

Getting them to Talk About It

How To Reach Out To Parents Of Prodigals



Paula Isakson

www.faithfamilyreunion.com

Deep Questions

- Why is the subject of our kids leaving faith and the church so hard to speak about?
- If you have a prodigal in your life, what do you do when your feelings overwhelm you?



Some Statistics

40 - 50% of kids who graduate from a church or youth group will fail to stick with their faith in college.

Only 20 percent of college students who leave the faith planned to do so during high school. The remaining 80 % intended to stick with their faith but didn't.

Resource "Sticky Faith" Dr. Kara E. Powell & Dr. Chap Clark



Statistics Within the LCMS

- Baptized LCMS membership reported for 2013 declined by 33,090 (or 1.51 %) from the number reported for 2012, for a total of 2,163,698 at the end of 2013.
- Confirmed membership decreased by 21,912 for 2013 to 1,685,597. A year earlier baptized membership for 2012 declined by 35,070 compared with 2011, and confirmed membership for 2012 decreased by 24,013 from the year before.

Resource blogs.LCMS.org



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Deeper Questions

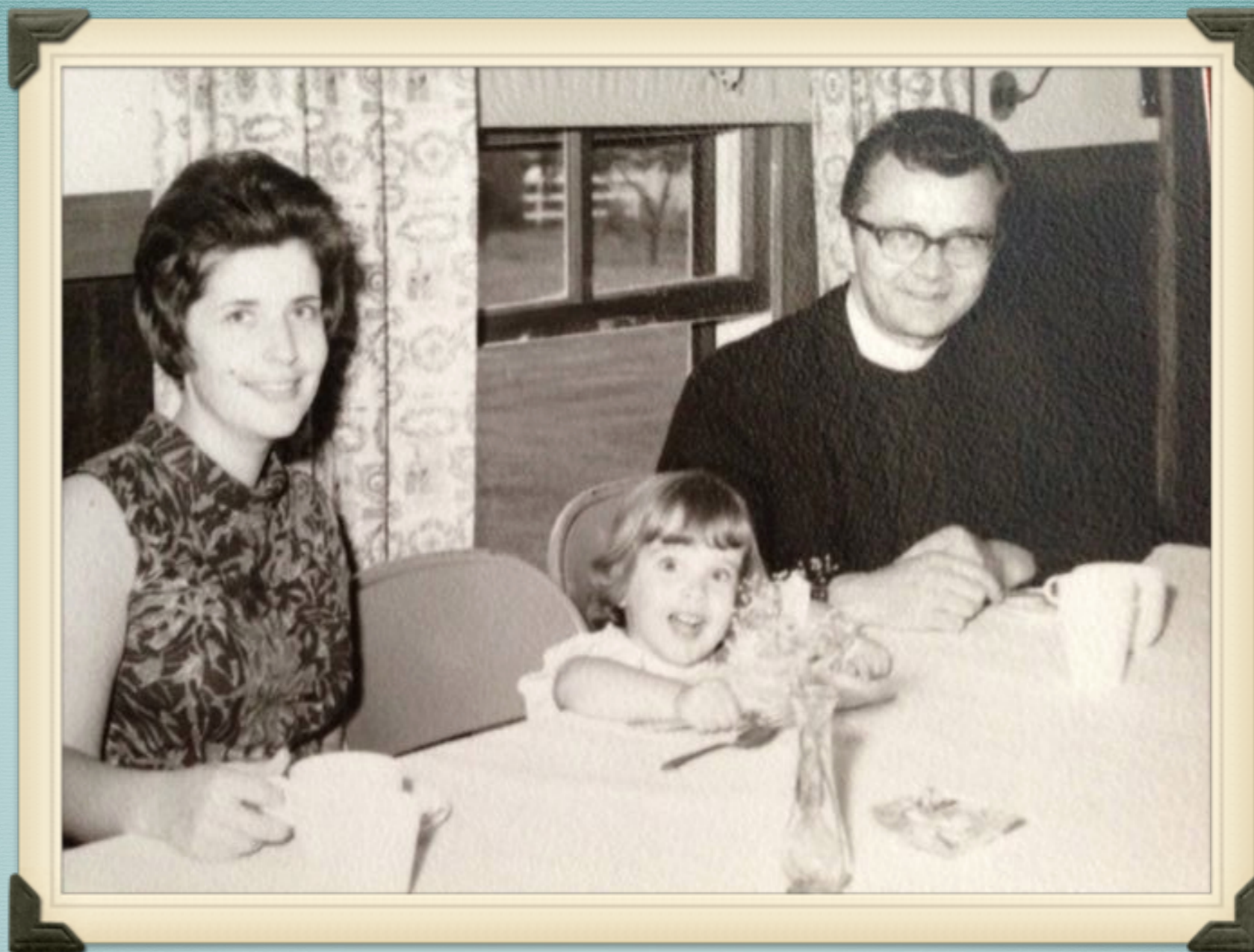
- Why are we so uncomfortable with prodigals?
- Do we feel rejected?
- What can we do?





My Family Growing Up | Dad,
Mom, Me





Growing Up In A Pastor's Family



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My parents brought me
up faithfully in the
Word



I also had faithful
Sunday School teachers
and parochial grade
school teachers

But I left the faith for
over 25 years



Let's Talk About It | On Being A Parent Of A Prodigal

What causes parents to keep quiet when it comes to their prodigals? Is it a feeling of failure, anger or sadness?

Help parents to learn how to “open up” with others and discover that they are not alone.

Help parents see how the process of “talking about it” can lead to an internal healing process enabling them to reach out to their prodigal.



Questions

- How many of you are in church leadership?
- How many of you know of parents with prodigals?
- How many of you have prodigals in your lives?



My Story



Get the Link: [http://
bit.ly/IGglx97](http://bit.ly/IGglx97)



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Where My Experiences As A Prodigal Have Taken Me

- Felt a call to reach out to parents of prodigals and developed Faith Family Reunion
- Now work on this ministry outreach with my father Dr. Jakob K. Heckert

Faith Family Reunion (is)

A ministry outreach to parents of prodigal

Goal is to get parents to start opening up and talking about the situation instead of keeping the hurt buried

Belief that meeting with others and sharing experiences helps one realize that they are not alone and can help with the internal healing process



Development Small Group Study

Background | Encouraged to write curriculum by mentors

Concordia Center for the Family Ann Arbor MI

Pilot Program | September 2014 at Concordia Ann Arbor. Panel included:

- Dr. Jakob K Heckert (Father and Theological Editor Faith Family Reunion)
- Ben & Jennifer Fruedenberg (Concordia Center For The Family, Ann Arbor MI)
- Bob McKinney (Former DCE Concordia University Ann Arbor MI) & Eunice McKinney (DCE & Counselor)
- Mom With Prodigal (From Ann Arbor MI)
- Grandmother With Prodigal (Counselor, From Ann Arbor MI)
- June McCarty (Counselor, From Britton MI)
- Pastor David McCarty (Immanuel Lutheran Church from Britton MI)
- Additional assistance: Ruth Koch (Overseer Board Concordia University Ann Arbor, Counselor), Sandy Wendehelin DCE Bethlehem Lutheran Denver CO, Pastor Hellmer's St. Lukes in Golden CO, Mom with prodigal from Denver CO



Faith Family Reunion Curriculum Content

- Week One | Love A Beacon Of Light
- Week Two | Trust Can Be The Hard Part
- Week Three | Community & The Importance Of Community
- Week Four | Identity
- Week Five | Heritage
- Week Six | Mistakes We All Make Them
- Week Seven | How The Lord Provides Comfort
- Week Eight | The Perfect Timing - Waiting On The Lord
- Closing Weekend | Group Affirmation And Thanksgiving



Why Bother?

- Address the emotional needs of parents (Grandparents and Other Family Members) with prodigals
- Build a community for parents to interact
- Provide encouragement among parents



What Can It Do?

- Create an outlet for parents (Grandparents and Other Family Members)
- Offer a place and time to receive regular encouragement
- Creates a community that can be a resource to hurting parents and families in the congregation (Giving them a place to go)
- Bring the members of the congregation together

More Ideas | Visit

<http://faithfamilyreunion.nextmeta.com/core-beliefs>



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Ways To Begin To Open Up

Initiate A Group Meeting In Your
Congregation

How

- Reach Out To Parents of Prodigals
- Offer A Weekly Bible Study
- Set Up Weekly Meeting Time & Location
- Put A Notice In Church Bulletin and Church Newsletter



Intended Group Audience

- Parents of Prodigals
- Grandparents
- Individuals that are believers and have prodigal family members
- Pastors and professional church workers if they have a prodigal in their family



Things To Consider As Group Leader

“Sensitivity of Subject Matter”

- Parents come to class blaming selves - important to stress forgiveness
- Dealing with a multitude of emotions and reasons why children have left the faith
- If you are going to lead the group, are you also dealing with a prodigal in your life? (don't let that discourage you from leading)



Different Family Scenarios

- Reasons children leave the faith
 - Family dynamics - Highlights
1. Leaving the faith or organized traditional church
 2. Toll on family, parents
 3. Response by each parent
 4. Vulnerability of meeting in a group
 5. Fear of judgment
 6. Family life, different styles of family

Forgiveness is KEY



How Do I Start?

After a thorough review of the introduction of the class material you may want to quit and not even start a group.

Questions To Ask Yourself:

1. What happens if parents just keep this sorrow to themselves? What will happen to them?
2. Could they benefit by sharing?
3. What would happen if we all started talking about it?



Slowly

- Sunday sermon series that broaches subject and gently preach about 'the prodigal' in a sermon or series
- Start a bible study with parents but don't delve into a study dealing with prodigals
- Get parents together who have "in common" their kids leaving the faith
- ◆ Highly recommend having an advocate within your congregation to get behind the study to lead from behind
- ◆ Also recommend having an introduction to share what the study is all about (similar to what we are having today) – this will help break down the misconceptions that the study is to tell parents what they did wrong



Small Group Study Format

Study gently addresses the issue to encourage parents to open up

Stages of Curriculum

- Address situation
- Understanding the prodigal
- Class format that includes devotion, prayer, bible verses and questions
- Deeper questions for parents to reflect on
- A section on forgiveness ends each session – forgiveness is key



Create A Safe Environment

- Ensure confidentiality
- Don't put parents on the spot
- Keep group small | 4 -6 people may be ideal
- If you are a group leader that has a prodigal make sure you are at a place of peace before leading the group
- Create “Rules Of Engagement” for group



Group Confidentiality Contract

Write Up 'Rules of Engagement' For Group

Example:

“I will keep the testimonies and stories I hear in this group confidential. What is discussed in this group stays in this group and is not to be shared outside the group.”



Purpose Of Meeting In A Small Group

- Encourages parents to begin to share their story
- Helps parents discover that they are not alone
- Provides opportunity to discover other parents responses to situation
- Creates opportunity to learn to learn from one another



Faith Family Reunion

Present & Overall Vision

We hope to see parents begin emotional healing from the effects of hurt and a strained relationship with their prodigal. We hope to see pastors and church leaders being equipped with resources to address the emotional needs of parents of prodigals.

Faith Family Reunion's goal is to equip pastors and church leaders with tools that address hurting parents from our website resources to class curriculum that can be used within their congregations.



Faith Family Reunion Future

- In the future we envision congregations setting up weekly parent meetings, where church leaders and parents can come together to address the issues together (using the class curriculum).
- We envision congregations organizing mentoring programs so that older parents can work with younger parents to encourage them and share best family practices on how to raise their children in the faith.
- We envision congregations working together on a regional and national level to bring broken families together to address the issues and encourage one another.



Faith Family Reunion Imagine

- Imagine a future where parents are unafraid to share their hurts, sorrow and disappointments with others
- Imagine pastors and church leadership having the tools to reach out to hurting parents
- Imagine congregations working together on resolutions to reach out to prodigals and their parents
- Imagine all of us coming back together as a community as we reach out to the prodigals



Let's Break It Down...

Faith Family & Reunion



Faith

Provide resources to congregations, pastors and church leadership to engage hurting parents in order to:

1. Restore faith by reminding them of their identity in Jesus Christ
2. Renew faith in Jesus Christ by welcoming them in love which can help them to experience forgiveness and come to a place of forgiveness for themselves and the prodigal
3. Remind them that faith in Jesus Christ ultimately brings hope to their situation



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Family

Create community and outreach, within the church family, for hurting parents by:

1. Demonstrating the love and caring of the church by reaching out to them as a church family
2. Creating a place where trust (within the church family) is built and offering a safe haven where the walls of pride, shame and secrecy can come down
3. Cultivating support and mentoring opportunities with the church family as members of the congregation, pastors and church leaders intentionally interact with them



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Reunion

Help parents to come to an emotional place of peace to:

1. Reunite them with their prodigals in order to open the door for reconciliation with their family so they can share their faith in Jesus Christ authentically
2. Reunite individual families with their church family and create an opportunity for open and honest communication to create a strong familial bond within the congregation
3. Reunite pastors and church leaders with parents and the members of their congregation so that they can work together to engage the prodigal and members that have left the church



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Resources For Parents

- Ice Breakers | Interactive Q & A's for Parents

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/ice-breakers>

- Complimentary Membership Parents

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/content.cfm?id=351>

- Testimonies from Parents

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/content.cfm?id=322>

Faith Builders – Story of Prodigals Returned

<http://www.faithfamilyreunion.com/content.cfm?id=322>

- Prayer Requests

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/content.cfm?id=268>



Ice-Breakers



Faith Builders Through Ice Breakers

Faith Builders are designed to be inspirational, an encouragement and a place to find nourishment for the soul. Faith Builders will present testimonies, Bible verses, conversation on family/faith and things to think about. [Follow these 5 easy steps to join the conversation.](#)

Please consider joining the conversation and be a part of [Faith Builders](#) as we can all be a light to each other.

[Login](#) to submit an answer to this question.

Question: I feel as though I sound like a broken record? Should I continue sharing the faith with my prodigal?

"Yes, yes, yes! By sharing ones faith, we actually share God's Word. It IS God's Word that shapes us, encourages us, helps us, fills us with joy, and forgives us! thus ultimately strengthening our faith. Without God's Word, one slowly, but surely, slips

Explore

Contact Us

Email Lists

Conversation Starters

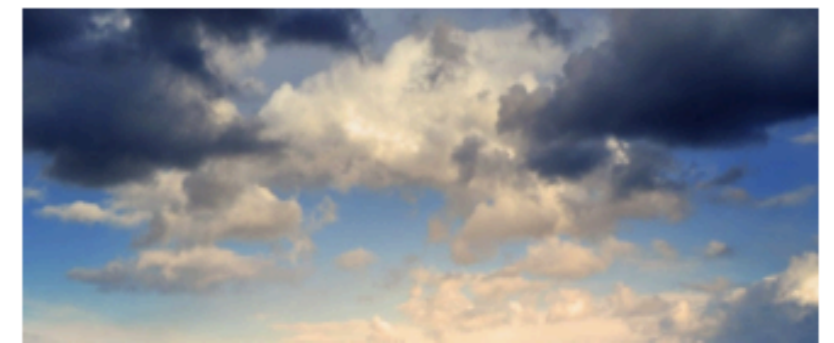
Ministries

Discussion Forums

[Ice-Breakers](#)

Member Sign Up

Speaking Engagements



Member Sign Up



Welcome To The Membership Page

Member Access Pages

As a member of Faith Family Reunion you will have access to the following pages on our website and the opportunity to be an encouragement to others. Thanks for considering joining. [If you have questions please contact us.](#)

Ice Breakers | This is a page where you can respond to questions that are posted on the website: <http://www.faithfamilyreunion.com/ice-breakers>

Discussion Forums | This is a members only page. This section provides an opportunity for members to have frank discussions on subjects dealing with their prodigals. Since the section is for members only it will be a private conversation between members only. View the page here:

<http://www.faithfamilyreunion.com/discussion-forums>

Faith Builders | This is a place where you can share a new discovery, a testimony, an encouraging word: <http://www.faithfamilyreunion.com/content.cfm?id=322>.

Send us an [email](#) if you have a Faith Builder that you would like to share. Please note that you will not be able to post on this page.

Explore

[How To Become A Member](#)

[Become A Member](#)

[Update Your Profile](#)



Testimonials



Submitted November 24, 2015

Paula: Thanks so much for your prayers and work through Faith Family Reunion! I look forward to reading your posts as they bring such comfort, encouragement, and help by way of your experiences as well as God's Word. That is hard to find these days, so I hope and pray you, Pastor Heckert, and Faith Family Reunion are around for a long, long time. Know that I keep your whole family (including your brothers!) in my prayers as well! May the Holy Spirit continue to work through you and Pastor Heckert to reach those of us with prodigals, bringing that true peace which only comes only through faith and relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Have a Blessed Thanksgiving!

Peace in Christ, From A Mom In the Midwest

Submitted April 27, 2015

I am praying that all the prodigals in my life (my daughters, nephews and nieces, a brother) will draw closer to their Creator, realizing how loved they are, and that He formed them and breathed life into them personally, with love.

What a great way to start my week. Thank you, Paula. *From a weekly devotional email subscriber

Submitted March 28, 2015

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[Vision](#)

[Mission Statement](#)

[Staff](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Testimonials](#)



Faith Builders



What are Faith Builders | Definition of Faith Builders

Faith Builders are designed to be inspirational, an encouragement and a place to find nourishment for the soul. Faith Builders will present testimonies, Bible verses, conversation on family/faith and things to think about.

You are invited to join in on the conversation and be a part of Faith Builders as we can all be a light to each other. If you have a story and testimony to share, a question to ask, a Bible verse or just a word of encouragement, please send your responses to [Faith Family Reunion](#).

Faith Builders

- Submitted January 3, 2015 | Thoughts On Faith: [More Information](#).
- Submitted January 15, 2015 | Thoughts On Rebellion: [More Information](#)
- Submitted January 15, 2015 | Thoughts On Worry: [More Information](#)
- Submitted March 30, 2015 | A Brother's Return To Faith: [More Information](#)
- Submitted May 16, 2015 | Her Story (A Prodigal Story) : [More Information](#)
- Submitted July 7, 2015 | This Is My Story: [More Information](#)
- Submitted October 26, 2015 | Stories About The Journey Of Faith In Jesus Christ: [More Information](#)
- Submitted January 26, 2016 | A Hymn For My Prodigal Son: [More Information](#)

- **From A Mom in California whose daughter is leaving for college:**

While our daughter seems to be losing faith, I do notice she will not say anything

Explore

[Hymn For My Prodigal Son](#)

[Here Is My Story](#)

[Her Story](#)

[My Brother A Prodigal](#)

[Worries](#)

[Rebellion](#)

[The Faith of God](#)



Prayer Requests



Prayer List

*If you would like to be added to our prayer list please fill out the form below

Prayer for Parents and their Children

Dear Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we thank you that you are with these parents and children, that your wonderful presence of grace and love surrounds them, and brings comfort to the parents that are dealing with the loss of their children from faith and the church. You enable them to remember the presence of the Holy Spirit and strengthen them to live strong in faith. You help them remember that they can trust in you. You renew their hope in every situation. We thank you, that you through the Holy Spirit are at work to return their children to a renewed relationship with you. We pray that you create situations or bring other Christians into the lives of their children that cause them to pause and look to you, to hear your voice. Enable these parents to realize that changes in their children's lives will happen according to your timing, because that your timing is perfect. By your Holy Spirit empower the parents to grow in faith and be strengthened as they go through this tough situation. We ask these things in Jesus Name. Amen.

Current Prayer List

- **From A Mom in California whose daughter is leaving for college:**

While our daughter seems to be losing faith, I do notice she will not say anything

Explore

Devotionals

Encouraging Words

Faith Builders

Prayer Requests

Blog

Invite A Friend



Faith Family Reunion

Visit Our Website: www.faithfamilyreunion.com

*Our Passion Is To
Inspire & Transform
Parents With Prodigals*



www.faithfamilyreunion.com

Small Group Study Information

Visit

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/contact-us>

What Are They Saying?

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/content.cfm?id=353>

Testimonials

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/content.cfm?id=306>



Want An Introduction To Faith Family Reunion

At Your Congregation?
Visit

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/contact-us>

Sign Up For Our Weekly Email

<http://faithfamilyreunion.com/email-lists>



Thank You

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