

**Don't Stop Believing**  
**Radio Program Notes**  
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I. Introduction:

- A. Today, we begin a special radio series geared towards loved ones of prodigals.
- B. The number of families in our church who are hurting due to having a loved one who has walked away from the Lord and His teaching is unknown.
- C. Many times parents and family members of prodigals do not share their pain with others and sometimes for good reason. Sometimes when they do, their pain is met with judgment, condemnation and criticism of themselves or their children. All of which is very divisive behavior and quite frankly is not helpful to anyone.
- D. This series is intended to offer hope and encouragement to parents and loved ones of prodigals.**

II. In Luke chapter 15 beginning in verse 11, we read about the parable of the prodigal son. The term "prodigal" is found only one time in the Bible and it means:

- A. A person who spends money in a recklessly extravagant way.
- B. A person who leaves home and behaves recklessly, but later makes a repentant return.
- C. Some Biblical translations use the term "lost" instead of the term prodigal.
- D. In Luke 15:11-32 (NIV) we read:

**The Parable of the Lost Son**

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

<sup>22</sup> “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

<sup>28</sup> “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

<sup>31</sup> “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

### III. Looking at this parable more closely we see:

- A. The younger son asked for his inheritance - he essentially was telling his father, I don’t need you anymore, I can do this, I got this covered. He had left his father emotionally and relationally long before he had left him physically. Although at first this may sting our dear parents who have prodigal children, it shows that when a child turns from their upbringing and essentially rejects their parents influence, it is not a single event but rather a process and an attitude of the heart.
- B. We see the father’s response by giving his youngest son his share of the inheritance. The father still blessed his son even though it was probably very painful to hear his son ask for his inheritance. The son seemed very ungrateful and just not aware of how much he was hurting his father and not aware of how off track and short sighted he was. Many of our prodigals are lost in many regards and need compassion and not judgment. They are hurting also. When we are in sin, we cannot be at peace.
  - 1. Prodigals are sometimes negatively influenced by friends.
- C. We see that ultimately the son left to do it on his own and to try to do it his way. He eventually learned that the people he surrounded himself with were truly not friends. When he was in need his friends were not around to help him. Prodigals are often very lonely especially the further they get away from their family.

- D. The son returned home when he came to his senses. It is very difficult for parents of prodigals to see their children learn things the hard way. As parents, we have more experience and can often see further down the street; however, our children cannot. God of course sees down the street, around the corner and sees the very end of the journey.
- E. The father saw the son while the son was a long way off because he was watching for him. The father then ran to the son and warmly welcomed him. There was no guilt, shame or harsh remarks shared.
- F. There are many more facets to this parable. We encourage our listeners to read it for themselves. Again, this parable can be found in Luke 15.

#### IV. Parenting is hard work.

- A. "It's the hardest job you will ever love."
- B. Parenting a child who has walked away from the Lord, walked away from His teachings, it is even harder work.
- C. It is very common for parents of prodigals to grieve the loss of how things were, how they expected things to be and even grieving for their child's future because at least temporarily it will be a bumpy ride.

#### V. How do you parent a prodigal?

- A. Give yourself and your spouse grace and space. Everyone grieves differently and we can be at different places in the same cycle.
- B. Avoid the shame and blame game. There are no winners in the shame and blame game, only losers.
- C. Pray. Hold onto Jesus' garment.
- D. Hold onto the promises of God, to name a few:
  - 1. Deuteronomy 30:6 And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love The Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.
  - 2. Jeremiah 31:17 There is a hope in your future, says The Lord, that your children shall come back to their own border.
  - 3. Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. In this verse, old actually means "mature".
  - 4. You can find many more promises in the Bible. Another resource is the book "65 Promises From God for Your Child" by Mike Shreve.
- E. Stay in God's word. Invite Jesus into your pain and heartache.
- F. Ask trusted friends and family to pray.
- G. Give yourself a break, allow yourself and your family the space to begin new traditions and new ways of doing things.
- H. **Don't stop believing in God's power to change hearts and transform lives.**
  - 1. We are suggesting that you place your hope and trust in the Lord and not on what you see outwardly, not your hope.

- VI. If you are a friend or extended family member of a prodigal:
- A. If you have the opportunity to **positively** influence a prodigal to return home or to reconnect with their family, TAKE IT. You may be the voice of reason and support that they need.
  - B. DO NOT TAKE SIDES - Well-meaning relatives, adults, friends of the family or even friends of the prodigal may sometimes take sides and in effort to be supportive of the prodigal may say negative things or agree with the prodigal on how “bad” the parents are or their home life.
  - C. Taking sides is divisive behavior and will usually make things worse for both the prodigal and the prodigal’s family. Keep in mind that you don’t know the whole story.
  - D. Don’t dismiss the prodigal but you don’t need to agree with everything that is said. Be in position to help bring about resolution and peace.
  - E. God puts families together and interfering and taking sides, is dishonoring to God.

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