

Jesus introduces us to the father in the story we call "The Prodigal Son." This man is caring, sensitive, generous, dependable, and loving.

Henri Nouwen: The parable of the prodigal son is a story about a love that existed before any rejection was possible and this love will still be there after all rejections have taken place.

The father revealed amazing loving-kindness toward each of his self-serving sons. Let's consider what he was saying in word and deed to these young men.

### **1. I Love You**

The father wanted his boys to be free to make choices about their lives, even if their choices brought pain to him and to them.

He was not blind to their greed, lust, anger, resentment and jealousy. Instead, he recognized the issues they faced on their way to maturity.

*A patient man has great understanding.*

*Proverbs 14:29*

Every move the father makes we see him acting out of who he was in his relationship to God. This is a critical truth we want to grasp.

The young son said, *Father, give me my share of the estate. (12)*

The father must have been taught to *Keep your head in all situations.*

*2 Timothy 4:5*

He refused to be angry, controlling, or manipulative. He kept the channels of communication open as he refrained from destructive words or actions. Still he felt the deep pain of rejection at the hands of his adult sons.

*While he (the younger son) was still a long way off, his father saw him & was filled with compassion toward him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. (20)*

*Love covers a multitude of sins.*

*1 Peter 4:8*

The father wanted meaningful relationship with his son. He did not want to be the boy's master or employer. He threw down cultural customs and ran to his rebellious son. He kissed him and welcomed him to a place of abundance and full restoration.

### **2. I Forgive You**

The father said, *Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him.*

*Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. (22)*

My love is bigger than what you did.

The father presented the symbols of forgiveness and acceptance (robe, ring, shoes) before the boy had a chance to finish his request.

Regardless of the boys imagined purposes for returning home, the father's heart brought him to knees. Prodigals often hope to enter the "Land of Beginning Again."

*God, make a fresh start in me, shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life.*

*Psalms 51:10 The Message*

A new relationship with the father, formed his new beginning.

### **3. I Enjoy You**

*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. (24)*

The father could not keep his joy to himself. Party was for the Father! God likes parties! And he rejoiced over everyone who turns to him.

*We had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. (32)*

### **4. I Pursue You**

*The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded with him. (28)*

The elder brother had trouble allowing his father to love him the way his father wanted to love him. Why? Because he wanted to be loved the way he thought he should be, as the favorite.

*Everything I have is yours (31)*

We are left to ask, how am I to let myself be loved by my Father?

This story calls us to step into the Father's sandals with compassion. We were never intended to spend our lives blaming the father or anyone else. We are invited to follow Jesus' model and become like the father, exhibiting loving kindness, forgiveness as joy as we invite the people who populate our world to faith in Jesus Christ.

The New International Version, 1984 is the Bible translation used in this study except where otherwise noted.

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