

July 24, 2022

Things the Father of the Prodigal Son Did NOT Do Greg Gwin

There are many things to learn from the famous parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15;11-32). Each of the three characters in the parable – the prodigal, the father, and the elder brother – provides us with essential instruction in spiritual matters. Few Biblical texts have served as the basis for more or more powerful sermons and lessons.

Our emphasis here is on the father, and specifically on some of the things he did NOT do. Consider:

1) He did not try to justify his son's sinful actions. Many parents make this critical mistake. Even when their children have done horrible, devastating wrongs, some parents will make excuses for them. Some have even been known to change their position on basic moral issues if it so happens that their son or daughter has followed that sinful route. This, of course, only makes things worse.

2) He did not continue a normal relationship with his erring son. The reality was that their relationship had been severely altered, not by the father's choices, but rather by the son's. The father accepted this reality, as unpleasant as it was. There was nothing 'normal' in the family as long as this son continued in his sinful ways.

3) He did not rush to bail his son out of the trouble he had gotten himself into, and he did not enable him to continue in his sinful lifestyle. Although it's not stated in the text, it's not hard to imagine that the father likely knew where his son was – may well have known about the horrid conditions his son was suffering in the pig pen. But, he did not go there. He did not send some much needed cash to ease the suffering. He did not take any steps to lessen the miserable consequences the boy had reaped by his bad choices. Unfortunately, we see way too many parents these days that, by their actions, actually make it possible for the children to continue in open rebellion to the will of God.

4) He did not forgive and restore his prodigal son until the son repented and sought his forgiveness. It's clear that he was willing to forgive. It's obvious that he was anxious to forgive. He made it easy for his wayward son to seek and receive forgiveness. But notice carefully that he did not forgive the prodigal until the young man "came to himself," humbly returned, and asked for reconciliation. This is the pattern taught throughout the Scriptures, and we must follow it.

5) He never gave up hope for his lost son. As the son was nearing home, "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." It has been noted that the father must have been constantly watching and always hoping that he would see his son on the horizon. No loving parent can give up hope for a child gone astray.

The father of the prodigal son serves as a great role model for us today. Of course, we believe he is a sort of "shadow" of our perfect Heavenly Father. Let us strive to be more like Him.