

HELP!

I HAVE A

PRODIGAL

How to Gain Hope and Healing When
Your Loved One Has Gone Astray

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JUDY R. SLEGH

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Names in the examples in this guide have been changed to protect and honor the people whose stories provide testimony of the greatness of God

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Endorsements

Help! I have a prodigal! If you are not in this situation right now, the chances are you will be in the future. When we think of prodigals, we think of our children, but prodigals come in our relationships with people, extended family, and church family. Judy Slegh has taken her years of prayer ministry and given us brief insight into the emotional, spiritual, and physical toll a prodigal can extract from a close walk with the Lord. Judy leads the reader through gaining insight into their situation while eliminating the need to spend countless hours on a Christian therapist's couch. If you are open to encountering the healing work of Father God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, Judy leads us there with a few illustrations, questions, and suggested prayers. Prodigal or not, this work is helpful to recovery and getting back on track in your faith walk with a loving triune God, ruler of the seen and unseen universe.

Bob Coombe

Pastor of Spiritual Development, Certified Critical Incident Stress Management, Pastoral Critical Incident Stress Management, Pastoral Care, Crisis & Trauma Counseling from the American Association of Christian Counselors, Edinbrook Church, Brooklyn Park, MN

Help! I have a Prodigal! is a phenomenal example of how to pray for our loved ones and stay sane in the midst of life situations that are beyond our control. This book reveals the essential understanding of one's own hurts and wounds and how they affect our thinking, emotions, and relationships. Judy explains how to surrender our fears and worries in

parenthood by placing our trust in God, and offers a practical approach to spiritual victory through prayer and biblical truths.

Dr. Jessica Rothmeyer

PhD in Clinical Christian Counseling, MA in Marriage and Family Therapy, *Divine Marriage Center*

The book you hold in your hands is a guide filled with teaching and activation to help those who have prodigals. Having loved a prodigal into health, Judy shares from her personal experience and wisdom gained from her thousands of hours in prayer ministry. This book leads the reader from feelings of being a guilt-and shame-filled victim weighed down by their prodigal's situation into feeling free from their prodigal's choices. I have known Judy and observed her work in setting captives free for several years. She uses her great teaching and instructional gift to prayerfully walk the reader through Spirit-led exercises to bring freedom for themselves and their prodigal. I highly recommend this book as a guide to personal freedom.

Dave Weigel

Pastor of Living Waters Church, Elk River, MN

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Many are not ready to come out to share the reality of their prodigal experience with others. Some are isolated from support. God knew this and wanted a way to touch hearts and minds with His freedom and revelation. This guide, I believe, is one method.

As you read and reference this guide, may the God of all peace give you additional revelation to bring you closer to His heart and call on your life. To Him be praise forever and ever!

Introduction

Hiding the Problem and Hoping for a Solution

This is not the typical book on prodigals. This is a devotional guide that will bring healing and restoration to your heart and mind. It will bring a revelation of partnering with God to shift life's difficulties due to a prodigal in your life.

Do you have a prodigal in your life now? Ask these questions:

Have I held in the pain and hurt from interactions with my loved one who has turned away from me, from God, or from life as I expected it?

Do I wonder why God is not using His sovereignty to intervene when I pray?

Do I feel my family is fighting a battle that we can't win? Am I feeling my loved one has caused destruction and a lack of peace that takes all my time and energy?

Do I feel regret in looking back on interactions with my loved one? Do I replay them in my mind?

Have I mourned during holidays for missing people who should be at the table but are distant and disconnected?

Am I feeling shame and blame but can't figure out why, especially when I am victimized by them?

Have I replied to, "How's your family?" with, "They're doing fine," knowing that if my friend asked for details, I would need to answer vaguely or lie to cover the truth?

Help! I Have a Prodigal

This loved one could be a mother, father, husband, wife, son, daughter, or friend. From a Bible story in Luke 15, we commonly coin this lost loved one a prodigal—one who is loved, has great value in our eyes, and yet has gone astray from our perspective. The dictionary terms this person as one who profusely or wastefully spends a commodity such as money or time. Others use this term when the person recklessly spends their resources on others. In either case, one sees the diversion from the wise use of time, energy, and finances to living a life that is compromised and wasted. *Prodigal, loved one, and lost one* will be used interchangeably to mean one who has left and gone in a direction that has caused others pain and loss.

Selecting this book means there is a state of chaos, uncertainty, and questions regarding an important relationship in your life. We often think our lives, relationships, and loved ones should be protected from attacks or circumstances that would tempt or destroy them. Yet we see sin invading our prodigals' lives that affects us. We get angry at the situations and choices they make. The Bible says we will have troubles, but we believe if we do the right things, we will avoid them. Jesus stated, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NIV). How can I have peace when I ask the following questions about my situation?

How do I deal with the problems, tension, anxiety, and pain I am feeling right now?

Where is God, and why is He not sovereignly intervening, especially as I have prayed fervently for change?

Why hasn't my loved one's heart come back to God when that is all I have asked?

From our viewpoints, it looks like the enemy is winning. What is going on?

As I wrote this book, I came to a standstill with these questions.

How do we pray, yet see no outcome and intervention?

How can tribulation rule?

Hiding the Problem and Hoping for a Solution

Is God ignoring our prayers?

Does He care?

Is He at work, or does He just sit and wait for our loved ones to come to their senses?

I went to bed one night with these questions, not knowing the answers but knowing the biblical truth. God is at work even today. He desires for us to pray and hears our prayers to act on them with His wisdom. He is sovereign and can change the hearts of men so easily.

What is going on?

God gave me this illustration.

He showed me a dad teaching the game of checkers to his small daughter. He patiently instructs her in learning the rules, so she can play and win the game. At the beginning, the dad takes delight in the interaction and growth of his loved one. Then he intentionally makes moves to set his daughter up for victory so she can experience success. Dad is certain she will see the correct move to win, but she misses the opportunity. Does he get upset? No. He makes changes to adapt to his child's wrong move and maneuvers to give her the opportunity to win again. There are constant interactions between the parent's knowledge of the game and the girl's growing skill in learning to win the game. Eventually she will recognize the right moves to win the game.

Then God stated, "This is a simplistic illustration of my interaction with your loved one, your prayers, and their reactions to opportunities."

As I pondered this, I realized how true it is.

Father God wants our loved ones to have a game-winning relationship with Him. Because He adores and created them for a destiny and a divine purpose, He sets up opportunities for them to make the right moves to bring victory over their situations and draw closer to Him. Sometimes they will make a move to connect with Him. Other times, because of ignorance, willful defiance, or distractions of life, our loved ones make the wrong moves. When that happens, He doesn't get discouraged or disgusted with them. He continues to play the game with them, using their wrong moves (choices) to set them up for another opportunity for a win. This might be connecting them with other

He knows the wrong moves our loved ones are going to make, yet sets up the opportunities so they can look back at them someday as evidence of His attempt for connection. We are often unaware of what's happening but sometimes we may receive a prompting from God to urge us to pray for them.

people, creating a Christ-focused atmosphere in their current situations, having someone speak life into them, imparting dreams and visions, or placing situations in their paths so they may discover the void in their lives. As a result, God is always working and reconfiguring the game to have them find His heart's desire for relationship with them. He works with their wrong moves to create another opportunity

for them to discover the victorious life in Him. Because a relationship with Him is His desire, He will continue to pursue them, and nothing in the heavenly realms will hinder Him (Romans 8:38–39). He continues to look for them (Matthew 18:12–13). But the choice is theirs.

As our loved ones interact with the opportunities for connection with God, our delight should be to pray for our loved ones to make the right choices to win the game. That is what our prayers do. We need to trust that our heavenly Father is working on our loved one's behalf.

We need to realize that His greater plan is often beyond our realm of understanding. He fully sees and operates in a spirit realm we can't see and in a timelessness that we don't comprehend. He knows the wrong moves our loved ones are going to make, yet sets up the opportunities so they can look back at them someday as evidence of His attempt for connection. We are often unaware of what's happening but sometimes we may receive a prompting from God to urge us to pray for them.

That is what this book is all about. We are going on a journey together that I experienced. This will include dismantling the mountain of emotions that robs us of peace and connection with God. With

God's help and guidance, we will see this mountain move. We will learn to see things from God's perspective.

In the beginning, I prayed into what I wanted to happen in my prodigal's life and in my life. Then God confronted me. He stated, "I want you to pray My prayers of declaration regarding your prodigal."

That stunned me and humbled me. I asked God a direct question in frustration, "How do I do that?"

"Listen to My voice. You know it. Get over trying to figure this out. Forgive your prodigal for the emotional baggage placed on you. Get a mind transformation to see things from My perspective. Ask Me for My perspective and guidance in establishing boundaries. Take your stand against the demonic realm using the authority of Jesus and His blood. Use your voice. You can do this."

He was blunt, but I sensed love and compassion in it. Knowing some of the tools to do this, I refocused, forgave, released, and repented. I started to pray what God gave me.

Over the months, we saw a miraculous transformation. Then God stated, "Your outcome came by My grace (My enablement), but also because you knew what to do. Now, help others. There are so many who are hurting and mad at Me. They need what you have learned, Judy."

This book is a result of this challenge from God. It is a compilation of my personal experiences as well as successes and revelations learned by helping others through healing prayer.

Reflective Questions

What should I take away from this reading today?

What am I feeling?

What do I think of the checkers analogy?

Pray:

Father God, forgive me for judging You based on my perspective. I choose to walk in the reality of You being a loving Father to me and my prodigal. I sense a change coming in me and my situation. I choose to stand in agreement with Romans 15:13 (ERV): “That the God who gives hope will fill [me] with much joy and peace as [I] trust in him. Then [I] will have more and more hope, and it will flow out of [me] by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Plant this truth into my spirit, soul, and body right now. In Jesus’s name. Amen.