

What Will You Find at the End of a Prodigal Journey?

The son—we'll call him Seth—broke every custom and tradition.

Weary of all the hard work, annoyed at his controlling elder brother and resentful that most of the land and livestock would one day belong to his brother, he made a defiant decision. This decision was followed by a series of even more radical choices.

Radical Choice No. 1

Seth went to his father and demanded all of his inheritance—now!

This was unheard of! He was rejecting his subordinate place, as the younger son, in the inheritance and management of the family estate. But worse, it said to his father: "I want you dead. I want my inheritance now."

Radical Choice No. 2

The father, surely heartbroken, had an even more radical response. He agreed to his son's demands. Surely he had to sell land and livestock to give him the cash equivalent of his portion.

Hopefully with a thank you and a goodbye kiss, but probably not, Seth headed off to the far land. Soon he gathered many friends to join in his riotous living. His generosity was greatly appreciated—until his wealth ran out. And so did his companions.

Radical Choice No. 3

Cold and hungry, Seth finally found work feeding pigs. In the muck and slime, he came to his senses:

"My father's servants are living better than I am. They have food, clothing and shelter. I will go home, though in great shame. Maybe my father will let me be one of his servants."
(See Luke 15:17.)

As he made the long journey home, Seth played over and over in his mind: "How can I show my shameful face? What will my father say? My brother? The servants? I need to confess, repent and ask forgiveness."

Radical Choice No. 4

Every evening, Seth's dad went up to the roof of their home to pray for his wayward son, to look over the horizon to see if he would return. Every night, he went to sleep with deep sadness over the loss of the very loved boy.

Then, one evening, he saw a figure in the distance. The figure was weak, disheveled yet familiar, dragging himself toward the house. And suddenly the father knew—it was his son. He was coming home.

He didn't stop to think: *How dare he think he can come back! What shall I say? How can I punish him? Will I let him stay?*

Oh no! He gathered up his robe and ran to him. When he reached him, Seth fell to his knees, seeking to sputter out his apology and request. But his father threw his arms and his robe around him, put his own sandals on his son. He even gave Seth his ring.

His words tumbled out: "My son! My son! You have come home! Oh, how I have mourned for you, prayed for you, waited for you. You are home!"

Seth again tried to ask to take rank in his father's house as one of the servants. His father would have none of that. He said, "You are my son. You were lost, but now you are found. Let's celebrate! We will have a party!"

And they did. Just like the angels in heaven celebrate with the Father, Son and Spirit every time one of the lost ones comes home.

It's called grace.

Grace that is extended to us repeatedly by our *Grace-Full Father*. Listen to this episode of *When You Love a Prodigal* with *Judy Douglass* on the Charisma Podcast Network for more on the Father's loving grace toward his prodigals. {eo}

Judy Douglass is a global writer, speaker and encourager. Her most recent book, *When You Love a Prodigal*, has ignited her new podcast of the same name. She directs Women's Resources at Cru.

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