

ON OUR KNEES

From *Seizing the Future on Our Knees*
by Doug Beacham



CRY OUT TO THE LORD

Lord, I don't ever want to underestimate my sin, but I want to stand clean before You all the days of my life. I want my sinful actions, behaviors, and choices to be washed away by Your love and by Your mercy. I praise You for being a God who lavishly gives the gift of forgiveness to those who ask.

PREFACE

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.



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 through the father of the two wayward sons.

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.

THE SIN OF JUDGMENTALISM

We have read our Lord's warning not to judge lest we be judged, yet have judged. We have judged unbelievers, hindering their entrance into the kingdom of God. We have judged faults in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have often emphasized outward appearance, rather than the condition of the heart. Our judgmentalism has excluded people from the church.

Judgmentalism has broken our fellowship with other members of the body of Christ. It has caused us to confuse personal convictions with the eternal principles of God's Word. Judgmentalism has given birth to the sin of hypocrisy and put people into bondage to traditions instead of freeing them to minister. We have often overemphasized the negative, while neglecting positive ministries such as worship, witness, and service to others.

Consider your own need for confession and repentance from judgmentalism.



PRAY and Experience Scripture

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. (1 John 1:9)

Prayerfully consider the sin of judgmentalism. Could there be any evidence of this sin in your own life? Talk to the heavenly Father, confessing and turning to Him, asking for His forgiveness.

*Heavenly Father, it is wrong of me to _____.
I know that part of the reason why You had to die was because of my _____.
And I know that my sin hurts You. And I ask for Your forgiveness for this area of my life*

Jesus embraces you. He forgives you and declares His love for you. In spite of the sin you have just shared, the Savior sees you as a person worthy of His love, acceptance, and grace. And just like the woman in the gospel of John, Jesus says, "Where are your accusers? ...Neither do I [accuse you]. Go and sin no more" (John 8:10–11).

How might Jesus want to free you from judging others? Talk to the Lord in prayer.

I want to thank You, Jesus, for not withholding love from me or judging me. I praise You for Your love that was expressed toward me and I pray that I might become more like You. Holy Spirit, deliver me from judging others and equip me to better express the love of Jesus to those around me.

THE SIN OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE

The original sin was pride. Lucifer exalted himself against God and brought sin into the universe (Ezekiel 28:11–19). The sin of pride was introduced into the human family when Adam and Eve yielded to Satan’s temptation. Man still exalts himself and declares his independence from God. This temptation often seduces the Church.

Pride deceived us so that we have tried to accomplish God’s work in our own strength instead of in the power of the Holy Spirit. We have sought our glory instead of giving all glory to Him. Pride has caused us to content with one another rather than edify the church. It has caused the heavens to be as iron and earth as brass, rendering our labors unfruitful.

Consider your need for confession and repentance from pride.

LOVE Others in Community

You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it you. (Matthew 21:22)

Talk with a friend, family member, or mentor about your own tendencies toward pride. Be vulnerable with your story. When you are done sharing your story, then pray together. Quietly listen before the Lord as His Spirit speaks to you about areas of your life that need to look more like our humble Savior. Ask the Lord to give you discernment and direction as you respond to the following:

Lord, I sense a needed fresh work of humility in me, particularly toward _____ (which person or persons in your life?). Free me from pride. I want to only seek Your glory.



Lord, forgive me, as there have been times that I have had a superior attitude and taken Your grace for granted. I want Your Spirit to stir within me a humble and grateful heart. Overwhelm me with a deep awareness of my identity as the beloved of God and then constrain and control me through the grateful wonder of Your love.



SHARE with Others in Community

Ask God to show you a person in your community who could benefit from a grace-filled, accepting response. Look for opportunities to demonstrate these gifts to another person.

Heavenly Father, I want to demonstrate the same welcoming embrace to others that You have shown me. Help me see people in my world this week who could benefit from this kind of love.