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The Parable of the Lost Son and His Jealous Brother

Luke 15: 11-32

The parable of the lost son and his jealous brother DIG: Name some of God's character traits highlighted in the parable of the prodigal son. What happens when the Lord gives people freedom to make their own choice? In what ways do we sometimes show disregard for YHVH's authority, like the younger son in the story? Why do hard times often bring people to repentance? In what way does ADONAI respond to people who confess their sins and return to Him?

REFLECT: When is it most difficult for me to trust God? Why? Why does the Lord accept and forgive my sin? Why is it important to realize that ADONAI values all people equally? How does it feel to know that Jesus sees all of my faults and still loves me anyway? Why do I tend to treat some people better than others? In what ways can I combat my tendency to withhold love from certain people? In what ways can I show God's love to that one person in my life that is difficult to love?

The one main point of the parable of the lost son and his jealous brother is that God delights in the redemption of sinners.



Jesus summarized **God's** stubborn love with a parable. **He** told about **a teenager** who decided that life at the farm was too slow for **his** tastes. So, with pockets full of inheritance money, **he** set out to find the big time. What **he** found instead were hangovers, fair-weather friends, and long unemployment lines. When **he** had just about as much of the pig's life as **he** could take, **he** swallowed **his** pride, dug **his** hands deep into **his** empty pockets, and began the long walk home; all the while rehearsing a speech that **he** planned to give to **his** father. But **he** never used it. Just when **he** got to the top of the hill, **his father**, who'd been waiting at the gate, saw **him**. **The boy's** words of apology were quickly muffled by **the father's** words of forgiveness . . . If you ever wonder how **God** can use you to make a difference in this world, look to the forgiveness found in those open arms.¹¹⁰²

As John MacArther writes in his book *A Tale of Two Sons*, the parable is set in a chiasmic **A-B-C-D-D-C-B-A** structure. It's kind of a poetic parallelism, and a normal device in Near Eastern prose to facilitate storytelling. The first half focuses entirely upon **the younger brother** and has eight stanzas that describe **the prodigal's** progress from departure to return. **Jesus said: There was a man who had two sons (Luke 15:11).**

(A) Death: The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate" (Luke 15:12a). Filled with shameless disrespect for **his father**, **the youngest son's** request was inappropriate and cut against the grain of Jewish culture's core values. A son guilty of dishonoring **his father** to this degree could expect to be stripped of everything he had and then permanently banished from the family and treated as **dead**. In fact, when **the prodigal** comes back at the end of the story **his father** said: **For this son of mine was dead (Luke 15:24).** Once disowned by **the father**, there was almost no way for a rebellious **son** to come back and regain **his** position in the family. If **he** wanted back **he** had to make restitution for whatever dishonor **he** caused the family and for whatever possessions **he** might have taken when **he** went away. Even then, **he** might expect to forfeit many of the rights that **he** had previously enjoyed as a family member. **He** could certainly forget about receiving any further inheritance. Lacking any real love for **his father**, it was as if **the youngest son** had said, "**Dad, I** wish you were **dead. You're** in the way of **my** plans. **I'm** not asking for **your** advice; **I** just want what's coming to **me. I** don't need accountability, and **I** don't need **you**. Give me **my** inheritance now, and **I'm** out of here." Like every rebellious adolescent, **the prodigal** was clearly miserable. But instead of the normal response to that level of disrespect (which would have been a hard, public slap across the face), **the father**

divided his property evenly **between his two sons (Luke 15:12).**¹¹⁰³

(B) All Is Lost: Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had (Luke 15:13a). He sold **his** birthright for pennies on the dollar because **he** just wanted out. **He** wanted to get away from **God**, but to do so **he** squandered all **his** spiritual opportunities and every blessing **ADONAI** had given **him**. **He set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living (Luke 15:13b).** Any **distant country** would be Gentile **country**. **The prodigal** not only left **his** home and family but also his Jewish heritage and **his God**. The Pharisees and Torah-teachers must have been thinking, “Nothing could be more contemptible.” Their disdain for shameless sinners was legendary. In their minds, **the prodigal** was beyond redemption. They thought **the father** should give **him** a symbolic funeral and be done with **him**. **After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need (Luke 15:14). Sin** always takes you further than you want to go, and costs you more than you wanted to pay. **The prodigal** was about to discover those truths in a very painful way. **His** own lusts proved to be uncontrollable and **he** was powerless to free **himself**. **His** bondage to **sin** turned out to be infinitely much worse than **he** ever imagined **his father’s** authority to be. **He** had made numerous horrendous decisions for **himself**, but now, the hand of **God** had made **his** troubles more severe than **he** could have ever imagined. The party was over.¹¹⁰⁴

At this point in the story **the older brother** is totally absent. Why didn’t **he** defend **his father’s** honor? Why didn’t **he** step in and try to talk some sense into **his younger brother**? Who don’t we hear any word of protest or a word of gratitude when **the father** divided up **his** wealth and divested **himself** of everything **he** owned? Surely **he** understood the public humiliation **his father** suffered because of **his younger brother’s** rebellion. Why didn’t **he** at least make an attempt to bring **his younger brother** home? Why wasn’t **he** hurt by the grief of **his father** and the ruin of **his brother**? It was because **he** didn’t have a relationship with **his younger brother** or **his father**. **He** had no more love for **his father** than **his prodigal brother** did. **He** just wanted to get **his** share of **his father’s** wealth, stay home and strengthen **his** reputation as the “good” **son**. This was a totally dysfunctional family. Although **the father** was loving, kind and provided generously for **his two sons**, both of them cared more about **his** wealth than **they** did for **the father himself**. One was a blatant, rebellious sinner; while the other was a religious sinner overlaid with a thin coating of respectability. Neither **son** had any real respect for **the father**, nor returned **his** love. Neither showed any interest in a

relationship with **him**. As a matter of fact, both **sons** hated **the father**, and **they** hated each other.¹¹⁰⁵ What a mess.



(C) Rejection: The disillusioned **runaway** at first did what a lot of people try to do before they really hit bottom. **He** frantically tried to devise a plan that would allow **him** to weather the crisis and perhaps even avoid really having to face **his sin** and own up to the mistakes **he** had foolishly committed. **His** only thought all along had been to get out from under **his father's** authority so **he** could have some fun. That obviously hadn't worked out to well; accordingly, **he** went to **his** back-up plan: **So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs (Luke 15:15). Swine** herding paid next to nothing and it was extremely demeaning work. It was virtually the lowest paying job at that time and unfit for normal people. But it was especially unfit for a son of the Covenant because any contact with **pigs** would make **him** ceremonially unclean. **He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything (Luke 15:16).** The mental picture that **Messiah** painted surely caused the Pharisees to recoil in disgust. As **Jesus** told **His** parable, **He** had attributed to **the prodigal** every kind of defilement, disgrace and dishonor conceivable. According to pharisaic Judaism **the prodigal** should have been scorned more than pitied. **His** reputation was so damaged that they had no doubt written **him** off as a lost cause.¹¹⁰⁶

(D) The Problem: When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death" (Luke 15:17)! The road **the prodigal** had chosen to follow turned out to be the highway to ruin. **His** carefree lifestyle had suddenly turned into a horrible, crushing slavery. All **his** dreams had become nightmares. All **his** pleasure had turned to pain. All **his** fun had given way to overwhelming grief. And this reckless young **rebel** who threw everything away for a few days of indulgence was forced

into a lifestyle of utter poverty. The party was definitely over. The laughs had been quieted. **He** had no more food. All **his** supposed friends had vanished into thin air. **He** was in the gutter with nowhere to go and about to die.¹¹⁰⁷

Before we move on, a critical lesson about the nature of **sin** and its devastation needs to be drawn from the rubble of **the prodigal's** life. **His** experiences give us a vivid picture of what **sin** is and what it does to people. This is the story of every one of us. We are all prodigal sons and daughters. Consequently, we need to pay attention to the warning **Yeshua** gives us in the part of the parable. When we **sin** we disregard **God's** love as well as **His** holy authority. Moreover, **sin** always bears evil fruit (**Ephesians 2:2-3**). In the end, the broad road leads to nothing but destruction. There is no one there to help, and nowhere to turn. We need to face the fact that we lack the ability to repair our own broken lives. We can't possibly pay for our **sins**, so we can't make the guilt go away. Unless **the Savior of Sinners** can be found, nothing awaits us but **death** and eternal doom.¹¹⁰⁸

This parable was tailor-made for Near Eastern agrarian culture.

Messiah's audience clearly understood the imagery and knew that **the prodigal son** had gotten himself into a real mess from which there seemed to be no earthly way of escape. If any Pharisees in the audience believed there was even a hint of possibility that **the prodigal** could ever find forgiveness, they were certain that it could come only after a long, arduous time of hard work and penance for the sake of *earning his father's* pardon. Actually, that would likely be the common assumption of everyone listening to **Jesus** as **He** told this parable. But **the prodigal** was ready. **He** was broken. **He** was alone. **He** was discouraged. **He** was repentant. And **he** believed in **his father**.¹¹⁰⁹

(D) The Solution: There was no question of whether **he** should go home or not. If **he** was going to live **he** had to reach out to **the father** that **he** had rejected. The question that remained was how to do it. **The Prodigal** rehearsed what **he** was going to say when **he** arrived back home. **I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19).** **He** had thought it through. **He** had no hopes, asked for no special rights, and made no ultimatums. **He** was determined to throw **himself** on the mercy of **his father**. But as far as the Pharisees were concerned that would not be enough. **He** still needed to *earn his* way back into **the father's** good graces. Would **he** be accepted? In reality, **he** didn't know – but **he** had to try.

Of all the **sins the Prodigal** had committed, the most damaging was the great distance **he** had put between **himself** and **his father**. **So he got up and went to his father (Luke 15:20a).**¹¹¹⁰

Listening to **Yeshua** tell **His** parable, the Pharisees and Torah-teachers certainly expected **the father** to deal very harshly with **his** rebellious **son** on **his** return. In fact, they couldn't wait. You could almost see the start of a smug smile on the corner of their lips as they waited for **Christ** to confirm everything they believed. Certainly there was no thought of grace in their theology for such a sinner. The Torah called for **his** death (**Deuteronomy 28:18-21**), so merely being disowned seemed merciful by comparison. **He** chose to live like a Gentile, now **he** would be treated like one! **He** would probably live on the outskirts of **his father's** estate, shouldering the blame for the rest of **his** life.

In that culture of honor, especially in a situation like this, it wouldn't be unusual if **the father** simply refused to meet **the boy** face-to-face. In fact, even if **the father** were inclined to grant the contrite **son** an audience, it would be typical to punish **him** first by making a public spectacle of **his** shame. For example, a **father** in those circumstances might have **the prodigal** sit outside the village gate in public view for several days, letting **him** soak up some of the dishonor **he** had brought upon the family. The whole village would mock and verbally abuse **him**, even spit on **him**. Most likely, that's exactly the kind of treatment **the son** expected. **He** had made **himself** an outcast; now **he'd** be treated as one.¹¹¹¹



(C) Acceptance: At this point, **Jesus'** parable took an unexpected turn. Here **the father** was not only willing to grant a measure of mercy in return for the promise of a lifetime of service – but **eager** to forgive freely, completely, at the very first sign of repentance. **But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son, threw his arms**

around him and kissed him (Luke 15:20b). It is evident that **the father** kept looking daily for **the prodigal's** return. It was daylight when **the father** finally spotted **his** rebellious **son**. That meant the village market was filled with people. But **the father ran to the son** rather than waiting for **the son to run to him**. That aspect of this parable is similar to the previous two parables, where the shepherd diligently sought his lost sheep and the woman feverishly searched for her lost coin. Each of those images pictures him as **the faithful Seeker**. **He** is the architect and the initiator of our salvation. **He** seeks and draws sinners to **Himself** before they ever would think of seeking **Him**. **He** always makes the first move in the salvation process. **He Himself** pays the redemption-price. **He** calls, justifies, sanctifies and finally glorifies each and every believing sinner (**to see link click [Bw - What God Does for Us at the Moment of Faith](#)**). But neither the Pharisees, nor any listener in **Yeshua's** audience was moved. As far as they were concerned it was even more offensive to them than the sins of **the prodigal**.¹¹¹²

(B) All Is Restored: It is significant that **the father** had already forgiven **his son** even before **the prodigal said** a word. After **his father** embraced **him**, **the** repentant **son** started to make a confession that **he** had undoubtedly been rehearsing for quite a while. **Father, he** said: **I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son (Luke 15:21).** Although the Pharisees had not run out with **the father** and were not present, they would have fully agreed with **the prodigal's** assessment. The heart of the Pharisees doctrinal error was that all sinners needed to perform certain works to atone for their own sin, and thus earning forgiveness from **God**. But the lifetime of servitude **the wayward son** was prepared to offer was unnecessary as a means of earning **the father's** favor because **he** had granted **his son** full blessing and unconditional pardon by grace alone. This would change **his son** forever. Why would **he** ever go back to a life of self-indulgence and extravagance? **He** had already pursued sin to its inevitable end and knew the results all too well.¹¹¹³

But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet" (Luke 15:22). Here again, as **Jesus** told the story, eyes in **His** audience would roll. Not only the Pharisees, but also anyone steeped in that culture would be completely confused by **the father's** actions. This **man** had no shame. **He** had just sacrificed **his** last shred of dignity by running like a fool to grant free and complete forgiveness to a **son** who deserved nothing but the full weight of **his father's** wrath. Even worse, **he** was now going to use the best of everything **he** had to honor **the** dishonorable **boy**.

The prodigal son must have been stunned, hardly able to grasp what was happening. **The Lord** mentions three gifts **the father** immediately gave **his son**. Everyone listening to **Messiah's** parable understood the implications of those gifts.

Sandals may not sound like a great gift to us, but in that culture it was very significant. Hired servants and household slaves normally went barefoot. Only masters and their sons wore **sandals**. So they were an important gesture that signified **the former rebel's** full and immediate reinstatement as a privileged **son**. Everyone understood it was no small thing.

The best robe was an even higher honor. Every nobleman had a choice robe, an ornate, expensive, embroidered, one-of-a-kind, floor-length **robe**. He would only wear it to his children's weddings or equivalent occasions. Everyone in the village would have been appalled at such a thought. **The father** was publicly honoring **his** returning **son** not only as guest of honor at the banquet, but also as a person of the utmost distinction.

The ring was the signet **ring** that had the family seal on it, and therefore a symbol of power (see my commentary on **Esther Bh - The King Gave His Signet Ring to Mordecai**). Exactly how much power and authority is a matter we shall look at in more detail shortly. In giving the three gifts to **his son**, **he** was in effect telling **him**, "The best of all that I have is yours. You are now fully restored to Sonship, and even elevated in our household to a position of honor. No longer are you a rebellious adolescent. Now you are a full-grown adult son, with all the privilege that comes with that position, and I want you to enjoy it fully."

Today it is hard to conceive of any **father** taking forgiveness that far. But **he** wasn't the least bit concerned about **his** own honor in the sight of **his** critics. Therefore, it's important to remember that **the father** here is a picture of **Christ (Philippians 2:6-8)**. Death on the cross was a far greater humiliation than any indignity **the father** in this parable suffered. Moreover, the parable reminds us that **Jesus** receives sinners who are in exactly the same situation as **the prodigal son** – unclean, clothed in filthy rags, lacking of any assets whatsoever, with no sacrifice to offer to **the Messiah (Romans 4:5)**.

This, of course, was the very thing that put the Pharisees and Torah-teachers at odds with **Christ**. They refused to view **Yeshua's** ministry of seeking and saving sinners as the activity of **ADONAI**. The idea that our **Savior** would receive filthy sinners made them want to throw up. They believed the real **Meshiach** wouldn't

act like that. And the fact that **He** would justify sinners through faith alone and instantly treat them as if they had never sinned was simply more than the Pharisees could stand. After all, most of them had spent their whole lives working to attain that status that they now held. Was that all for nothing? In their minds **the Lord** was defiled by the sinners **He** came in contact with.

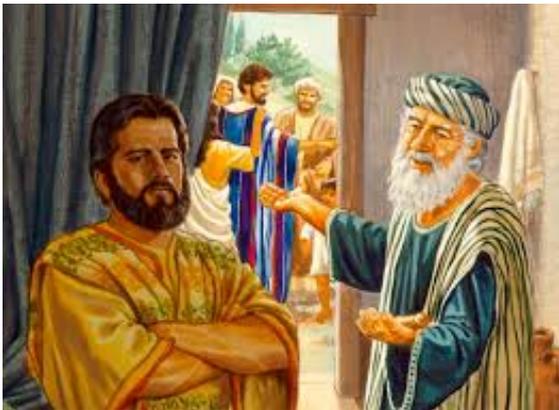
As **Jesus** described the parable to **His** audience, they would have been outraged. Everything **the father** was doing was completely opposite of what anyone thought **he** should do. It was contrary to their customs. It went against everything they knew about justice. It just didn't make sense! The thought that this **prodigal son** would instantly have all the rights and privileges as **his older brother**, who had never once overtly rebelled was repugnant to them. It was as if **the wayward son** had never sinned at all. We could hardly blame **the prodigal** for feeling like **he** had more reason to celebrate than anyone. **He** had entrusted **his** life to **the father**, and **the father** had absolutely amazed and overwhelmed **him** by entrusting all **his** resources to **him**. **The son** was finally home, in **his father's** house, a true member of the family. **He** had every reason to remain faithful and devote the rest of **his** life to **his father's** honor.

(A) Resurrection: Having crowned **his** repentant **son** with the highest honor and privilege, **the Prodigal's father** was not finished. Next **he** called for the greatest **feast** that had ever occurred in that family – perhaps the greatest **celebration** that the village had ever seen, saying: **Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate (Luke 15:23-24).** In effect, then, the celebration was really in honor of **the father's** goodness to **his** undeserving **son**. It was **the father** who gave this **boy** back his life and privileges. It was **the father** who forgave **him**, restored **him** to sonship, gave **him** true liberty, and showered **him** with tokens of love. So this **father**, who apparently felt no shame, threw a party so that **he** could share the joy of **his** own kindness with everyone. That kind of refreshing, exhilarating joy is what heaven is all about.¹¹¹⁴

The second half of the parable shifts focus to **the elder brother**. The lines of family honor were clear to everyone in their society. **The father**, as the family patriarch, was to be highly honored. No mother is mentioned, so **the father** may have been a widower, which would mean **the father** and **two sons** were the nucleus of the household. However, **the younger son** would be expected to honor not only **the father**, but **the older brother** as well. The story of **the elder brother** is once

again seen through a parallel chiasmic pattern. It also has eight stanzas, but it ends abruptly after the seventh.¹¹¹⁵

(A) He Stood Aloof: Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. He is the third major character in the parable, and as it turns out, is the one who embodies that parable's main lesson. **His** most obvious characteristic is **his** resentment for **his** younger **brother**. But underneath that, and even more sinister, it is clear that **he** had been quietly nurturing a smoldering hatred for **the father** – for a long, long time. **When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on (Luke 15:25-26).**¹¹¹⁶



(B) Anger at His Brother: “Your brother has come,” he replied, “and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.” The older brother became angry and refused to go in (Luke 15:27-28a). The servant boy told the older brother everything he needed to know. Instead of being glad that his wayward brother was alive, he was angry. He clearly had no affection for his younger brother, but the father was the one whom he most resented. The elder son is a perfect picture of the Pharisees (Luke 15:1-2). He had no appreciation of grace because he thought he didn't need it. He figured he had earned his father's approval. In fact, the very thought of free forgiveness was disgusting to him. The older brother was insulted. He was stunned. He was outraged. He was confused. But mostly, he was resentful. This was precisely the spiritual condition of the Pharisees. All their religious activity was really only about their self-promotion. They may have thought they were earning God's good will. But the truth is that they were completely alienated from God. And as far as being among those who followed Messiah into His new Kingdom, they became angry and refused to go in.¹¹¹⁷

(C) The Father's Love: So his father went out and pleaded with him (Luke 15:28b). At this point in the parable the Pharisees probably started to recognize themselves as **the older brother**. The lesson **Jesus** had been laying the groundwork for was about to become very, very clear. **The father** and **the first-born son** are an illustration of contrasts in this parable. **The father** is kind and merciful, and **he** rejoices when **his younger son** repents. **The elder brother** is self-centered and cruel, and **he** actually became angry over **the father's** kindness to **his wayward brother**. Here, **the father** made overtures every bit as tenderhearted and gracious to **the older son** as the mercy **he** had shown to **the prodigal son**. The rebellion long suppressed underneath **the first son's** hypocrisy had now broken into the open and could be seen in **his** full-blown insolence. But instead of punishing **his son** (or worse) **the** gracious **father** actually walked away from **the celebration** and went outside where **the older brother** was pouting **and pleaded with him** to **come in**. This is another picture of **Christ** as **the One** who always makes the first offer of peace to the sinner.¹¹¹⁸

(D) The Older Brother's Jealousy: But the elder son's response was much different, **he answered his father saying, "Look! All these years I've been slaving away for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet, you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends"** (Luke 15:29). **He** tore off the veil of **his** deep-rooted resentment toward **his father** and unloaded **his** bitterness. With the very first word, **Look!** the deep hatred toward **his father** that he had tried to conceal from public view suddenly erupted. **He** was admitting that everything **he** had ever done for **his father** was like being **a slave** in **his** own mind. Then why did **he** stick around? **He** was **the firstborn** and stood to inherit a double portion of **his father's** wealth. In the end, **he** was in the very same place **his wayward brother** had started out. **He** just wanted what **he** considered rightfully **his**, on **his** own terms, so that **he** could live as **he** pleased. And that didn't include **his father** or **younger brother**. **He** had a completely different group of friends. **He** might still have been sleeping at home, but **his** heart was far away. **He** sought fellowship with those who shared **his** values. Just like the Pharisees, who strictly excluded from their circle of fellowship all who did not see eye-to-eye with them. What we see here is an angry, resentful, envious, defiant, and greedy **young man**. This was not just a bad response to the unexpected shock of **his brother's** return. This was **the elder brother's** true character coming out.¹¹¹⁹

(D) The Younger Son's Reward: Still insinuating that **his father** had been grossly unjust, **the older son** continued **his** assault, saying: **But when this son of**

yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him (Luke 15:30)! He even refused to refer to **him** as “my brother.” Instead, **he** called **him this son of yours**. Then **he** brought up offenses that demanded death according to the Torah (**Deuteronomy 21:18-21**). It was **his** subtle way of saying that **his** stupid **brother** *should* be dead, and quite frankly **the older son** would have been happier if **he** were dead. **The firstborn son** should have been a role model for **his younger brother**. And, sadly, **he** had been. **The prodigal son** had learned **his** disrespect from **his elder brother** – but lacking the restraint that comes with maturity **he** didn’t learn when to quit and thus overtly took **his** rebellion down a path that almost led to **his** destruction. There is not a hint of sorrow about any of those things in **the older son’s** lament. Like the Pharisees, **he** was only concerned about **himself, his** desires, **his** status and **his** own narcissistic self-love.¹¹²⁰

(C) The Father’s Love: Even though it appears **the father** knew all along that **his first son’s** heart was not right, such a sudden barrage of cold-hearted rebellion must have caught **him** a little off guard. It was a stark departure from the normal passive-aggressive style **the young man** had perfected. Nevertheless, **the father** responded with tenderness and love, saying: **“My child,” the father said, “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours (Luke 15:31).** Previously, **the father** had referred to **him** as **my son** (Greek: *huios*), but here **he** says **my child** (Greek: *teknon*). Clearly **the father** was full of grief and agonizing pain, mixed with compassionate love and mercy. If **the elder son** wanted a relationship with **the father**, it was **his** for the asking. If **he** had any needs, the resources were already there for the taking. **The first-born son** had the legal right to everything on the property. **The father’s** inheritance – which included everything **he** had – was already available for **him** to use any way **he** liked. But just like the Pharisees, there was no sign **the elder son** responded to the gentle pleas of **his father**. And just like the Pharisees, **his** heart remained as cold as stone.¹¹²¹

(B) Joy Over the Son: The father made one final plea, and it was an echo of the main theme that dominates all of **Luke 15: But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found (Luke 15:32).** As far as **the father** was concerned, the celebration was perfectly right and natural. **His lost son** had returned a different person. It was like receiving someone back from the dead. They **had to celebrate** that! There was no alternative. In fact, it would have been wrong *not to celebrate*. The unspoken implication should have touched **the elder son’s** heart,

“We’ll celebrate for you, too, if you come.”¹¹²²

(A) The Missing Ending: The end of the parable is deliberately missing, as if to put extra emphasis on the lack of resolution. It simply isn’t there. With all that pent-up expectation, **Yeshua** simply walked away, leaving the parable hanging, unfinished and unresolved.

Don’t forget that **Jesus** told this parable, including the abrupt ending, chiefly for the benefit of the Pharisees and Torah-teachers. It was really a story about *them* because *they* represented **the older brother**. **The missing ending** underscored the truth that the next move was theirs and they would indeed write the end of the parable themselves. So what did they do? They killed **Him**. If they had actually written it down in words, it would have ended something like this: **The older son was so outraged at his father that he picked up a big piece of wood and beat him to death with it in front of everyone.**¹¹²³

Prayers for a prodigal: Do you have a **prodigal**? These Scripture-based prayers are designed to be prayed for any loved one (a son, daughter, grandchild, the child of a close friend, or even a spouse or parent) who has strayed from **ADONAI** into a destructive lifestyle. For the sake of clarity, the prayers are written with a **son** in mind. Please adapt them to fit your situation.

1. **Lord Jesus**, protect my **son**. Build a hedge around **him** to guard **him** physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Block **his** paths so that **he** cannot move toward activities and relationships that would harm **him** (**Job 1:10; Hosea 2:6-7**).
2. Deliver my **son** from evil. Rescue **him** from a destructive lifestyle. Restore **him** to **his** senses, and bring **him** home from the land of the enemy (**Matthew 6:13; Psalm 91:14; Luke 15:17; Jeremiah 31:16-17**).
3. Guide my **son** into truth. Teach **him** to recognize deceptive ideas and thoughts. Make **him** alert to the lies of the enemy, and teach **him** how to resist the devil by faith (**John 16:13; First Cor 2:16; First Peter 5:8-9**).
4. Give my **son** the courage to be honest with **himself** and with **You**. **Ruach ha-Kodesh**, convict **him** of sin and **his** need for **You**. Don’t allow my **son** to blame others for troubles in **his** life. Show **him** that **he** alone is responsible for **his** own choices (**Yochanan 16:8; Genesis 3:12-13; Ezekiel 18:20**).

5. **ADONAI**, thank **You** for drawing my **son** with love and tenderness to **Yourself**, even in **his** desert place. Show **him** that **You** are with **him**. **You** delight in **him**. Amid the clamor for **his** attention and affections, may **he** hear **Your** voice calling **him** and respond to **Your** deep, deep love (**Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 2:14; Zeph 3:17**).

6. Cause my **son** to call out to **You** in **his** distress and confusion. Cause **him** to seek **You** with abandon. Thank **You** for promising to answer **him** (**Psalm 91:15; Jeremiah 29:13**).

7. Remove my **son's** heart of stone and replace it with a new, soft heart. Make **his** heart into a bed of fertile soil so that the seed of truth sown into it will grow deep roots and bring forth a rich crop of life (**Ezekiel 36:26-27; Matthew 13:23; Col. 2:5-7**).

8. **Messiah**, reveal to my **son** that lasting refreshment and satisfaction can only be found in **You**. In **You** **he** will find an abundant life (**John 4:10 and 10:10; Psalm 1:3**).

9. Lead my **son** to friends who will graciously point **him** to **You**. Cause **him** to be attracted to those who are attracted to **You**. Scatter like chaff in the wind any and all friends who will bring **him** harm. Give **him** the courage to please **You**, and not man (**Proverbs 13:20; Galatians 1:10**).

10. Produce in my **son** a humble spirit that is yielded to **You**. Teach **him** how to live in **You**, and show **him** that apart from **You** **he** can do nothing (**James 4:10; Romans 6:13, Jn 15:5**).

11. **Yeshua**, reveal to my **son** how valuable and significant **his** life is. Give **him** a vision for **his** purpose in the world, and show **him** the possibilities for **his** future. Through **You**, **he** can do all things (**Isaiah 43:7; Jeremiah 29:11; Philippians 4:13**).

12. Help my **son** to see that **he** doesn't need to condemn **himself**. Show **him** that **he** can experience complete forgiveness through the work **You've** already finished on **his** behalf. Give **him** the grace to repent of and let go of the past (**Yochanan 19:30; Acts 3:19; Isaiah 43:18-19**).

13. Thank **You** for offering hope and comfort to my **son**. Thank **You** for restoring

the years the locusts have eaten and bestowing on my **son** a cross of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of despair (**Isaiah 57:18; Joel 2:25; Isaiah 61:3**).

14. Teach my **son** that following **You** is not about following rules. Show **him** that what **You** long for is a genuine relationship with **him** (**Romans 6:14; Jeremiah 9:24; Philippians 3:3 and 10**).

15. **El Elyon**, cause my **son** to grow up in **You**, maturing into an oak of righteousness for the display of **Your** splendor. Help **him** grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor with **You** and with man (**Eph 4:15; Isa 61:3; Luke 2:52**).

16. Teach my **son** to live in freedom, animated and motivated by **Your Spirit** and in step with **Him** (**Gal 5:16, 25**).

17. Teach my **son** to walk by faith. Help **him** to see beyond **his** circumstances and trust **You** with every part of **his** life (**2 Cor 5:7; Hebrews 11:1; Proverbs 3:5-6**).

18. Impress on my **son** the need to protect **his** mind, guarding its purity through the choices **he** makes, about what **he** looks at, listens to and thinks about (**Philippians 4:8; Second Corinthians 10:5**).

19. **El Shaddai**, in this fast-paced world of instant gratification, plant in my **son** the perseverance **he** needs to succeed. Cause **him** to be still and wait patiently before **You**. Help **him** to rest in **Your** power. Establish the work of **his** hands (**Psalms 37:7; Hebrews 12:1-3; Psalm 90:17**).

20. Turn my **son's** focus away from **himself** and onto **You**. May **he** allow **Your** power to flow through **him** to others. Teach **him** to love others as **himself** (**Philippians 2:4; Second Corinthians 4:7; Matthew 22:39**).

21. Cause my **son** to love **You** with all **his** heart, soul, and mind. May **he** live all **his** days in love with and rejoicing in **You** (**Matthew 22:37; Psalm 27:4; Philippians 4:4**).¹¹²⁴

Waiting (by Ruth Bell Graham)

She waited for the call that never came;
searched every mail for a letter, or a note, or a card that bore **his** name.

On her knees at night and on her feet all day, she stormed Heaven's Gate,



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on **his** behalf she pled for **him** in Heaven's high court. "Be still and wait," was the word **He** gave; and so she knew **He** would do in, and for, that which she never could.

Doubts ignored,
she went about her chores with joy; knowing though spurned, **His** Word was true. **The prodigal** had not returned but **God** was **God**, and there was work to do.¹¹²⁵