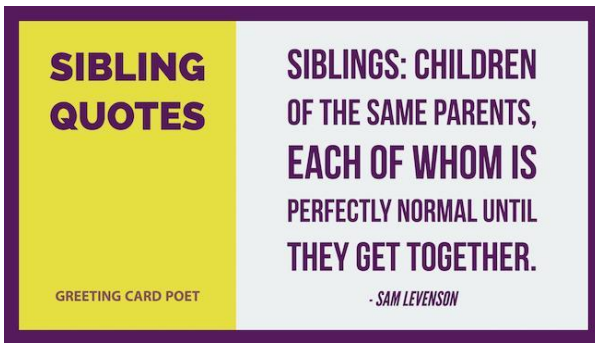


Sam Levenson defines the word siblings:



A Brother Like That

Paul received an automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve when Paul came out of his office, a young, roguish-looking kid was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. "Is this your car, Mister?" the boy asked.

Paul nodded. "My brother gave it to me for Christmas." The boy was astounded. "You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing? Boy, I wish..."

Paul knew what the boy was going to wish – for a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way to his heels.

"I wish that I could be a brother like that."

Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, then impulsively he responded, "Would you like to go for a ride in my new car?"

"Oh yes, I'd love that!"

After a short ride, the boy turned with his eyes aglow and said, "Mister, would you mind driving in front of my house?"

Paul smiled a little. Again, he thought he knew what the lad wanted...to show his neighbors that he was riding in a big, new automobile. But he was wrong again. "Will you stop at those two steps?" the boy asked.

The boy ran up the steps. In a little while, Paul heard him coming back, but moving quite slowly. The lad was carrying his younger, handicapped brother. The boy sat his brother down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car.

"There she is, buddy, just like I told you! His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn't cost him a cent. And someday I'm gonna give you one just like it...then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been trying to tell you about."

Paul got out of the car and lifted the younger child to the front seat. The shining-eyed older brother climbed in beside the small child and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.

Oh, what a sweet thing it is when siblings love each other!

Psalm 133:1

Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!

Oh, how important it is that we maintain healthy, loving relationships with our siblings.

We've been talking about the 12 Apostles and specifically about 2 sets of brothers: Peter and Andrew & James and John

Which brings up this issue Sibling Relationships.

When we think of

Sibling _____, the next word we think of is often rivalry

The 1st siblings in history ... Cane and Abel were rivals ... so much so that one killed the other. The 1st sibling rivalry resulted in the 1st murder.

You can imagine Eve saying: If I can just keep them from killing each other when they're young, they're going to be great friends.

Many of us as adults think about the relationships we have with our brothers and sisters, and we hope for better for our kids.

We want our kids to be good friends with each other...

Some homeschool families have cited this as one of the key reasons they chose homeschooling. They were afraid that dividing kids up by age groups (K, 1, 2, 3...) in public or private school would put division between our kids.

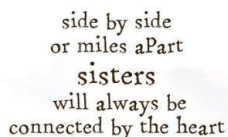
I'm not sure if there's truth in that or not.

I've seen sibling rivalry amongst kids who go to school, and I've seen it amongst kids who are homeschooled.

Elsa and Anna have to be 2 of the most famous siblings in all of movie making history:

- One is cold and responsible
- The other is warm and fun-loving
- They have a disagreement that tears them apart
- But they come back together and become the best of friends

The relationship between siblings is very important! One greeting card says...



side by side
or miles aPart
sisters
will always be
connected by the heart

Goal – 2 Things This Morning

1. Look at the examples of siblings in the Bible
2. Talk about how we can have good relationships with our brother or sister.

Let's talk about some of the Siblings in the Bible

- **Cane and Abel**: God accepted Ables offering, but not Cane's. Cane was jealous of his brother, so he killed Able.
- **Jacob and Esau**: Jacob and Esau were at odds with each other even when they were in the womb. They were as different as oil and water, as night and day. One was a manly hunter. One stayed home with mama. Jacob deceived Esau and stole his birthright. Esau determined that he would kill Jacob, so Jacob ran for his life.

Years later, the two brothers meet up, and Jacob is concerned that Esau is actually going to kill him.

Genesis 32:11

Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.

Jacob prays: God, don't let him kill me!

Genesis 33:4

Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

Esau weeps because he's so happy to see his brother.

- **Rachel and Leah**: Jacob's two wives. Their father, Laban, set their relationship up for disaster when he married both of them to the same man. They had to compete for their husband's love.
- Rachel had the love of her husband, but Leah had the babies.

In Genesis 30, **Rachel** says to Jacob: "**Give me children, or I shall die!**" It's quite ironic, because the moment she does have children, she dies.

But before that, Rachel asks an honest question of her sister: **Can I have some of your son's mandrakes?**

The **mandrake was a root** that was thought to help women have babies. Rachel wanted babies. But Leah didn't want Rachel to have more babies so she didn't want to give mandrakes to Rachel.

Genesis 30:15, Leah responds...

"Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?"

Hear the bitterness and rivalry in Leah's response: **You stole my husband**. Will you have my son's mandrakes as well.

Joseph and his siblings (one of the worst sibling stories): Joseph is the favorite. He gets the coat of many colors and shares dreams about his family bowing down to him. So, the brothers hate Joseph so much they want to kill him, but change their minds and decide to sell him as a slave instead. Let's not kill him. Let's make some money off him.

Later Joseph becomes a ruler in Egypt. And his siblings come begging to Egypt for food. Joseph, gives them food and reveals to them that he is there brother. Which scares the heck out of them! They're afraid he'll hurt them.

But instead, Joseph weeps because he's so happy to see his brothers.

He invites them and all their families to come to Egypt and live in Goshen, on the best land in Egypt.

It seems like there is a complete restoration of the relationship between the brothers...until Jacob dies.

When Jacob dies, the brothers are afraid that Joseph will use that as an opportunity to get back at them and punish them for what they did to him.

But Joseph loves his brothers. He has forgiven his brothers, and has come to see what they did as part of God's good plan.

Joseph says in **Genesis 50:20**

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Next... There's **Moses, Aaron and Miriam**: Miriam saves Moses as a baby. Aaron speaks for Moses before Pharaoh. They seem like loving siblings.

Until **Numbers 12**... where Aaron and Miriam start speaking against Moses and trying to get people to turn against their brother. Apparently, they don't like taking orders from their **little brother**. Later, Aaron decides to build a golden calf and Moses gets ticked.

Then... There's **David and his brothers**. All the brothers get passed over and the Prophet Samuel chooses the youngest brother – David – to be the next king.

- David takes food to his brothers who are soldiers out at the battle front. David hears Goliath defy the armies of God, and David is upset. God's honor is on the line.
- David's oldest brother takes this as an opportunity to insult David.

1 Samuel 17:28

²⁸Eliab [David's] eldest brother... [His] anger was kindled against David, and he said, "**Why have** you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle."

Sibling relationships can be challenging.

As mentioned... There are those **2 sets of brothers** amongst the 12 Apostles:

- **Peter and Andrew**
- James and John
- I'm sure there was some sibling rivalry, but there is no hint of it in the scriptures. These brothers were close. They lived together. They worked together in the fishing business. And, together they chose to follow Jesus.
- I'm sure they loved each other deeply.
- **James and John** seem to do almost everything together. James, the older brother, is never mentioned in scripture without also mentioning his younger brother, John. That was partly to distinguish him from the other James, but also partly because they seemed to do pretty much everything together.

Then, there were the iconic sisters, **Mary and Martha**.

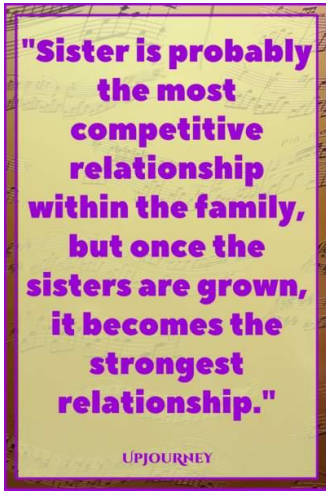
- One was task-oriented. One was people-oriented.
- Martha is the worker bee. She gets things done.
- Mary is the socializer. She just wants to sit at Jesus feet.
- **Martha complains** to Jesus:

Luke 10:40

"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."

I'm doing all the work. And, she's not helping. Oh, how many times have I had one of my daughters say the same thing to me.

"I'm cleaning up all the toys all by myself, and she's just playing."



Jesus himself had siblings: James, Joseph, Simon and Judas. He also had some sisters. Jesus' siblings did not believe him. They didn't become followers of Jesus until after the resurrection. Jesus used them once as an illustration:

Matthew 12:46-50 it says

While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.' He replied to him, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'

His point was that spiritual family is more important than physical family.

Some of us have brothers and sisters who are not followers of Christ. Who want nothing to do with our Jesus. That's a sad thing, and sometimes we find it extra difficult to be close to these brothers and sisters.

Also... of course we have the story of **the prodigal son** and his older brother. – The good kid and the bad kid. The prodigal leaves his father's house to go waste his inheritance on sinful living. He ends up eating with the pigs. He comes home, and his father accepts him, but his brother does not. --- **His brother WILL NOT.**

The father welcomes the prodigal home, but his older brother won't even go to the party to celebrate the return of his brother.

I've lived that story. I am the older brother. My little brother was the black sheep, and I liked it that way. I was the good kid. He was the bad kid.

And, when my brother came to Christ, he started walking in the ways of the Lord. And, I didn't know what to do about it. I felt like he was stealing my spot.

Intellectually, I told myself: "**Joseph is serving the Lord.** He's come home like the prodigal son. This is a good thing!"

I knew that was true, but there was still part of me that missed Joseph being the black sheep of the family.

There's something about sibling relationships that reduces each of us to children.

I remember years ago talking to **my grandpa**. His older brother always beat him up. But time passed and he grew.

And, my grandpa told me the story like it was yesterday. He said with pride, "One day, I decided not anymore. I punched back and I punched hard. And, I laid my brother out on the ground. He never beat me up again after that day."

There's **often** this desire in younger siblings to conquer and to overcome their big brother or big sister.

What's your family situation like?

Kids, some of you have siblings. And, sometimes your brother or sister gets **on your nerves**.

- Maybe you're the **older sibling** and you just want a break from your little sister or your little brother.
- Maybe you're the **younger sibling** and you just want to be included. Why won't big sister play with me?
- Or, maybe you're an **only child**. And, you don't get why these brothers and sisters can't get along. You wish you had a brother. You wish you had a sister. But you don't.

Or maybe you're a **parent**. And, you so badly want your kids to get along. You want them to be friends.

- You think: I hope my kids get along better than I get along with my sister or my brother.
- You want your kids united. I think that's a godly desire

In Christ, we are all brothers and sisters, and God desperately wants us to get along.

This is what **Psalm 133** is all about. I'll read you the entire chapter (it's only 3 verses):

¹ Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!

² It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!

³ It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing,
life forevermore.

There in the place of unity between brothers, God commands a blessing! Oh, how important unity is.

So kids... **How can you build good relationships with your siblings?**

Parents, how can you **help your kids** build strong, loving relationships that will last a lifetime?

1. Recognize that we are all sinners.

Romans 3:10

There is none righteous, no not one.

One of the reasons you get so frustrated with your sister is because you forget that you're a sinner too.

You forget that sometimes you're **NOT** the easiest person to get along with either. Sometimes you are **NOT** so easy to like.

As sinners, we are going to sin against our brothers and sisters, and they are going to sin against us. So...

2. Give each other a lot of grace.

God has given us grace, so we should give grace to our brother and our sister.

God has forgiven our sins, so we also should forgive the sins that our sister commits against us.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

We forgive because we are forgiven. There is **NO** place for holding grudges in the body of Christ.

You have been forgiven much. You're sin against God is so much greater than your brother's sin against you. So forgive!

The gospel is powerful medicine for healing the relationships between siblings.

3. Recognize that the God-intended norm is for brothers and sisters to love each other very deeply.

Christians are supposed to love each other like family, like brothers and sisters. Your sibling relationships were given to you to help you understand how the body of Christ is to love each other.

Romans 12:10

Love one another with brotherly affection.

Love your fellow Christians the way you already love your sister or your brother. Paul says in...

Philippians 4:1

My brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown.

In the church, we call each other by these very affectionate terms... Brother, Sister

4. Don't think that you don't love each other because you fight sometimes.

Brothers and sisters fight. So what!

You know, husbands and wives fight sometimes too. But they still love each other.

Carolyn and I are both firstborns. Sometimes we have disagreements.

But we deeply love each other! We are committed to each other. Even though we hurt each other's feelings sometimes, that's not going to change. Carolyn is very precious to me.

The sibling relationship is a bit like a marriage relationship. It's a very close, intimate relationship.

And, because you're so close. Because you spend so much time together. And because you love each other so much, sometimes you're going to hurt each others' feelings.

But in the those moments when you're upset with your sister...

5. Think about how much you'd miss your brother or sister if they were gone.

If you sat down to dinner tonight and you looked at the chair where your sister normally sits and it was empty. She was gone. And, you knew you could never play together again. You couldn't play checkers. Or tell her about that boy at school who was mean to you. You couldn't tell her the new joke that you learned today.

She's gone. All the crazy things she did. All the times she got on your nerves. **You wish** you could have them all back again.

Oh, what you'd give to just have a few more minutes with your sister.

Don't forget how much you love each other. Don't forget how much you'd miss her if she were gone.

6. Realize that you are commanded to love your brother and sister.

We are commanded to love our enemies. How much more so our brothers and sisters.

1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

God wants you to love your brother. He wants you to love your sister. That's part of what it means to be a Christian.

God places a high value on being loyal to family and loving your siblings.

You remember Isaac had 2 sons: Jacob and Esau. They were brothers, and God wanted them to love each other. And, he wanted their descendants to love each other.

Deuteronomy 23:7 God says to Israel...

You shall not hate an Edomite, for he is your brother.

You're related. So you need to treat each other well.

1 Timothy 5:8

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

God cares about family. He wants us to look after each other.

God said to Cane: Where is your brother?

Cane's famous reply: Am I my brother's keeper?

Do I need to be watching out for him? Do I need to take care of him?

To which want to scream: YES! Because he's your brother!

Yes, you are your brother's keeper. You are your sister's keeper. You're supposed to look out for each other.

That's what sisters do. That's what brothers do.

You're family! And, that's important to God!

7. Look for ways to serve your sister or your brother.

Let your brother go first in the game.

Give your sister the best seat at the table.

Let her get ice cream before you.

Luke 6:31

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

How do you want your sister to treat you? Treat her that way.

Let your brother play with your toy even when you want to play with it.

Jesus is our savior, but he is also our older brother. And, he washes the feet of his disciples.

Look for ways that you can serve your brother. Treat your sister like she's more important than you.

8. Live at peace with each other.

Stop fighting. Stop arguing. Stop trying to be first.

Stop being so particular.

James 1:19

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Be slow to anger.

- You say: I don't get angry. I just get frustrated. Well, **stop it!**
- I don't get angry: But Sometimes things bug me. **Stop it!** Stop getting bugged so easily.
- Sometimes, things get on my nerves. **Stop it!**

We get upset so quickly. So easily. If everything doesn't go according to our plan.

- It's just that I like things a certain way.
- Yeah? – And what happens when things aren't that certain way?
- Well, then I get a little frustrated. – **Stop it!**

We have so many excuses for our anger... and our unkind words. And our harsh tones.

- So many excuses for giving someone else the cold shoulder or the silent treatment.
- Be gentle and kind and slow to anger.

You're thinking: **I'm sure glad my spouse** is hearing this.

- I get it. I'm so glad Carolyn is here today.
- No no no.

- I want you to think: I'm sure glad I'm hearing this because I could be a whole lot nicer to my spouse, my children, my brother, my sister.

Romans 12:18

Live at peace with everyone.

Avoid arguments and conflict. Be a peacemaker when disagreements rise up in your family.

Love your siblings. Be a great brother. Be a great sister.

League of their own

Is a story about baseball. It's a story about women. But it's also very much a story about sisters and their relationship. Dottie and Kit play baseball on the same team... and later play on opposing teams. They're both good, but the older sister, Dottie, is a little better. And the younger sister, Kit, always feels like she's in the shadow of her big sister who gets all the praise.

In the final game, the sisters go head to head against each other. In the bottom of the 9th with 2 outs, Kit hits what looks like its going to be an in the park home run. Dottie is playing catcher. Kit is rounding 3rd base and heading home as the throw comes in. Dottie, Kit and the ball meet up at home plate in a flurry of dust. Big sister drops the ball. She plays it off as an accident, but you know. You know why she did it.

Because she loved her little sister. And, she couldn't bear to tag her out. She couldn't bare to steal the spotlight one more time from her little sister.

After that, big sister dropped out of baseball, so that all the attention and praise could go to her little sister.

Psalm 133:1

Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!

Our relationships with our sisters and brothers are worth some sacrifice. Worth sacrificial love.

Isn't that the kind of love that Jesus, our older brother, gives to us!

Jesus said with his life: I'll take the fall for you. I'll go to the cross. I'll sacrifice my life, so you can live!