

Why Every Parent of a Prodigal Should Take These 4 Steps

I have realized over the course of the last year that there is an entire subgroup of Christians who desire to bring no attention to themselves or to their terrible cause. This anonymous company of wounded soldiers would actually rather stay incognito due to shame and blame.

This association of both men and women has one heartbreaking similarity—each one is the devastated parent of a prodigal.

As parents, we don't need anyone to point out our weaknesses or mistakes. If you have a child who has left your nest, you are painfully and personally aware of all of the things that you wish you would have done differently. However, when one of our beloved children decides to leave the faith in which he or she was raised and choose a lifestyle that does not honor God, it is the parent who suffers the most.

"Prodigals are not limited in gender, race, age or color. They do have one thing in common: They have left home, and they are missed." —Ruth Bell Graham

If you are the parent of a prodigal, or know someone who is, perhaps these four practices will bring a measure of healing and comfort while you wait for your prodigal to come home once again.

1. Pray.

Pray without ceasing. Pray the Word of God over your child. Ask God to give you a specific Scripture to pray over the one who has turned his or her back on their faith. Perhaps one of these Scriptures would be a powerful added component to your

prayer life:

"I pray that the eyes of (child's name) heart may be enlightened so that (child's name) will know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18).

"So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. 18:14).

"Do not fear, nor be dismayed because of this great army, for the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chron. 20:15).

2. Repent.

If all that you can think about are the mistakes that you made in raising this child, repent and then move on. Don't beat yourself up over the fact that you were not a perfect mother or father. Ask God to forgive you of your human failings, but also ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of the wonderful moments you shared with this child.

Remember that God was the perfect Father and yet His children rebelled. A perfect parent is no guarantee that a child will grow up to become a perfect adult.

3. Connect, but don't preach.

If possible, look for opportunities to connect with your child through conversations, gifts, words of encouragement and sweet notes. However, do not preach to the wayward adult. Our adult children can run away from our words, but they can never escape our prayers, so our wise strategy is to talk less and pray more.

4. Don't waste your pain.

While you are waiting for your child to return to the open arms of the Father, invest your life in serving others who are also in pain or in need of parental love. Perhaps you could

volunteer at a homeless shelter or at a nursing home. Maybe you could teach Sunday school or just hold babies in the church nursery. It might be healing and comforting to you to send a teenager to summer camp or on a mission trip. You might also invite a young family over for dinner and offer to be a surrogate grandparent.

If you are the parent of a prodigal, I would love to hear from you. I have an entire team of intercessors who pray daily for people across the world. We would love to pray for your son or daughter and stand in faith with you as you battle for their very soul. You can email at carol@carolmcleodministries with your child's name, and you can be very sure we will hold up your arms in the battle! {eoa}

Carol McLeod is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written 10 books, including *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*; *Defiant Joy!*; *Holy Estrogen!*; *No More Ordinary*; *Refined*; *Joy For All Seasons*; *Let There Be Joy!*; *Pass the Joy, Please!*; *Guide Your Mind*, *Guard Your Heart*, *Grace Your Tongue*; and *Stormproof*, which releases on March 1, 2019. Her teaching DVD, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*, won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming. You can also listen to Carol's "Jolt of Joy" program daily on the *Charisma Podcast Network*. Connect with Carol or inquire about her speaking to your group at .