

Here Are 3 Ways to Win Over Your Prodigal Children

A “Not Now!” sign is on my door all this week, a sign that everyone in the Every Nation office is ignoring. Try as I may, I obviously don’t intimidate anyone around here.

I am in writing mode, working against a speeding deadline, trying to finish a book that does not have a title yet. Two possible titles: *The Heart of Parenting* or *My First, Second, and Third Attempts at Parenting*.

I am taking a break from chapter seven to post this blog. Chapter seven is titled “Pilgrim’s Progress: God’s Heart for Your Prodigal.” (The other chapter titles are at the bottom of this blog. As you can see, they are all borrowed from classic books.)

After applying the principles of the Parable of the Prodigal Son to parenting, the chapter I’m working on finishes with three tips called How to Win Your Prodigal.

Here are those three tips:

1. Be a parent, not a pastor. In the course of their lives, my sons have had many pastors. But they have only had one mother and one father. We can outsource the pastoring, but not the parenting. If I don’t fulfill the role of pastor to my sons, there are plenty of other pastors ready and willing to step into that void. But if Deborah and I don’t fulfill the role of parents, no one else can.

2. More praying, less preaching. I am not sure, but my guess is that the father of the prodigal in the parable did a lot more praying for his son than preaching to his son. In the end, after much pain and shame, it turned out better than OK for the famous prodigal family. If you have tried preaching to

your prodigal, and he is still far away, I suggest muting the sermons and replacing them with prayer.

3. Look for progress, not perfection. As soon as the prodigal turned toward home, when he was still far off, his father ran to him. He was far from home and far from perfect, but he was finally pointed in the right direction. As soon as your prodigal makes a turn and takes a step in the right direction, rather than criticizing how far away he still is, why not try running to him and throwing a party?

Please pray for me as I attempt to finish this book in the next few weeks. I am just over halfway finished. As you pray for this book, I am praying that prodigals will turn toward home and toward God.

Here's the book. Bold chapters are finished, and getting shredded by my copy editors. Non-bold are scattered noted in my iPad and stories in my head that are trying to find form.

FORWARD by William Murrell, Jr.: The Three Musketeers: What My Parents Did Right

PART 1: HISTORY

Chapter 1: Gone with the Wind: Seize the Moment Before the Moment Is Gone

Chapter 2: The Old Man and the Boy: Lessons from My Father

PART 2: HEART

Chapter 3: The Godfather: God's Heart for His Children

Chapter 4: The Heart of Darkness: Every Child's Heart

Chapter 5: War and Peace: Every Parent's Heart

Chapter 6: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: Seven Deadly Heart Issues

Chapter 7: Pilgrim's Progress: God's Heart for Your Prodigal

PART 3: HOME

Chapter 8: Where the Wild Things Are: Discipleship Starts at Home

Chapter 9: Great Expectations: Leadership Development Starts at Home

Chapter 10: A Tale of Two Cities: At Home in Manila and Nashville

Chapter 11: All's Well that Ends Well: What I Would Do Differently at Home

Steve and Deborah Murrell went to the Philippines in 1984 for a one-month summer mission trip that never ended. They are the founding pastors of Victory Manila, one church that meets in 14 locations in metro Manila and has planted churches in 60 Philippine cities and 20 other nations. Currently, Victory has more than 6,000 discipleship groups that meet in coffee shops, offices, dormitories and homes in metro Manila. Steve is co-founder and president of Every Nation Churches and Ministries, a family of churches focused on church planting, campus ministry and world missions.

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