

Why Do They Do It? When Your Brother Is a Prodigal

I think Michelle started her counseling ministry before she was 12.

Her friends often came to her for her wise counsel and her compassionate heart – and sometimes for a place to stay when things weren't good at home.

When God sent a 9-year-old boy to us as a foster child, she welcomed him gladly. Because he was just a few months younger than she was, they became close. The challenges that he brought to our home from his abandonment and neglect experiences drew from her compassion and wise counsel for him and for us.

But when adoption became our option, she paused. Then said, "It's been challenging, and may be hard, but I don't want to ruin the rest of his life by rejecting him."

That decision and the wilderness journey our family experienced over the next 15 years with our son are the topic of the most recent episode of my *When You Love a Prodigal* podcast. Our lively and honest conversation reveal the hard times and the help and hope that brought us all through it.

But there's more. Michelle went on to do missionary work, then got her master's and license in mental health counseling. She has used her gifts to help many and has given me great wisdom in my ministry to those who love a prodigal.

In the current episode of my podcast, we have another honest conversation about why some kids rebel and what are some real helps and hopes for good outcomes for them.

Most often, when teens begin to make questionable, and then

destructive, choices for their lives, parents grow fearful, desperate, even hopeless. “Why?” they ask. “Why has my kid done this, become so bad, ruined our family?”

Michelle has some answers to give real help and great hope. We talk about the realities of trauma and mental health issues in driving many to rebellion and scary decisions. She shares the importance of maintaining relationships and continuing to love; and she tells about some resources that are helping many.

I believe these two episodes will give help and hope for anyone on a hard journey with their children. Don’t miss “When the Prodigal Is Your Brother” and “Rebellion, Trauma, Mental Illness” – both interviews with Michelle Essary. {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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