help, guidelines for referring your friends to a professional counselor, and additional resources, that you can use as you support your hurting friends.

Our prayer for this booklet is that it will help you help your friends during a difficult time.

## Rebellious Child

Helping Parents Lovingly  
Raise a “Problem Child”

with counseling insights from TREVOR SIMPSON  
+ ministry tips from JAMES W. MILLER

**T**he Powers’ son, Jonathan, was a challenging child from the very start. In the crib, he would stand up and beat against the bars, screaming until someone would come and attend to whatever need was overwhelming him at that moment. With such a strong-willed child, it became easier to appease him than to contradict him. Discipline seemed futile.

Elementary school was a slew of letters home from teachers and complaints from other parents. While Jon was not afraid to speak out in class, his speaking out rarely made him many friends. When report cards started to come home, they were always filled with the letter U for *unsatisfactory*. The Powers took Jon to school counselors and guidance counselors, but in the office Jon would clam up and give the psychologist little to go on.

The Powers went over and over their own parenting, the things they had and hadn’t said. Each of them blamed themselves privately, but often blamed each other face-to-face. When Jon became a teenager, a parent from school, trying to sympathize, told them that this behavior was just how children reacted when they felt overly controlled at home. So Mrs. Powers blamed Mr. Powers for cutting off all debate when Jon wanted to

disagree, and Mr. Powers blamed her for encouraging the behaviors they were trying to correct.

Jon's behavior at home soon became lethargic and silent. They confronted Jon about drug use, which he thoroughly and confidently denied. Nonetheless, in a moment of panic, Mrs. Powers combed through Jon's bedroom only to find a plastic bag full of marijuana. Which led to one of the now-frequent family blowups.

They joined a parent support group at church where other parents had similar situations. One parent talked about sending his child to a "camp" in another state. Others talked about persistent counseling even against their children's will. Even though the Powers didn't necessarily agree with everything the other parents said, there was a sense of community—that challenging children were not entirely unusual—and the group gave them some sense of hope.

They counted it a small miracle when they approached Jon again, and he was open to counseling. They had taken a different approach this time—they avoided making it sound as if they were going to counseling "to fix him." They suggested instead that they were having struggles together as a family...and they admitted that some of those struggles were a result of their relationship with one another, as well as with him.

But in the end, the most helpful person who joined them in the hard work of parenting was actually not a parent at all. Jon's Sunday school teacher, Mark Roberts, took an interest in them and their son. In their recollection, Mark never once offered them any advice on parenting. He just listened. When they talked to him about Jon, he sympathized. He asked them good questions about what was going on at home, but never followed up with simplistic "how-tos." On one occasion, Mark called home to tell them that Jon had been especially attentive in class lately and asked good questions. No reason other than to pay a small compliment. This was the only one of its kind they could remember, and they would remember it forever.

The Powers are now six months away from Jon attending college. Not everything is perfect, but not everything is as bad as it was. It looks like Jon will graduate, and that in and of itself is a great success. They've gotten better about trusting him to be on his own, and he occasionally

gives them good reason to. They know that no matter what happens, he will soon be on his own anyway, and the best thing they can do is trust God for his future.

## WHEN TO REFER

**+ When you believe there is a danger to the child, family, or others**—Consult with church leadership and the parents as soon as you believe the parents or child pose a physical risk to themselves or others.

**+ If there are issues beyond your understanding or you don't feel confident in addressing them**—With your friends or in your small group, you may feel a huge need to be the problem-solver. It's OK to say you're in over your head and you'd like some other forms of support present.

**+ When you can't be an unbiased advocate for the child and the family**—The child's behavior may have a direct impact on your family or be so offensive to you personally that you can't serve them well. In this case, help the family find someone else who will give them the support they need.



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