

RESOURCES FOR DEALING WITH PRODIGAL CHILDREN

1. When Good Kids Make Bad Choices by Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jim Newheiser
2. You Never Stop Being a Parent: Thriving in Relationship with Your Adult Children by Jim Newheiser and Elyse Fitzpatrick
3. Engaging Today's Prodigal: Clear Thinking, New Approaches, and Reasons for Hope by Carol Barnier
4. Why Christian Kids Leave the Faith and Good News About Prodigals both by Tom Bissett
5. Prodigal in the Parsonage by Judi Braddy
6. Parents with Broken Hearts: Helping Parents of Prodigals to Cope by Bill Coleman
7. Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith ... and How to Bring Them Back by Drew Dyck
8. iParent: Parenting Prodigals and Children in the 21st Century by Lon Flippo
9. Letting Go: Rugged Love for Wayward Souls by Dave Harvey and Paul Gilbert
10. Praying for Your Prodigal by Kyle Idleman
11. The Hurting Parent: Help and Hope for Parents of Prodigals by Margie & Gregg Lewis
12. Will Your Prodigal Come Home? By Jeff Lucas
13. Come Home: A Call Back to Faith by James MacDonald
14. Come Back, Barbara by C. John Miller & Barbara Miller Juliani
15. The Hope of a Homecoming: Entrusting Your Prodigal to a Sovereign God by Brendan O'Rourke and DeEtte Sauer
16. Hope for the Prodigal: Bringing the Lost, Wandering, and Rebellious Home by Jim Putman
17. When They Turn Away: Drawing Your Adult Child Back to Christ by Rob Rienow
18. Praying Prodigals Home: Taking Back What the Enemy Has Stolen by Quin Sherrer and Ruthanne Garlock
19. Loving A Prodigal: A Survival Guide for Parents of Rebellious Children by H. Norman Wright
20. Before You Lose Your Faith: Deconstructing Doubt in the Church by Ivan Mesa, ed.

This last one is not really about prodigals, but the issues driving young people to leave

***“What Should We Do When They Stray?”* by Rev. Nick Batzig (a former prodigal child), Pastor, New Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA), Richmond Hill, GA, 7/31/15, www.feedingonchrist.com**

1. Pray the Promises of God for Your Children.

Incessantly ask the Lord to fulfill his covenant promises on behalf of your children. God has given believers large promises. While the salvation of your children is ultimately dependent on the sovereign grace and mercy of God, the agency of godly parents often plays an important role. Many times, the Lord has answered the prayers of the parents of rebellious children in order to bring them to salvation.

2. Pray that God will Surround Your Children with Strong Christian Friends.

Through all of my years of rebellion, I knew that my parents were praying that the Lord would bring godly young men and women into my life – and that is exactly what He did. I met my best friend, Stephen –who had been converted at a conference under the preaching of John Piper. Stephen was a direct answer to the prayers of my parents to surround me with strong, spiritually minded Christians.

3. Pray that God will Do What it Takes to Bring Your Children to Himself.

Though no one likes the thought of asking God to “do whatever it takes,” this is a prayer that we should all be willing to pray for our children. The Lord often brings individuals to rock bottom in order for them to see their need for the Savior. In fact, this is the very teaching of the parable of the prodigal son. When he finally hit rock bottom, he remembered the love of the Father and the comforts of the Father’s house. The prodigal son, Jesus tells us, “came to himself” (that’s shorthand for “repented”) and returned to His Father. Godly parents should pray that the Lord does whatever is necessary to save their children

4. Pursue Your Children with the Word of God.

This is arguably the most significant thing that my parents did through almost a decade of my rebellion. When I was getting into deeper and deeper spiritual darkness, my father was more and more intentional about reading the Scriptures to me. In addition to reading Scripture together, write particular verses out in a letter or on an index card and hand it to your children when they are in your home. There is something special about handing a handwritten letter—or card—with Scripture in it to you son or daughter. It shows personal and specific spiritual care for them.

5. Be Firm but Loving in Addressing Your Children.

This is the last thing with which I try to encourage Christian parents with rebellious children. Far too many parents think that they can love their children into the Kingdom by being soft on them. Nothing is further than the truth. Surely, the goodness of God brings us to repentance—and He often uses the kindness of Christian parents to reflect His goodness (even toward rebellious children). However, when we read the Scriptures, we find the Savior and the Apostles being

serious and firm in their teaching against sin and rebellion. There is a seriousness with which we ought to address our children when they are rebelling.

That being said, it is possible for parents to swing the pendulum from the one extreme of enabling and weakness to the other extreme of heavy-handedness. There must be a balance between sternness and tenderness. The Apostle Paul warns against fathers provoking their children to anger by being too heavy-handed (see Eph. 6:4). We must always have hearts that are full of tender affection for our children. We should weep much when they rebel. We should show them affection in the midst of their rebellion, but we must be direct and firm in bringing the warnings and the promises of Scripture to bear upon them.

Whenever I hear that one of the children of believers in our congregation is straying—or has been straying from Christ for quite some time—my heart fills with sorrow. I think of the many hours that godly parents have spent teaching them the Scriptures, praying with and for them and having them among the congregation of the saints who are worshiping the Lord week in and week out. I think of the pain that they are experiencing as they know that they cannot change their child's heart. I think of my own inability to change their hearts. I think of the hardships that they might face if they do not repent.

Then I think of how God, in his most amazing and astonishing sovereign mercy and grace, saved a wretch like me. I think of the many others that He has redeemed late in life and I am encouraged to pray more fervently for them. I think of the fact that the Gospel is for rebels—that God loves the prodigal and receives and welcomes them home with great joy and rejoicing. I think of my own need for the Gospel today and my need for the word of God.