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PRAYING FOR PRODIGALS

— A 7-Day Devotional —



90.9 KCBI FM
ENCOURAGING MUSIC
WORDS OF HOPE

Praying for Prodigals

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Introduction

Welcome to Praying for Prodigals, a 7-day devotional journey inspired by the encouragement and wisdom found in Luke 15:11-32—the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

In this parable, Jesus paints a vivid picture of a wayward son who, driven by rebellion and desire, squanders his inheritance in a distant land. As the young man faces the consequences of his extravagant and reckless lifestyle, he hits rock bottom. In his brokenness, he decides to return home, hoping for forgiveness and restoration. What unfolds is a powerful narrative of redemption and the boundless grace of a loving father who eagerly welcomes his lost son back home.

What is a prodigal? The term itself means an extravagant and reckless spender. In the parable, the son foolishly blew through all of his money on the pleasures of life. Because of this parable, the term prodigal has taken on another meaning. When a Christian uses the word prodigal today, they are referring to individuals who have walked away from their faith—whether intentionally or unintentionally—abandoning the church or rejecting the teachings of the Lord. A prodigal is someone who has taken a path away from the love and guidance of God.

In this devotional, our focus is clear: to lift up prayers for our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, spouses, grandchildren, or anyone else who has, for whatever reason, fallen away—or run away—from the Lord. We earnestly desire that they come to realize the error of their actions, that the scales may fall from their eyes, and that their hearts may be softened toward God. Our prayer is for their return, like the prodigal son, to the loving arms of the Heavenly Father.

As we embark on this 7-day journey of prayer, we unite our hearts in hope, trusting that our prayers will be a powerful force in the lives of those we intercede for. May this devotional serve as a source of encouragement to you, and a reminder that God's love is relentless, His grace is boundless, and our prayers can make a difference in the lives of the prodigals we hold dear!

Day 1

God Has Prodigals Too

"Therefore tell the people: This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the Lord Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the Lord Almighty." — Zechariah 1:3

For those of us who have prodigals in our lives, especially parents, it's not uncommon to grapple with a sense of guilt and self-blame. Questions may swirl in our minds: *Where did we go wrong? What could we have done differently? Are we bad parents (siblings, grandparents, friends, etc.)?* The weight of our prodigals' choices feels heavy on our hearts.

But here's a perspective shift we need to embrace: having a prodigal doesn't automatically make you a bad parent, grandparent, brother, sister, spouse, or friend. It doesn't mean you failed as a guiding influence in their lives. In fact, consider this: if having prodigals is a measure of bad parenting, then God must also be considered a bad Father, for He has many prodigals.

It's essential to recognize that, despite our influence and love, a prodigal's choices are ultimately their own. They have the free will to make decisions, even if those decisions lead them away from the path of faith. It's not solely a reflection of your parenting or your efforts in whatever relationship you have with your prodigal.

What does this mean for us, then? It means acknowledging that their journey back to the Lord is a personal one. Repentance and turning back to God are decisions only they can make. As much as we may desire to somehow *make* them come back, it's not within our power to force them onto the right path.

So, instead of dwelling in guilt and regret, let's redirect our energy toward something more powerful: prayer. Prayer is our bridge to God's grace and mercy. It's our way of actively participating in the spiritual journey of our prodigals. Through prayer, we can intercede on their behalf, asking God to touch their hearts, open their eyes, and draw them back into His loving embrace.

On days when your heart breaks for the prodigal in your life, know that you are not alone. God understands the pain of having prodigals, and He walks beside you in this season. Trust in His sovereignty, and may our prayers pave the way for the prodigals we love to find their way back home.

Heavenly Father, as we bring our prodigals before You today, we lay down the weight of guilt and regret. Help us shift our focus from self-blame to prayer. We entrust our loved ones to Your grace and mercy. Touch their hearts, open their eyes, and draw them back into Your loving embrace. Thank You that we are not alone in our concern for the prodigals in our lives and that You care so deeply for them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Day 2

When God Ran

"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 15:20

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, we witness the father's reaction as he spots his wayward son from a distance. The Scripture paints a vivid picture: Seeing his beloved son from a far, he didn't sit and wait for the son to arrive. He didn't walk to meet him halfway. He hiked up his robes and started running!

That's a remarkable response for an older man. Running is not necessarily an easy or dignified thing for older people to do. But the father was not concerned with his own appearance, dignity, or what others might think. And his first order of business wasn't to scold, reprimand, or say, "I told you so." Instead, his priority was love. He demonstrated love by running, by embracing, and by showering his wayward son with kisses.

As we navigate our relationships with the prodigals in our lives, let's pause and reflect: *Do our interactions with them reflect God's attitude toward them? Are we demonstrating God's love or God's judgment in the things we say to our prodigals? Are we making it easier or more difficult for them to return to the fold with dignity?*

The father's example challenges us to lead with love. Just as God's love is unconditional, forgiving, and welcoming, can we extend the same to those who have strayed? Let our words and actions mirror the Father's compassion, embracing our prodigals with open arms and a heart full of love.

We don't have to condone or accept their sinful actions, but we must be careful to separate the actions from the person.

As we pray for our prodigals today, may our prayers be infused with the spirit of God's love, asking for guidance on how we can emulate the Father's grace in our relationships. May our interactions be a testament to the power of God's compassion, creating an environment where prodigals feel the warmth of acceptance and the freedom to return to the fold with dignity.

Heavenly Father, as we reflect on the powerful image of the father running to embrace his wayward son, we are reminded of Your boundless love. Help us, Lord, to mirror this love in our interactions with the prodigals in our lives. May our words and actions be filled with Your compassion, leading with love as we navigate the complexities of these relationships. Grant us the wisdom to separate the actions from the person, extending unconditional love just as You do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Day 3

Heart Transplant

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." —Ezekiel 36:26

Perhaps the prodigal in your life wants nothing to do with God. Your attempts to talk to them about the Lord have been met with disinterest, resistance, or outright hostility. Their heart is cold, hard, and heavy, like a stone.

In the face of such challenges, here's the good news: our God specializes in heart transplants!

When our efforts to reach the prodigals in our lives with the message of God's love seem futile, when their hearts appear unyielding, remember that what seems impossible to us is not impossible for God. Keep praying for your prodigal. Our God has the power to remove their heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh—a heart softened and receptive to His love and guidance.

As you lift up your prodigal in prayer, envision the transforming work that God can do. Pray for the renewal of their spirit, the softening of their heart, and the awakening of a desire for God. Trust in the promise that the Lord can bring about unthinkable change, breaking through the hardness and creating a receptivity to His grace.

Today, let your prayers be filled with hope and expectancy. Our God is in the business of transforming hearts, and with Him all things are possible. As you intercede for your prodigal, remember that the journey of faith is often a process, and God's timing is perfect. Keep trusting, keep praying, and believe in the miracle of a heart transformed by the grace and love of our Heavenly Father.

Heavenly Father, today we lift up our prodigals to You, especially those whose hearts may be cold, hard, and heavy. Thank You for the good news that You specialize in heart transplants! Even when our efforts seem futile, we trust that what appears impossible to us is possible for You. Grant them a new heart, Lord—a heart of flesh that is softened and receptive to Your love and guidance. We pray for the breaking through of hardness, the awakening of a desire for You, and the unfolding of Your grace in their lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Day 4

Rock Bottom

"He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God." — Psalm 40:2-3

You may be watching your prodigal spiral out of control and wondering why God hasn't stepped in to stop it.

But you must remember that it's often when we've reached the lowest point in life that our gaze finally turns upward. Sometimes God allows prodigals to reach rock bottom so that they can truly understand their need for Him.

Perhaps you are witnessing your prodigal making choices that break your heart—choices involving drugs, alcohol, sex, violence, a cult, reckless endangerment, or something else. It's a painful experience, and you may wonder, "Why hasn't God intervened?" Know this: God has not forgotten your prodigal. He may be allowing their pride and rebellion to reach their breaking point.

One day, when they've sunk so low in the pit that they recognize their desperate need for God, they will cry out to Him. In that moment, God will respond with love and mercy, lifting them out of the slimy pit, setting their feet on the solid rock of Jesus Christ, and putting a new song of redemption and praise in their mouths.

Until that day comes, continue to keep them in your prayers. Trust that God, in His perfect wisdom, has His loving eye on them. As you pray, hold on to the promise of Psalm 40, knowing that God is a rescuer, a redeemer, and a restorer. Keep your hope alive, and find strength and reassurance in your prayer times with the Lord.

Heavenly Father, as we witness our prodigals making choices that break our hearts, we turn to You in prayer, acknowledging Your sovereignty and perfect wisdom. In the face of their struggles and the pain we endure, help us remember that You have not forgotten them. Though we may wonder why intervention hasn't come sooner, we trust that You, in Your infinite love, have a purpose even in their lowest moments. Allow us to see beyond the surface, to recognize that rock bottom is often the turning point. We lift up our prodigals once more to You, trusting that You have Your loving eye on them. We anticipate the day when, recognizing their need for You, they cry out, and You respond with love and mercy. Lift them out of the pit, set their feet on the solid rock of Jesus Christ, and fill their mouths with a new song of redemption and praise. As we wait for that day, Lord, instill in us hope. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Day 5

Wholeheartedly

"I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart." —Jeremiah 24:7

The thing about prodigals is that, when they return to the Lord, they usually return "with all their heart." The experiences and hardships they have faced without God awaken a realization of their need for Him. They've tested the theory that the grass is greener elsewhere and found it to be false.

When prodigals return and repent, there's no half-heartedness in their worship and devotion. They come back fully on-fire for the Lord.

This rekindled passion stems from a deep understanding of the forgiveness and grace they've received. Jesus said that those who have been forgiven much, love much. Prodigals, having experienced the depths of God's mercy, often become passionate evangelists, eager to share the incredible gift of forgiveness they've received! Their spiritual enthusiasm becomes contagious, inspiring others to draw near to the Lord.

In your prayers for your prodigal today, pray that God would give them a heart to know Him intimately, and that they will return to Him "with all their heart." Ask for a radical transformation that goes beyond surface-level changes, a transformation that penetrates the core of their being. Pray that the prodigal in your life becomes a living testament to the remarkable love and grace of our Heavenly Father, drawing others into His family through their passionate testimony and devotion.

Heavenly Father, today in our prayers, we ask for a deep transformation in the hearts of our prodigals, one that penetrates the core of their being. Grant them a heart that knows You intimately, a heart that beats with love and devotion for You. May the experiences and hardships they've faced without You awaken a deep realization of their need for You. As they return to You, let there be no half-heartedness in their worship and devotion. Infuse in them a passion for You, Lord, that stems from a profound understanding of the forgiveness and grace they've received. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Day 6

God Loves Them Even More Than You Do

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." —Romans 5:8

Sometimes we need to be reminded that God loves your prodigal even more than you do!

In your concern and compassion for the one who has wandered away, it's good to recognize that you are not alone. God stands with you, and the Holy Spirit intercedes on your prodigal's behalf, just as you do. The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love (Psalm 145:8).

Despite the distance and the choices your prodigal may have made, God's love for them remains steady. He has not forgotten them. In fact, when they return to the Lord, He will rejoice over them with gladness, quiet them by His love, and exult over them with loud singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

Knowing that God is for them and not against them should fill you with encouragement and thanksgiving. In your prayers today, take a moment to surrender your prodigal once more to the Lord. Entrust them to the hands of a God whose love surpasses all understanding—the best hands they could ever be in.

As you pray, find solace in the fact that God's love reaches the farthest corners and darkest depths. Your prodigal is on the heart and mind of our loving Creator who desires their return.

Heavenly Father, thank You for today's reminder that Your love for our prodigals exceeds even our own. In moments of concern, help us remember that we are not alone in this journey. Stand with us, intercede for our prodigals through the Holy Spirit, and shower them with Your steadfast love. Your grace and compassion bring us comfort. Despite the distance and their choices, Your love remains steadfast. As we surrender them once more into Your capable hands, we find encouragement and we give thanks. May Your incomprehensible love guide them back to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Day 7

A Hope and a Future

"I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." —Jeremiah 29:11

This verse is well known and often recited by many of us. But let's read it again today with your prodigal's name inserted:

"I know the plans I have for _____," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper _____ and not to harm _____, plans to give _____ hope and a future."

Does that give you renewed encouragement?

It may be that your prodigal has gone so far astray that you can't even envision a future for them that is good and promising.

God can! He is a God who makes impossible things possible.

He is the God who parts seas.
He is the God who causes walls to crumble.
He is the God who turns bitter to sweet.
He is the God who turns water into wine.
He is the God who raises the dead.

He can do a miracle for your prodigal as well.

Take heart, and know that there is a hope and a future for your prodigal!

Heavenly Father, as we pray the promise of Jeremiah 29:11 for our prodigals, we trust in Your plans to prosper and give them hope and a future. Fill our hearts with renewed encouragement, believing in Your ability to make the impossible possible. You, who have parted seas and raised the dead, can work miracles in our prodigals' lives. In moments of doubt, help us find comfort in thinking about the hope and future You have designed for them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.