

Title: Return of the Prodigal Son	Author: Henri Nouwen
Media type: (check one) X Book _CD/Audio book _DVD	Call Number: 248.4 NOU
Review submitted by: Tacy Slade	Date: March 16, 2014
Subject (e.g. Prayer, Family Life, Sacraments, Saints, Bible Study, Moral Conduct, Social Justice) Bible study/parable	
<p>1. What is this book about? (describe briefly) ? Inspired by Rembrandt's painting of the Return of the Prodigal Son, Nouwen sets out on a reflective journey uncovering the full depth of meaning of this parable. The reflections are so clear and profound my understanding of the parable is forever changed. The prologue addresses our yearning for a lasting home and he states "coming home meant walking step by step toward the one who awaits me with open arms and wants to hold me in an eternal embrace." Nouwen considers himself to be the critical observer, a comfortable position in control. Could he relinquish the security of the observer for the vulnerability of the returning son? Nouwen says "the painting has become a mysterious window through which I can step into the Kingdom of God. Whether you are the younger or elder son, you are called to become the father."</p>	
<p>2. What main message does the author convey? One by one, Nouwen focuses on the returning son, the elder brother and finally the father. He gives a full understanding of what it means "to leave for a distant country" and what the words said to the father truly mean; the heartless rejection of everything considered holy at home, much like Adam's original rebellion. Have you ever thought of Jesus as the Prodigal Son? When Nouwen's focus turns to the elder brother he states that the painting summarizes the great spiritual battle and the great choices the battle demands. The image of the elder brother equals the inner drama of the soul, because the elder brother is free to choose. His obedience and duty had become a burden, service became slavery and in reality he was "lost while still at home." Both sons need healing. Nouwen states, "The hardest conversion to go through is the conversion of the one who stayed home." Have you ever thought of Jesus as the elder brother? When the focus turns to the father, Nouwen believes "the painting is the human expression of divine compassion. Everything comes together here; time and eternity intersect here, sin and forgiveness, the human and divine all become one." Can you become the father? What is the path?</p>	
<p>3. What inspired you the most about this book, and why would you recommend it? I have heard and read this simple parable all my life yet never have my eyes been so opened to its full meaning, especially the aspects beyond the obvious of the returning son. The discourse on the elder brother was a true epiphany!</p>	
<p>4. Who would benefit from reading this book? Everyone should read this book! I wish he would write one for every parable; I would read them all.</p>	
<p>5. Any other impressions: Henri Nouwen states, "I stand with awe at the place where Rembrandt brought me. He led me from the kneeling, disheveled young son to the standing, bent-over old father, from the place of being blessed to the place of blessing."</p>	