

## **Dealing with Difficult People (The Prodigal Son)**

**Webster defines** difficult people as and Man's answer in dealing with these kinds of people is to:

- **hard to deal with** remove or fight.
- **hard to manage** lessen expectations until little is accomplished
- **hard to understand** labeling and name calling
- **hard to overcome** give up and move on. Take the path of least resistance.

**Biblical examples:** Judas, Pharaoh, and Jonah.

- Judas wanted his will to be done
- Pharaoh refused to bend to God
- Jonah did God's work, but not God's will.

### **The Prodigal Son**

Many say this account illustrated an education of the consequences of a sinful life, "but I also see a lesson in the importance of his relationship with his father."

- The older brother of Luke Ch. 15 is best known as "being difficult".
  - His too was an education of the consequences of a sinful life

(Lk.15:1-2) sets up the story with two classes of people. Sinners and Religious leaders.

- Big brother was commendable. He was moral (stayed home and didn't run off with prodigal), hardworking (in the fields) **vs 25**, and faithful to his job (low these many years I have served you) **vs 29**.
- But despite his morality, he is outside (literally) the circle of fellowship (joy).

When reading this story of the two sons, the focus should always be on the Father.

- The Father, in dealing with his older son, never attacked his negativity.
- He proposed three questions to him to get him to see his sin.

**Question #1:** Why are you outside?

- The Father stays positive and gives reasons why he should not be "outside" (negative) in their relationship.
- The older son [Big brother] answers his father in **vs 28**. He was angry and would not go in.

Who was he angry at?

- At the Father? For doing for a "lesser" brother who didn't deserve it.
- At his younger brother? Possibly because he lost some building blocks for building up himself.

Rather than rejoicing over the restored brother, he was upset!

**Paul's test:** (Gal.6:1) "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted".

- This was not big brothers attitude. There was no meekness, kindness, love, or compassion in him!
- He considered the prodigal's repentance a threat!
- He was angry at himself. **Vs.29** He got a raw deal; a bad bargain. He obeyed the rules and got nothing...so he thought.
- He had no appreciation for the fellowship of his Father. He became complacent with it.

The prodigal son's return home did not create problems, it revealed them!

- The Big brother was physically closer to his Father, but he was just as far removed spiritually as the prodigal.

**Question #2:** Is it costing you anything to be outside? Are you gaining anything by this exercise?

- It's costing him fellowship with his Father and with his brother.
- It was also costing him joy by staying outside. (1 John 1)

Notice the desire of the Father to fellowship with both sons. He ran to one who was far off and he went outside to find the other (**vs 28**).

- The Father is encouraging his son to come and rejoice.

All three parables in Luke 15 end in rejoicing.

- One younger son's sin was **action** while the older son's sin was **attitude**.

The Father addressed both in a loving way.

**Question #3:** Can you go in? Do you have to stay outside?

**Vs 31** says Yes, he could go in. He just had to see the poison in his life and confess it.

We don't know what big brother chose. He was left with an invitation to go in as the story ends.