

## Contact with Children Who Have Left

**We must have one mind about how to relate to children who have left, and who call, write letters, or wish to visit. The doorway for a wayward son is his abba. All his communication with the Body should come through his abba,** whose whole desire is for his son to be saved. There is not likely to be any profit in social calls to talk with his siblings or friends in the community. The wayward child needs to feel acutely his separation from the people of God, and not get emotional “fixes” by calling to get the latest news or talk about how wonderful or wretched his life in the world is. If he calls to speak with his abba, and if his abba’s heart is toward him, then the Holy Spirit will be upon his abba to reach his heart, not make trivial conversation.

Anyone who receives letters from a wayward child would, of course, give them to the child’s abba. A child in the community who receives a letter from a child in the world would *never* read it before his abba read it and covered him to do so, and any letter written to the wayward son would also go through the abba. If a child wishes to visit the community, it must be judged what his *motive* is for visiting. Consider the story of the “Prodigal Son” in Luke 15:11-32: “And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’” Obviously, the son had reached a humble place and was ready to return. Perhaps a child may not be quite to that point, but it is clear that his motive for visiting is because he is needy and his heart seems sensitive. He is not just coming for a social visit, to show off his new truck, to make contact with his siblings or friends, etc. So if it is judged that a child may come for a visit, the child would normally be received by his abba at his abba’s community and would constantly be connected to his abba (or an appointed responsible person) for the entire duration of his visit. He would not travel from community to community. He would not be left alone with his siblings or friends. He would not pick up an instrument and begin playing music. No one would make idle or trivial conversation with him, but would have only one desire in talking with him — to love him and reach his heart so that he would come to his senses and repent. And anyone who saw or heard or sensed anything amiss in his communications during his visit would be faithful to communicate with his abba or a responsible brother.