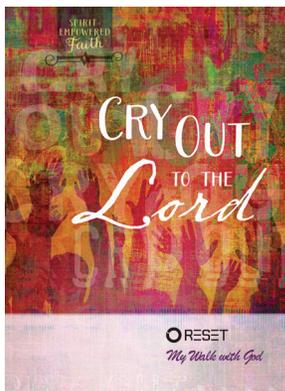




On Our Knees

This article is from *Cry Out to the Lord*. It is an excerpt from the book, *Seizing the Future on Our Knees*, by **Doug Beacham**.



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Change will come to our lives and our communities when there is a common resolve to corporately join together before the face of God to be reconciled from sin and to seek God's will for our future. This change will come when we experience both times of confession and repentance, admission of sin, and our decision to live life differently. Let's look, with perhaps a fresh perspective, at our need for God's abundant grace.

"If my people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV).

The Sin of the Elder Brother Syndrome

No story confronts us with the Father's love like the parable of the prodigal son and his older brother. In this illustration, Jesus contrasts God's boundless love with the total ineptness of human affection. Both the prodigal and his brother needed the embrace of a forgiving father and a sense of *"coming home."* The younger brother undoubtedly needed the grace of a father after he came to his senses. He had selfishly demanded from his father, squandered precious gifts, and lived a life of self-indulgence and rebellion. The difficult point of the parable, however, is the older son, who believed that by "staying at home" he deserved priority treatment. His refusal to join the celebration revealed his flawed understanding of the father's love. It also exposed the brother's pride because he considered himself more worthy than his prodigal sibling.





Knowing that God has called us (*the church*) to unity and that the Father sees no distinction of sin, we must acknowledge the sin of the elder brother. The church today often looks much like this older sibling. In fact, the **elder brother syndrome** has caused us to resist God's love rather than rejoice in seeing it lavished upon penitent prodigals. This syndrome opens the door to anger, bitterness, jealousy, and complaint. Old resentments, rooted in pride, intensify our withdrawal from God and His family and deepen divisions that dishonor and wound others.

The elder brother's self-reliance reveals a spiritual poverty which closes the door to communion with the Father and fellowship with His family. Like the elder brother, we have hardened our hearts against those who have left us and wanted to come home. We have often failed to demonstrate that God is full of grace and mercy. Instead, we have manifested a spirit of legalism that is based on works. We remember offenses and forget the love and generosity of the Father. Consider your need for confession and repentance from the **elder brother syndrome**.



M10. Living submissively within His body, the church, as instruction and encouragement, reproof, and correction are graciously received by faithful disciples

LEARN to Encounter Jesus

"And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

Even now, as you consider again the story of the prodigal son, the elder brother, and the father, allow the Lord to sensitize your heart to the true character of Father God. Spend some time meditating on this passage of Scripture. Ponder not only the story itself but also the ways in which the heart of the Lord is revealed.

Meditate specifically on Luke 15:20 and imagine that Christ is waiting for you to return home, sometimes as the prodigal and sometimes as the elder brother. When He sees you in the distance, He is moved with compassion in spite of your selfishness, self-reliance, pride, condemnation, and sin; He runs toward you, even when you're a long way off.

If you have demonstrated the sin of the elder brother, rest assured that when the Father sees you, He smiles with complete joy. In spite of your arrogance, bitterness, and resentment, He leaps quickly off the front porch because He cannot wait to be with you.





The Father embraces you, kisses you, and whispers in your ear. He does not offer lectures or criticism. There is no rebuke or scorn. His voice is filled with compassion as He embraces you and tells you that He loves you. There's a ring, a robe, and the announcement of a huge party. The true character of God is One who welcomes you with outstretched arms, is ready to embrace you, and is excited to love you.

Allow the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with gratitude for the grace that you have received. Ask Him to bring you to a time of fresh reflection upon the grace of the embracing Christ. Pray that He would fill you with wonder for His care and gratefulness for His love.

*Forgive me, Father, for all the ways the **elder brother syndrome** has worked in my heart. Fill my heart, Holy Spirit, with the wonder of an embracing, welcoming Jesus; may my joy and gratitude for being so loved empower my humility and grace-filled giving to others.*

