

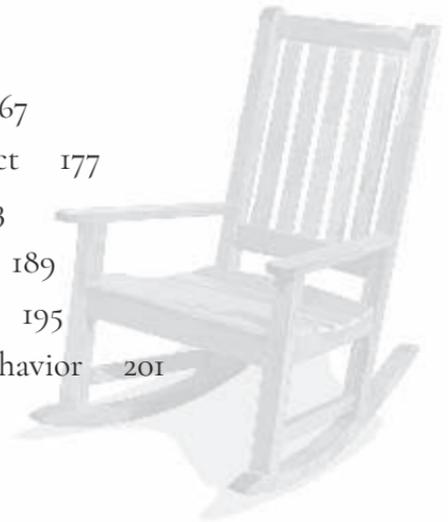
DOUGLAS WEISS, PH.D.

PRODIGAL PARENT
process



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INTRODUCTION

There are moms and dads in every church who suffer deeply because of a prodigal child in their family. Most Sundays, as the music fills the sanctuary and the sermon is delivered, their minds and souls wander off into the private pain of envisioning their prodigal traveling an undesirable road. The vacant seat next to them stirs the void in their heart.

They scroll through the memories of when their child came to church, sang songs, and worshipped God. They remember the family Bible studies and the bedside prayers. They do not understand how this once godly child can now yell at them, call them names, and behave so defiantly. Even worse, they do not understand the resistance to sharing a meal or having a simple conversation.

These wounded parents are in every church. Some are silent. Some ask for prayer. Most are enduring the grief of losing their daughter or son.

This book is created for Christian parents of prodigal children to help them understand what went wrong, acknowledge the truth, embrace hope and begin to heal. Through this teaching, you will learn the actual and biblical reality of how a person (or, more aptly, a soul) chooses to become a prodigal and the steps you can take to heal from the trauma of the broken relationship. Additionally, you will discover ways to improve your relationship once your prodigal chooses to come home.

As you read, I hope you heal and become stronger for your spouse, family, and even your child. God is aware of the decisions and actions of your prodigal and the pain that it causes you. He desires to have His child, who is on loan to you, return home to Him as well.

Douglas Weiss, Ph.D.



CHAPTER

One

THE FIRST PRODIGAL PARENT

Every lousy story begins with a good one. In the beginning, God created. And with that, we are drawn into the greatest story ever told. It has a miraculous beginning, awful middle, and fantastic ending. This magnificent creation account is simultaneously the story of God and the story of us. The buildup is immense. He speaks, and the waters separate; stars fill the sky; plants and creatures flourish.

Then in the second chapter of Genesis, God slows down. He thoughtfully and carefully forms His eternal son born in time, Adam. He raises him to become a man of service, trains him to work the land, and directs him to name the animals. Then

God creates Eve and gives her to Adam, and in doing so, God creates marriage—the trinity on earth as it is in heaven.

The stage is set! An amazing God has prepared all of creation for His children. A perfect Father loves and spends quality time with Adam and Eve. He teaches them, gives them responsibility for the land and animals, and established only one command: live at peace in His garden.

As this epic story unfolds, we see a sinless man and woman living in the perfect love and care of an all-powerful God, and then, WHAMO! Like a knockout punch from Rocky Balboa, the reader is taken into the painful abyss of a story gone rogue. This perfect, beautiful, godly, strong, brilliant couple with endless resources hits the dust through sin, and their epic beginning gives way to a tragic journey.

The Father who spent who knows how long convincing the Son and the Holy Spirit to create a free will race is now the first prodigal parent in history. And despite His pain, God sticks to His word; because of their disobedience, Adam and Eve would

experience many types of suffering and even death. He has them escorted out of the Garden of Eden, and He, like many of you reading this, is now a parent to prodigals. How did this happen?

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” ²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” ⁴“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 3:1-5

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, perfect in every way, have created us to live in a beautiful relationship with them. And—for their glory and our good—they created a moral universe where choices