

PRODIGAL

What we know:

- 1: The young brother wanted happiness
- 2: He wanted things apart from the owner (his father)
- 3: He defied and rejected a relationship with his father openly, physically
- 4: He was clear on his life pursuits
- 5: He experienced exhaustion and regret in trying to fill the emptiness in his life with things

When he returned... He was willing to own up his mistakes, to trade his regret by repentance. What he received was beyond his imagination. Even his best plans and theological understanding could not give him and explain what the father gave him--

This leads to worship

“Do you realize, then, what Jesus is teaching? Neither son loved the father for himself. They both were using the father for their own self-centered ends rather than loving, enjoying, and serving him for his own sake. This means that you can rebel against God and be alienated from him either by breaking his rules or by keeping all of them diligently.”

Tim Keller, *Prodigal God*





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Everyone is wrong, everyone is loved and everyone is called to recognize this and change.

We are all on a self – salvation – self improvement mission – we just go about it different. Some with God, some without God.

*To the without God people,
God becomes Useful, not Lord.*



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The elder brother...

- Refuses to enter the celebration
- Ignores the invitation to come in
- Refuses to understand kindness
- Refuses to respect the Father
- Speaks from a place of entitlement
- Is blind to his rejection of the Father's invitation
- Is blind to his self-righteousness

*Sometimes our anger with God
is rooted in an elder brother mindset*

Recognizing "Elder Brotherness"

1. GOD EXISTS FOR THEIR NEEDS

They obey God to get things. They don't obey God to get God himself. They use God to get power and control.



Recognizing "Elder Brotherness"

2. THEY GET ANGRY WHEN LIFE DOESN'T GO THEIR WAY

God owes them a better life if they live up to his standards. Often, our inability to handle suffering is because our obedience is only motivated by results – we obey to get. For an elder brother, a "good life is lived not for delight in good deeds themselves, but as a calculated ways to control their environment." (Keller)



Recognizing "Elder Brotherness"

3. THEY REDEFINE SIN

They are more distant, but not obviously. The young brother clearly left, became physically distant. The elder brother stayed, but he was personally distant and alienated. They do not see themselves as in need of a savior or as member of a community of sinner in need of a savior.



Recognizing "Elder Brotherness"

4. THEY FEEL SUPERIOR

They believe their lifestyle-cv makes them better than those that spend time with prostitutes. Their safe image is based on looks, elite-ness, smart, hardworking, race, tribe. Their identity comes from competitive comparison, not God, not Jesus, not that they are loved. They are hostile towards those that don't believe the same right doctrine as them.





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Why is this toxic?

- 1: **Creates culture of hate**, because they are only better if others are lower than they are (e.g. classism & racism)
- 2: **Creates an unforgiving spirit**, because they hold things against those that sin differently than them; because they don't see their self-centeredness and the grief they cause to their Father
- 3: **Creates a judgmental culture**, because their spotless record gives them the right to judge and be highly offended.
- 4: **Creates deep insecurity**, because their identity is in their spiritual achievements and their performance not in the truth that they are loved despite their sin.