

The Return of the Prodigal – by Henri Nouen An easy but profound read

How much have you thought about the well-known story known as “The Prodigal Son”? Do you associate with the younger son, the older son or the Father? Based a lot on a study of the Rembrandt painting of the Return of the Prodigal, Henri Nouen reflects on how we need at different stages in our lives consider how we should be like all three of these characters. Yes we need to repent and return to Our Father as the younger son. But as someone who wasn’t a rebellious teenager, who normally did as he was told, who went to a Christian camp, who tried to study his bible who went to church reasonably regularly, I need to appreciate that I have a lot of the elder brother in me and I need to heed the Father’s call to come on in and join the party for a younger Christian brother. And in my Christian journey when I meet a younger brother character, someone recently released from prison maybe, or an alcoholic, or prostitute desperately in need of love do I reach out my arms to hug them. And when I see the regular church goer struggle to accept the outsider do I without looking down on them, gently encourage them to be reconciled.

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In the story of “The Prodigal Son” do you associate with the younger son, the older son or the Father? Based on a study of the Rembrandt painting, Henri Nouen reflects on how we need to be like all three of these characters. We need the repentance of the younger son as we return to the Father, the humility of the older son to rejoice with the Father when the rebellious return and the extravagant love of the Father who is besotted with all His children, including me.

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Do you want to have your mind stretched, but don’t have time for a long heavy read? Then I would strongly recommend this book. Based around a Rembrandt painting Henri Nouen gently encourages the reader to look at each of the three main players in the story of the Prodigal Son showing how at different times in our lives we need to be like each of the younger son, the older son and the Father.