



**What did the father mean by, 'he was dead but now he is alive'?**

**How did the father feel on his sons return?**

**Did the father ever give up on his son?**

**How did the son feel?**

**Do you think it was what the son expected?**

**On who's terms was the son taken back?**

**What was the fathers greatest attribute?**

**Why did the father behave the way he did?**

**How else could he have acted?**



Be honest and put yourself in the fathers position, would you acted like this? What would you have said? Ah so you've come crawling home have you, you're a disgrace. Dead right your not worthy to be my son, don't you realize the damage you have done. You are going to work as a servant and you will pay back every penny you wasted. And if you ever so much as put a foot wrong you are out on your ear.

**Why is our likely response so different from that found in the story?**



**What was the final outcome?**

**How had the son changed?**

**How had the father changed?**

**What changed in their relationship?**

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## The Lost Son

If you are going to interpret the parables of Jesus then you will need to understand two important elements; The cultural background, for example in this parable, Jews despised pigs and were prohibited from keeping them. Secondly; the human element, why the people behaved the way they did. The former is often stressed over the latter. The *prodigal son* is a human interest story, if you are a teenager or you have teenagers you will identify with the characters.



**Read Luke 15v11-24**

Prodigal means lavish or extravagant, to give prodigally is to give generously, it comes from the same root as prodigious. Today we understand it as wasteful or wayward.

**What did the younger son request of the father?**

This was acceptable practice, the estate could be divided before the death of the father. In accordance with Deut 21v17, the oldest son would probably have received two thirds and the younger a third. The heirs could sell the land, but it would not change hands until the father died. In the mean time, the father received the income from the property. In the parable, the son ended up with a sum of money, he may have sold his share in the property, or it may have come from the capital within the estate.



**Why did you do think he asked for this?**

**What characteristics did it show in his life?**

**What did he have in mind to do?**

Was the young man greedy, impatient? Clearly he was not content. Clearly he wanted out.

**How do you think he felt at home?**

It has been said that by asking for the inheritance the younger son was effectively telling his father he wished he would hurry up and die. Dividing property was part of the culture, and was often initiated by the father. It is unlikely he wanted his father dead, he just wanted to get away, be free, be an adult.



**Do you think he hated his father?**

**What was his attitude to his father?**

**What did the younger son do next? v13**



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The next thing he did was to leave home. He went to a distant country and lived it up.



**Why was the time frame short?**

**Why did the young man want to leave home?**

**Why a distant country?**

**Why did he adopt such a lavish lifestyle?**

He wanted to be free and he wanted to have fun. He wanted to find his own life. He felt he was missing out, that his father was too old fashioned, too frugal.

**Do teenagers still experience this?**

The father must have had an idea of what his son had in mind and what was likely to happen if he got his hands on the money.



**Why did the father give him the money and let him go?**

**What alternatives did he have?**

**What would you have done?**

**What might have happened if the son had stayed?**

**What risks did the father take?**

**How do you think the father felt letting him go?**

The father in the story is wise, he is after all a type of God! He loved his son, he had seen the frustration build in his life, and he knew that the only way he could keep his son was if he let him go. (What else could he have tried?)



**What happened next?** v14-16

Your going to say he ran out of money and a famine (economic recession) occurred and he was left penniless, alone and miserable, a long way from home. But that is not what happened next. It took him a while to get through his money and life was good! Everything he expected happened, and it was great. He had been right all along. His fathers morality and lifestyle were repressive and found wanting. This was the way to live!



**Read Hebrews 11v24-26**

**What choice did Moses make?**

**Why?**

**What choice did the lost son make?**

**Why?**

**What does this passage tell us about sin?**

Part of our Christian heritage is to tell people, 'sin is no fun, you won't enjoy it.' Its continuing popularity would prove otherwise. There is pleasure in sin, but it is short lived. It is the end results that prove the point. Sin leads to misery and death, righteousness to happiness and life. The question is not, 'will I enjoy myself' but 'in the long term, where is this going to take me.' The Lost Son was a victim of his own choices.



*And he began to be in need.*

**What were his needs?**

As a good Jewish lad, feeding pigs in a foreign country, was the ultimate low. It could not be worst. His lifestyle led him in to servitude.



*No one gave him anything.*

**What contrast is being made?**

**How do you think he felt?**



**What happened next?**

**What was the plan?** v18-19

**When he came to his senses what did he realize?**

**On who's terms was he going to return home?**

**Why did he plan to return home, not go somewhere else?**

**How did his actions reflect this Fathers influence?**

**Who had he sinned against?**

**How had he sinned against his father?**

**Why did he only realize this now? How had he sinned against God?**

God is creator, owner, lawgiver, and the moral standard of the universe. All sin is primarily against God. Read Psalm 51v4



**What happened next?**

One of the consistent criticisms of this parable is that it contains no theology of atonement. (it is just a parable, you cannot fit everything into a story). However the sons actions are consistent with repentance. He acknowledged his sin, he confessed it, he returned to the father and asked to be taken back.

**How do you think the son felt walking home?**

**How did the father see him a long way off?**

We can only conclude that the father had been watching for his return. This was the day he had been living for ever since he divided the land.

**What did the father do?** v20

Why did the father behave this way? The vision of an old, respectable father, running down the dusty road to embrace an emaciated youth, dressed in rags, is the heart of the gospel. It is interesting that the son never got to finish his carefully prepared speech.



**Was what he said true?** v21

**What did the father do?**

**What did this mean?**

**What do you think these things symbolized?**

It meant he accepted him back as a son, he forgave him and planned to be generous towards him. The son no longer had a share in the estate but it is clear from the fathers actions that he intends to provide for him. It is the father in this story who is truly prodigal!

**In what ways was the father prodigal?**