

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. 25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Why might prodigals be the worst?

Two Overarching Reasons why prodigals are the worst.

1. From the parent/discipler perspective - (the more mature believer)
 - The prodigal knows better! They make the choice full of knowledge of what they are leaving.
 - The prodigal knows what the father is worth and basically wishes the father was dead!

What are some of the emotions involved?

Frustration, anger, sadness, embarrassment, hurt, what a waste (all this effort I have put into it has gone to waste) Worry – will they be okay? Will they ever return? Are they safe?

2. From the older brother/peer perspective –
 - When they return they get loved as much as the faithful and possibly even more.
 - All that energy spent on the one who left. All that money spent and squandered. This is unfair!

Why is it important that we talk about prodigals?

1. So that no one remains lost. Matthew 28
2. We are all prodigals. Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and we sin when we are in the flock. Our hearts are prone to wander. Confess/repent cycle.

What are some Practical strategies in preparing to deal with prodigals?

Churches and homes have to be willing to allow prodigals to leave.

What do you think about this statement? Sometimes the most grace filled action we can take is to allow them to leave.

1. Make our homes and our church places that prodigals will run to and be restored. Prodigals have to get to the end of themselves.
 - All of us are sinners that are saved by grace and not by works.
 - Our works are evidence of the grace we have received.
 - Trust is earned but grace is never earned.

Confession is the foundation that trust is built upon.

How do I show grace before there has been any confession?

- Why do we expect people to earn our love back?

Do we require more of people than even God does? What is the requirement that God sets for us in order for Him to love us? (not meant to be a trick question but He has no requirement of us before He loves us.)

Set good boundaries for trust but grace and love is not earned.

2. To the best of our ability we have to make our homes and church places that do not unintentionally create prodigals.

Number one factor that fertilizes prodigals is hypocrisy. (We sing about Amazing Grace in church and then we do not treat our family with grace we are living as hypocrites.) Confession dissolves hypocrisy.

- What are some areas/emotions do you think generate hypocrisy? - insecurity, secrets, masks, double life – live and act one way here and another way there, etc
- Kinder to strangers and harsh to family

Consumerism and entertainment - What happens when the preferences of the young or the immature rule the roost?

- Why would we allow the least mature to drive the direction rather than faithfulness to Christ and His Word? Build on faithfulness.

Lack of depth/discipleship among people in the church leads to prodigals.

- 60-80% of students reared in church (according Barna, Pew, and LifeWay research) state that students leave the church when they graduate high school. If I don't get what I want in the home or the church, I cannot wait to get out of this home/church.

A theology of the body in the church (rather than only focusing on certain parts) practically plays out by having more that stay in the life of the church.

Take prayer requests and allow time for prayer.