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Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

Siblings

“Move over!”

“Stop touching me!”

“You took the last cookie! That’s not fair!”

“I hate you, you big jerk!”

“Mom always treats you better!”

“Na-aahhhh. He’s lying!”

“Get outta my room!”

The Bible has plenty to say about one’s relationship to his children, and his parents, and even his grandparents. But, does the Bible say anything about one’s relationship to his brothers and sisters?

I have a sneaking suspicion that in many of our homes, we hear less, “I love and appreciate you, my dear sweet brothers and sisters,” and more of the sorts of comments written above. At least, while we are still living there. Later, when we’ve grown up, we often have a greater appreciation for our siblings.

The Bible doesn’t say that much directly about the relationship of brothers and sisters, but there are several passages where we can see the blessings, and problems, associated with growing up among siblings.

God has designed the human family to include, in most circumstances, brothers and sisters. Human beings are not like spiders or fish, whose young scatter far and wide as soon as their eggs hatch, never knowing their own blood relatives. Instead, God intends that we experience life in a household before entering the world to start our own families.

God intends the relationship of brothers and sisters in a family to be full of support and love. It is no accident that God chooses a household of brothers and sisters as a metaphor to describe the relationship of Christians in the church of Christ. We could be called “members,” or “participants,” or “adherents” or some other term less inspirational, but most often in the Scriptures we are called “brethren” to emphasize our love for one another. Just as we learn about our heavenly Father from our earthly father, we learn about our spiritual brethren from our physical brethren. We can say, “Let the love of the brethren continue” (Heb. 13:1), because we first know the love of a physical family under one roof.

Brothers and sisters love and help one another. I am reminded of Joseph, who forgave his siblings and brought them into Egypt so that he could feed and protect them (Gen. 45:10–20).

I am reminded of Miriam in Exodus 2, who courageously watched to see what would become of her infant brother Moses, floating in the reeds on the bank of the Nile. When he was found by Pharaoh’s daughter, she took a risk and spoke up (knowing that all Hebrew children were supposed to be executed) and offered to find a wet nurse for the infant. Because of Miriam’s courage, Moses was saved, and was raised by his own mother to become the savior of Israel.

I am reminded of the sons of Zebedee, James and John (Matthew 4:18–22, 10:2–3). They worked together in the family fishing business, and they decided together to drop their nets and follow Jesus. Imagine how John must have felt when Herod had James put to death with a sword (Acts 12:2).

I am reminded of Andrew and Peter. Of course, Peter is the one who gets all the attention, but his brother Andrew was the first to believe in

Jesus, and “found first his own brother ... [and] brought him to Jesus” (John 1:40–42).

In many families, the sibling relationship is sacred, so that even criminals will always find time to support their brothers. As Al Pacino’s character said in *The Godfather*, “You *never* turn your back on your family.” Which is not too far from James’ statement about our spiritual brethren, “Do not speak against one another, brethren” (James 4:11). Our love is so deep, that if necessary, “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

True story: a friend of mine was once hiking through Arkansas, and stopped at a gas station for a snack and a drink. He got into a conversation with a man in a truck who was pumping gas. When the man learned that they shared the same last name, he insisted that he come to his home, get clean, eat a hot meal, and sleep in a comfortable bed. He had never met him, but supposedly he was family!

As odd as that sounds to us, we have an automatic love for those who are in Christ. Paul says, “as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another, for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia” (1 Thess. 2:9–10). The Thessalonian Christians were sending money to help those they had never met, simply because they were brethren.

Of course, the Bible records some instances of strife, too. Cain killed his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8). Absalom killed his half-brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13:24–39). There was enmity between Jacob and Esau that continued forever in the families of Israel and Edom (Gen. 25:19–34). But these problems are mentioned in the text because it’s all the worse when siblings come to blows. And it’s never a good thing when siblings cooperate for evil purposes, like Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1–3) and Hophni and Phineas (1 Sam. 2:12–17).

So, if I may draw some conclusions, we can clearly say that God intends our relationship to our siblings to be full of love and support. In reality, we sometimes get caught up in bickering and fighting. There are plenty of occasions for strife, since two or more people are living in

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