

**Date:** 21 Apr 2024 | **Speaker:** Ps Ernie Song | **Topic:** The Orphan Spirit | **Scripture:** Luke 15:25-32

## SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

At the end of the sermon discussion, cell members will:

1. Understand what the orphan heart is and identify the spirit of the “Elder Brother” in them.
2. Learn what is brokenness and desire for God to bring them there.

## SERMON SUMMARY

The response of the older brother towards the repentance and celebration of the younger brother revealed the true condition of his heart – he had an orphan spirit. The older brother represented the pharisees (Luke 15:1-2) – despite doing all the rituals and their righteous works, they were distant from the Father and did not embrace His heart for sinners. The older brother also had a transactional relationship with the father. He expected to be rewarded for his dedication and hard work. Thus, the elder brother lived as an orphan in the home. He too was lost.

The Father’s heart is not just for the prodigal, but also for the “Elder Brothers” – those who are self-righteous. The way to overcome a religious spirit is through brokenness (Psalm 51). There is no authentic relationship with the Father if there is no brokenness within us.

## SERMON RECAP

### The Reveal

- When the older brother found out that they were celebrating the younger son’s return and had killed the fattened calf, he became angry and refused to participate in the celebrations (v28).
- He was angry because part of his inheritance was used for the celebration (v27).
- But mainly he was angry with his father.
  - He didn’t enter the house because he disagreed with the father’s decision to welcome back his younger brother.
  - He felt that his father’s treatment towards both of them was unfair (v29).
  - He expressed his anger by using “Look” instead of addressing his father first. It was highly disrespectful (v29).
  - He also termed his younger brother, “this son of yours”, which in effect is disowning his younger brother (v30).
- The response of the elder brother revealed the true condition of his heart:
  - He had a Pharisaic attitude towards sinners – believing himself to be better and more deserving than his younger brother because he remained and worked hard for his father.
  - His relationship with his father was transactional (v29). He expected to be rewarded based on what he has done for his father, his family.
  - We too can have a transactional approach towards God when we expect Him to bless us if we pray enough, do enough good works, take on a lot of activities in church, etc.
  - He was more interested in the father’s things than the father. He had a religious spirit (like a Pharisee).

### The Orphan Heart

“Being saved does not automatically mean feeling secure, loved and accepted as a son or daughter of God. The new birth in Christ makes you a son or daughter of God, but that does not mean you will enter automatically into the full personal experience of that love relationship with Him as Father. When you close your hearts to receive love, you close your hearts to intimacy. We take on an independent, self-reliant attitude. A closed and isolated heart manifests itself with an attitude that says, “If anything is going to get done around here, I’ll have to do it myself.” This results in superficial relationships, and you will begin chasing after counterfeit affections.” – Jack Frost, *Spiritual Slavery to Sonship*

- As a result of having a transactional approach towards the father, the elder brother lived as an orphan in the home. He too was lost and needed to be found.
  - He never mentions “celebrate with the family” but with his friends (v29).
  - We need to be wary of isolation in the family of God. It may actually reveal ourselves to be the older brother – one that approaches relationships transactionally.
- Four signs of an orphan heart:
  - Unforgiveness/Easily Offended
  - High Expectations
  - Rejects Correction/Authority
  - No Deep Relationships

### **The Father’s Heart**

God’s love is not just for the sinners, but also for the self-righteous.

### The Father’s Response

1. The father tried to bring both brothers home.
  - In Middle Eastern culture, this would have been shameful for the Patriarch. For the older brother, it shows that the Patriarch had an un-submissive son.
2. The father broke all societal norms in order to bring both sons home.

### Our Context

1. Many of us have a bit of the elder brother within us. There is a religious spirit / transactional approach towards God. We feel that God owes us.
2. Also like the Elder Brother, our pride dictates that God should needs to serve us – what we think, how we feel, what we want.
  - We have elevated ourselves to the place of God.
  - That is why, most “Elder brothers” find it very difficult to receive discipleship from leaders, or there is a critical spirit (anger) within us when things don’t go according to how we want it to be.

### **The Appropriate Response (Psalm 51)**

To overcome the spirit of the “Elder Brother” within us, brokenness is necessary.

Brokenness causes us to:

1. Remember that we are wretched sinners saved by grace (**Psalm 51:3**)
2. Live in humility – having a posture of openness towards God’s work (**Psalm 51:4**)
3. Realise that our only hope is in God (**Psalm 51:8-12**)

There is no authentic relationship with the Father if there is no brokenness within us. Apart from brokenness, we will not be capable of authentic worship.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### 1. How have you experienced God as a caring Father?

#### Leader's Notes

In Scripture, there are many beautiful descriptions of God as a loving parent, images that invoke God's deep love for His children. This is also beautifully illustrated in the story of The Prodigal Son – which shows the father's agape love for both his sons. The father tried to bring both brothers home, even breaking societal norms to do that.

As we are children of our Heavenly Father, how have you experienced the Father's deep love for you? How can you view Him as your Father, and not just a divine being that is distant and unrelated to us.

#### Transition

Many of us are living as orphans and God is waiting for us to return to Him.

### 2. Study the table at the 'Appendix – Contrast Between the Orphan Heart & the Heart of Sonship' appended below. Which areas of the Orphan Heart do you identify with?

#### Leader's Notes

Everyone has a bit of the Orphan Heart. In the parable of The Prodigal Son, both the older and younger brother have an Orphan's Heart. As you go through the table, reflect honestly on the areas you relate to. Identifying these areas is the first step to brokenness, then to healing and restoration by God. Share with the group.

#### Transition

Let us turn our orphan hearts into hearts of sonship.

### 3. Brokenness is necessary for us to overcome the spirit of the "Elder Brother" within us. How do we embrace brokenness?

#### Leader's Notes

Brokenness is not a bad thing. According to the sermon, there are three characteristics of brokenness.

- i) We must remember that we are wretched sinners saved by grace. Remember how great God's grace has been in our lives.
- ii) Brokenness causes us to live in humility – open to what God wants us to do – not seeing our relationship with Him as transactional.
- iii) Brokenness causes us to realise that we need God's restoration, or we will never be able to experience true joy and peace.

Which of these do you lack? Take practical steps to change our mindsets and to see how God has always been working in our lives. He has never, and will never, abandon us.

Perhaps you could record down daily all the blessings and providence that you see in your life. You can also read Scripture to learn more about His character and get to know your Father more. Talk to Him and learn to listen for His replies through the Holy Spirit. There are many other ways you can be surrendered to Him and be broken.

#### Closing

Apart from brokenness, there can be no authentic worship of God.

## Appendix – Contrast Between the Orphan Heart & the Heart of Sonship

Extracted from “Spiritual Slavery to Sonship” by Jack Frost

Area	Orphan Heart	Heart of Sonship
<b>Image of God</b>	Master	Father
<b>Dependency</b>	Independent/Self-Reliant	Interdependent / Acknowledge Need
<b>Theology</b>	Live by the law	Live by the law of love
<b>Security</b>	Insecure/lack of peace	Rest and Peace
<b>Need for Approval</b>	Strive for the praise, approval, and acceptance of people	Totally accepted in God’s love and justified by grace
<b>Motive for Service</b>	A need for personal achievement as you seek to impress God and others, or no motivation to serve at all	Service that is motivated by a deep gratitude for being unconditionally loved and accepted by God
<b>Motive Behind Christian Disciplines</b>	Duty and earning God’s favour or no motivation at all	Pleasure and delight
<b>Motivation for Purity</b>	“Must” be holy to have God’s favour, thus increasing a sense of shame of guilt	“Want to” be holy; do not want anything to hinder intimate relationship with God
<b>Self-Image</b>	Self-rejection from comparing yourself to others	Positive and affirmed because you know you have such value to God
<b>Source of Comfort</b>	Seek comfort in counterfeit affections: addictions, compulsions, escapism, busyness, hyper-religious activity.	Seek times of quietness and solitude to rest in the Father’s presence and love.
<b>Peer Relationships</b>	Competition, rivalry and jealousy towards other’s success and position	Humility and unity as you value others and are able to rejoice in their blessings and success.
<b>Handling Others’ Faults</b>	Accusation and exposure in order to make yourself look good by making others look bad	Love covers as you seek to restore others in the spirit of love and gentleness
<b>View of Authority</b>	See authority as a source of pain; distrustful toward them and lack a heart attitude of submission.	Respectful, honouring: you see them as ministers of God for good in your life.
<b>View of Admonition</b>	Difficulty receiving admonition; you must be right so you easily get your feelings hurt and close your spirit to discipline.	See the receiving of admonition as a blessing and need in your life so that your faults and weaknesses are exposed and put to death.
<b>Expression of Love</b>	Guarded and conditional; based upon others’ performance as you seek to get your own needs met.	Open, patient, and affectionate as you lay your life and agendas down in order to meet the needs of others.
<b>Sense of God’s Presence</b>	Conditional and Distant	Close and Intimate
<b>Condition</b>	Bondage	Liberty
<b>Position</b>	Feel like a servant/slave	Feel like a son/daughter
<b>Vision</b>	Spiritual ambition; the earnest desire for some spiritual achievement and distinction and the willingness to strive for it; a desire to be seen and counted among the mature	To daily experience the Father’s unconditional love and acceptance and then be sent as a representative of His love to family and others.
<b>Future</b>	Fight for what you can get!	Sonship releases your inheritance!

Consider dividing the group into micro-groups for a deeper time of sharing as well as praying for the following items:

## 1. Sermon Application

- Pray for the spirit of the orphan to be broken in us.
- Pray for us to be broken so that we can truly worship God.
- Pray for our family members and friends, especially for those who have yet to know Him.
- To commit 2024 to God and allow Him to work in us and through us as we continue to seek Him.

## 2. RiverLife

- Pray for our church, that as we enter 2024, we will determine to grow into Christlikeness.

## 3. World

- Continue to pray for the various nations that are at war:
  - a. Russia and Ukraine
  - b. Myanmar (Civil War) – Pray for the situation where military service was made compulsory for man and woman between the ages of 18 and 35.
  - c. Israel & Hamas
- Continue to pray for countries that have an escalated conflict situation:
  - a. Japan, China and the Philippines in the South China Sea
  - b. North & South Korea
- Continue to pray for countries recovering from recent natural disasters:
  - a. Japan (Earthquake)
  - b. Iceland (Volcanic Eruption)
- Pray for Singapore
  - a. Pray for the family of the 2 victims that were killed in a road accident at Tampines
  - b. Pray for a smooth transition from PM Lee to incoming PM Lawrence Wong
  - c. Pray for a stability in the cost of living in Singapore
- Other Global Issues
  - a. Pray for the situation in Malaysia where 2 helicopters collided resulting in 10 deaths
  - b. Pray for Dubai as it faces various storms
  - c. Pray for the H5N1 Bird flu that has infected poultry

## 4. Opportunities for Outreach

- Ask the Lord to bless us as we step out to reach a pre-believer.
- Ask the Lord to grant you opportunities to reach out to a non-believing loved one, friend, or colleague this week as we seek to mature in Christlikeness.

1. **RiverLife Missions.** Mission trip schedule for 2024 is out now on our Missions website! Discover how you can sow into the nations this year: [rlc.sg/missions](https://rlc.sg/missions)
2. **RiverLife Kindergarten Open House & Exhibition 2024.** Sat, 18 May 10am-12pm RiverLife Church. You're invited to view the artworks of our students and find out more about RiverLife Kindergarten.
3. **Found: A Journey In Sonship (New Sermon Series). 14 Apr-26 May.** As disciples of Christ, God calls us His sons and daughters – loved, accepted, and provided for. We sometimes wander from the presence of our Father, choosing to live apart from Him. As we process what God has spoken to us during our recent season of prayer & fasting, we want to respond by returning to the Father's love once again.

Post-Service Sessions (11.30am-1pm in Worship Centre)

**a. Sun, 12 May How Can I Hear My Heavenly Father?**

*Facilitated by Rev Pat Owyang* No registration is required for the post-service sessions.

Restoring The Foundations (RTF)

- The RTF ministry in RiverLife undergirds the prayer ministry of our church.
  - Its approach for healing and restoration aims to help the receiver walk out his/her freedom and restoration through the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and in partnership with the Holy Spirit. More information can be found at [www.RestoringTheFoundations.org](https://www.RestoringTheFoundations.org).
  - Find out more at the RTF booth on Sundays, 28 Apr & 5 May.
4. **The Parents Gathering. 27 Apr, 2.30pm-6pm. Grace Chapel.** This platform is designed to help parents of various life-stages to grow in their roles as parents, as well as support one another in their parenting journey. Each quarterly gathering will include short teachings, group connection time, refreshments, as well as parents processing time.
    - No fees required
    - Closing Date: 24 April 2024
    - Registration: [rlc.sg/pg](https://rlc.sg/pg)
  5. **SuperLife Camp 2024: Wisdom for Living (P1-P6).** Thu-Sat, 30 May-1 Jun. RiverLife Church
    - Camp Schedule
      - Thu & Fri, 30 & 31 May | 9am-6pm | Children Only
      - Sat, 1 Jun | 9am-2pm | Children & Parents
    - Parents are invited to join us on Sat, 1 Jun.
      - 9am to 12pm: Session with The Treasure Box
      - Parents and their children will hear a special message for families, and work together to create their very own Family Mosaic Coaster.
      - 12pm to 2pm: Lunch Celebration
    - Cost
      - 7-21 Apr (Early Bird): \$60 per child (22 Apr onwards: \$70)
      - Additional Costs for Family Session on Sat, 1 Jun: \$15/parent (for lunch); and \$10/family (for family mosaic coaster) or \$4.50/child (for individual mosaic coaster if parents are not coming)
    - Registration & More Details: [rlc.sg/slcamp2024](https://rlc.sg/slcamp2024)
  6. **MegaLife Camp 2024. Thu-Sun, 13-16 Jun. Thistle Hotel, Johor Bahru. For Youths Aged 13-18.** If you are a parent of a teen or know someone who's a teen, invite them for our annual Youth camp! Registration opens first week of April and more details will be shared.
    - Early Bird (6-15 Apr): \$280

# Announcements

- Regular (16-22 Apr): \$320
7. **Young Adults Camp 2024 - Commune: As One** (For Young Adults in their 20s). Join us this year at Commune: As One, where we will discover what Jesus meant when he prayed for us to be “One”. Let us come together to encounter God’s love in the context of family as we build deeper relationships with one another!
- Location: Fri-Sun, 5-7 Jul, Holiday Villa Johor Bahru
  - Cost
    - 3 Days 2 Nights: Regular: \$275, Student/NSF: \$225
    - 2 Days 1 Night: Regular: \$210, Student/NSF: \$170
  - More Details & Registration: [rlc.sg/yacamp2024](https://rlc.sg/yacamp2024), Enquiries (Telegram): @YAcommunebot
8. **Sustaining the Fire.** As our 21-day season of prayer & fasting comes to a close, we thank God for reviving us individually and collectively. It is needful for us to go on walking closely with the Lord and be faithful stewards of the work that has been done in us. We can continue this journey by spending time with God daily using this recommended 21-day devotional:
- 21 Days to Overflow takes readers on a 3-week journey of emptying themselves of self, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and living out an overflowing spirit-filled life. Start 21-day devotional: [On YouVersion Bible App](#) | [PDF](#)
- Our Revive Us, Lord website has been updated with resources to help you grow in these four aspects – spiritually, relationally, physically & missionally.
- For more information: [rlc.sg/21days](https://rlc.sg/21days)
9. **Family Life Portal.**
- Our Family Life ministry strengthens relationships within the family so that they are reflective of who God is – married couples loving and serving each other, parents discipling their children in the ways of God, grandparents inspiring the generations by their faith and actions, and the singles living secure and fruitful lives for God’s kingdom! RiverLife's Family Life portal is an online platform that contains this year's calendar of Family Life initiatives as well as a wide range of resources for various life stages.
  - Access the portal: [rlc.sg/familylife](https://rlc.sg/familylife) or [www.riverlife.org.sg](https://www.riverlife.org.sg) (Under the “Resources” tab)

- YA Gatherings (For Young Adults in their 20s). First Saturday Every Month, 5pm-8.30pm Victory Chapel (Level 1).**  
The YA Gathering is a space where young adults can get together to connect and build community. This gathering is made up of two components – Community Conversations & Communal Dinner – both with a focus on relationship building and life conversations. If you are interested in joining the gatherings and would like to find out more, connect with us on our Telegram Channel: [rlc.sg/ya](https://t.me/rlc.sg/ya).

Gathering Dates: 4 May, 1 Jun, 3 Aug, 7 Sep, 5 Oct, 2 Nov

YA Camp: 5-7 Jul

Christmas Outreach: 14 Dec

- RiverLife Prayer Meetings.**

- *RLC Prayer Room.* Tue, 8-9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Livestream: [rlc.sg/rpr-watch](https://t.me/rlc.sg/rpr-watch))
- *Revive Nights.* Wed, 8pm – 9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Livestream: [rlc.sg/revivenights](https://t.me/rlc.sg/revivenights))

We encourage you to set aside every Wednesday for a time of fasting.

- Quarterly Calendar for Key English Adult Congregation Events**

*\*Some dates are tentative and subjected to change. Stay updated via our digital bulletin and our social media channels for the latest information.*

Quarter 2	Quarter 3
<p><u>April</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 06 Apr – YA Gathering</li> <li>• 06 Apr to 22 Jun – Alpha #1</li> <li>• 07 Apr – Dating Couples Briefing #1</li> <li>• 13 Apr – Caleb Ministry Gathering</li> <li>• 27 Apr – The Parent’s Gathering</li> </ul> <p><u>May</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 04 May – YA Gathering</li> <li>• 17 to 18 May – Leaders Advance (Non-Stay In)</li> <li>• 30 May to 01 Jun – SuperLife Camp</li> </ul> <p><u>June</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2, 23, 30 Jun – Marriage Preparation Course #2</li> <li>• 08 Jun – Caleb Ministry Gathering, Water Baptism Class #2</li> <li>• 09 Jun – RiverLife AGM</li> <li>• 13 to 16 Jun – Youth Camp</li> <li>• 27 Jun – Fun Day (Youth)</li> <li>• 29 Jun – Parents Gathering #2</li> </ul>	<p><u>July</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 to 7 Jul – YA Camp</li> <li>• 13 Jul – Caleb Ministry</li> <li>• 14 Jul – Dating Couples Briefing #2</li> <li>• 21 Jul – EA Welcome Lunch</li> <li>• 28 Jul – Baptism Service #2</li> </ul> <p><u>August</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 03 Aug – YA Gathering</li> <li>• 03 Aug to 3 Oct – Alpha Run #2</li> <li>• 04 Aug – Q3 Leaders Huddle</li> <li>• 17 Aug – Parents Gathering #3</li> <li>• 24 to 25 Aug – RLC 33<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Weekend, RTF (Round Robin)</li> </ul> <p><u>September</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 07 Sep – YA Gathering</li> <li>• 01 to 15 Sep – Marriage Preparation Course #3</li> <li>• 01 to 29 Sep – SPYces</li> <li>• 06 to 15 Sep – Equipping #2: Deuteronomy</li> <li>• 14 Sep – Caleb Ministry Gathering</li> <li>• 22 Sep – EA Mid-Autumn Lunch Outreach</li> </ul>



## Quarter 4

### October

- 05 Oct – YA Gathering, Water Baptism Class #3
- 06 to 20 – Marriage Preparation Course #3
- 12 Oct – Caleb Ministry Gathering
- 13 Oct – Discipleship @ Home for Pre-School Parents (Parents Equipping)
- 16 to 23 Oct – Feast of the Tabernacles
- 19 Oct – Fun Day (Youth)
- 26 Oct – Local Outreach (Youth)

### November

- 02 Nov – YA Gathering
- 7 to 9 Nov – Ministry Orientation Camp for Sec 1s (Youth)
- 10 Nov – Discipleship @ Home for Primary School Parents (Parents Equipping)
- 10 Nov – Water Baptism Service #3
- 23-25 Nov – Marriage Retreat

### December

- 14 Dec – YA Christmas Outreach, Caleb Ministry Gathering
- 19 to 21 Dec – Youth Conference
- 21-22 Dec – Christmas Outreach Weekend
- 28 Dec – Parents Gathering #4

# Ministry & Opportunities



## 1. The 9M Ministry.

This ministry provides prayer support for expectant mothers on their 9-month journey of pregnancy. Sisters-in-Christ who are fellow RiverLifers are assigned as Prayer Buddies to walk alongside mums who sign up to receive prayer support.

- Receive Prayer Support: [rlc.sg/9m](https://rlc.sg/9m)
- Provide Prayer Support: [rlc.sg/serve](https://rlc.sg/serve)

## 2. Missions Microsite.

Discover how you can go, give and pray for the nations. Let's make a difference in the nations together! For more information, visit [rlc.sg/missions](https://rlc.sg/missions).

## 3. RiverLife Cares Opportunities.

Enquiries/Registration: [rlc.sg/serve-rlcar](https://rlc.sg/serve-rlcar)

## 4. Prayer Ministry.

If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (eg. fear, worry, etc), you can sign up for RiverLife's RTF ministry: [rlc.sg/rtf](https://rlc.sg/rtf)

## 1. Bible Reading Plan.

The church has provided 3 undated Bible Reading plans that will serve as a resource for those who wish to follow a Bible Reading plan. Link: [rlc.sg/brp](http://rlc.sg/brp)

- 2 Year Chronological Bible Reading Plan.
- 3 Year Bible Reading Schedule (Alternating readings between Old and New Testament passages)
- Redemptive Historical Bible Reading Plan (At your own pace, focusing on the redemption story)

## 2. RiverLife Podcast.

The RiverLife Podcast allows you to listen to RiverLife content anytime, anywhere! The link to go to is [rlc.sg/podcast](http://rlc.sg/podcast) or simply search 'The RiverLife Podcast' on Spotify.

## 3. Spiritual Growth Resources.

We have put together a curated list of recommended resources for the RiverLife family. These resources (books, articles, podcasts and videos) are recommendations for the various spiritual growth stages as you seek to grow deeper in the River of God this year. You can access them at [rlc.sg/resource](http://rlc.sg/resource). This list will be continually populated throughout the year.

## 4. Testimony.

If you have a testimony to share, you can write to us at [stories@riverlife.org.sg](mailto:stories@riverlife.org.sg) to share with us your testimony as an encouragement to others.

## 5. Stay Connected with RLC.

Follow us to stay updated on latest church news and happenings.

WhatsApp Broadcast: [rlc.sg/wachannelinvite](http://rlc.sg/wachannelinvite)

Telegram Channel: [t.me/RiverLifeChurch](https://t.me/RiverLifeChurch)

Facebook & Instagram: [@riverlifechurchsg](https://www.instagram.com/riverlifechurchsg)

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