

# ***“The Prodigal Son” in all of Us!***

## ***Just Sayin’!***

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It’s difficult to know where to begin. By looking at me now, you’d never be able to guess I have made some really bad choices in this life. Which is why I would like to share this story. It’s not a story of romantic adventure, glamorous travel or living a life of luxury. It is however the story of how a young man chose to follow the wrong path and it’s also the story of a father’s love.

Growing up, I never liked anybody telling me what to do; where to go; or how to get there. It caused me to be mad at the world, and I learned to carry a pretty big chip on my shoulder! It didn’t help that I was the little brother in the family. And it really didn’t help that my brother was arrogantly delusional. Then again, what big brother isn’t? I’m convinced that he thought somebody had died and put him in charge of the entire world, especially my world! I’m sure most of you had a sibling who was a big pain in the backside. My brother, he wasn’t just a pain, he was the boil of all boils, and a bully of all bullies. However, I must admit that I’m really not being fair to boils or to bullies by comparing them to the first-born of my father.

The worst part of my life was that my parents seemed to encourage him to treat me like a paramecium sized piece of worthless slime. They always defended him and what really added to my dilemma was the fact that no one ever took the time to listen to my side of any story, which caused an emptiness inside of me that just wouldn’t go away. Well, after spending my entire life playing second fiddle to my pompously, pontificating, pile of older sibling poo, I finally had enough. I rebelled in every way imaginable. I rebelled against my brother! I rebelled against my mother. I rebelled against my father! I rebelled against my friends. I even rebelled against God! I decided it was time to turn my back on everyone and everything at that very moment in my life!

I approached my father and I demanded my inheritance. I was entitled to it. I didn’t want to wait around for the old man to die! After all, I had spent my entire life slaving away on his estate, so he could enjoy the “good life.” I longed to be free of the oppression of a family that treated me with such flagrant disregard. I was determined to set out in search of my own destiny, in pursuit of my own dreams! A place where nobody could tell me what to do or where to go! I’d had my fill of being the younger sibling and I decided to wash my hands of the whole kit and caboodle of family relationship.

Do you know what my father did? He agreed! He gave me my share of the inheritance and sent me out to experience life all on my own! I went as far away from that place as possible and boy howdy, did I ever experience the world. I lived like there was no God and like there was no tomorrow. I had a pocketful of money and I began to live the wild life; chasing women, drinking myself into oblivion, doing drugs and partying for days on end. It was a wild adventure and at the time, I thought I was having the ride of my life. Well, at least the parts of it that I could remember. I had friends coming out of the

woodwork and everybody knew me my name! I was no longer John's boy or Steve's brother. My new friends loved me for who I was. They accepted me just the way I am! Or, so I thought.

Yeah, they loved me alright! That is until the money ran out, and I could no longer buy their friendship. After I'd squandered my entire inheritance, I had no place to turn! I had nothing to eat and no place to lay my head to rest! The emptiness inside of me was unlike anything I had ever felt before in my life, it was literally all-consuming. Before long, I found myself wallowing in the muck and mire of the pigs. I had reached rock bottom. It caused me to take a serious look at the kind of a man I had become. There is something to be said about waking up in the filth of a pig-sty. Now there's a kind of stench that can stay with you forever. It made me realize that maybe, just maybe I could have done things a bit different.

Finally, I came to my senses and realized that life was pretty good at home under my father's roof and I needed to go back to beg his forgiveness. Even his hired hands were better off than I was. I'd even work for free if he would just let me come back home. I had no idea if he would even hear me out, but when you're laying face down in pig pooh, you really don't have too many options available. I swallowed my pride and headed back home hoping I would get a chance to make things right. I've got to tell you, when he saw me walking down the dirt road toward the house, he was so filled with joy that he ran toward me as fast as he could with his arms wide open. Not only did he accept my apology, but he slaughtered the fattest calf and invited all the neighbors in for a party to beat all parties. I found my way back home that day, but even more important, I was also able to find my way back into the arms of my heavenly Father. I learned the greatest lesson in my life through those terrible mistakes of my youth. You see, the Lord's love is the only thing that can truly satisfy the soul – popularity; money; family, friends; none of those things can fill the emptiness within the deepest recesses of your being. The emptiness was completely filled when I chose to go back home and to seek God in a personal way. I discovered that God is the only one who could meet the deepest longings of my heart and soul.

Yep, that's what a father's love is all about. It doesn't matter how many mistakes you make in this life. Our heavenly Father is always ready, and willing, and able to welcome you back with open arms. That is, if you're willing to humble your heart and confess that you can't survive without him. I've got to tell you, it sure beats wallowing around in the pooh of a pig-sty! Just sayin'!

