

6 Steps to Bringing Your Prodigal Home

I can see it in their faces. They are parents who cry and pray for prodigals but nothing seems to work.

They privately long for a rebellious son or daughter to turn from their sin and start serving the Lord. They live for the day when their wayward child comes home.

In the story of the Prodigal Son, the father did everything right. His example gives us insight into what we should do for the Lord to get the attention of the one we love.

Here are six things you can do to help bring your prodigal child back to Christ.

1. Stop feeling guilty and start walking in victory. As parents, we often feel we are responsible for the sinfulness of our children. It is easy to think that perfect parenting equals perfect kids. Then we assume the opposite must be true: imperfect kids are the result of imperfect parenting.

Satan, who is the accuser of believers, takes that thought and starts inflicting guilt on us. We start spending our time wondering, "What did I do wrong?" The answer is probably nothing.

God didn't do anything wrong with Adam and Eve but they rebelled. Judas walked with perfect love for three years and still betrayed Christ. You can be the world's greatest parent and still have a child who walks away. Until the Holy Spirit reveals your error, you must spiritually walk as though you did nothing wrong. If you don't, guilt will destroy your joy and will enable your prodigal to manipulate you.

2. Remove the barriers. Sometimes we know what we did wrong.

The Holy Spirit convicted and showed us our sin. We pleaded for His forgiveness and He granted it. Yet, we never went to our rebellious son or daughter and asked for their forgiveness.

Satan often uses our inability to seek forgiveness as a spiritual barrier between our children and the Lord.

The way to remove the barrier is to be honest, admit your sin to your child, and ask for their forgiveness. Be warned: they may not grant it but you have removed the barrier by acknowledging your sin. They no longer have an excuse.

3. Extend unconditional love. Unconditional love says, "I love you for who you are, not for what you do." It sounds easy, but it's not. How do you react when your child's name is mentioned? Ever secretly wish your son was dead? Or wished your daughter belonged to someone else?

In the days of Jesus, a Jewish boy dishonored his family when he fed pigs. If the story of the Prodigal Son occurred today, the boy probably would engage in sexual sins, become addicted to every known drug, commit as many crimes as possible, and publicly humiliate his parents every chance he got.

Jesus set the example. Unconditional love bears the shame, endures the pain, and hopes for the best.

4. Let consequences occur. Rescuing your prodigal every time they get in a pigpen is not unconditional love. No, love allows a person making wrong choices to face the consequences of their sins. The father in Luke 15 could have sent a servant with some money for his son. But he didn't. Rescuing the son would get him out of the embarrassing pigpen but it would not get him home.

The father allowed his son to leave with his inheritance. He refused to follow him and he refused to rescue him from the pain his decisions caused. Discomfort caused by their

decisions often is the tool the Holy Spirit uses to break prodigals. Real love stays out of the way.

5. Guard your words. Too often we give Satan ammunition for keeping our prodigals in the far country. It is the words we speak.

Don't like the pastor at your church? Keep it to yourself. Dislike the music or the leader of the student ministry? Tell the Lord but not your prodigal.

The person you criticize the most may be the one person God can use in the life of your rebellious child. If you aren't careful, your criticism of others will destroy any impact they are having, including their influence in the life of your child.

6. Pray specifically for friends. Nothing impacts a wayward son or daughter like a friend who has a heart for God! Ask God to bring godly people into your prodigal's life.

Pray for the Lord to bring co-workers into their workplaces that love Christ. Pray for God to put godly neighbors next door and to put kids on the same sports team with parents who seek the Lord. Pray that your prodigal will develop friendships with people controlled by the Holy Spirit and for their friendships to have an impact on your prodigal.

The Gospel of Luke omits the amount of time between the prodigal leaving home and his return. Like you, the father prayed for the day his son returned. The father, however, never lost hope and neither should you.

Keep your eyes on the road because one day your prodigal is coming home.

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