

Brotherly Kindness



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The hardest aspect of Christianity is living it to those who are the closest to us. It is easy to drop off a check to an organization that helps the poor. Giving a couple of dollars to a stranger in need is not too hard either. Passing out clothes, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and those in prison, not much of a problem. Maybe a bit inconvenient, but we can do it. But when it comes to your brother or sister in Christ, how hard it is.

We go to church and bring our gifts; more to be seen by men than to be loved by God. Jesus said, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:23, 24.

This is so hard to do. Pride, ego and selfishness always want to be “right”. Lucifer wanted to be right. He wanted to be first. He

wanted to lift himself up to be like God. “I will,” “I will,” “I will” were the words of his mouth. Each “I will” was a desire to be like the power of God.

The problem is not in the “I will”, but in the “I will” **what?** Jesus came and said, I will be lifted up. I will draw all men unto Me. I will come that they may have life. Same “I will”, but different ending. Lucifer wanted power, Jesus wanted service. Jesus wanted to redeem us. I will give, I will bless, I will love and I will die. We need to be like Jesus. We need to keep our eyes on the right “I will”. Not the “I” of selfishness, but the humble “I” of giving and service.

“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with action and in truth.” 1 John 3:18. The hardest place to practice this is in the family. Spouse to spouse, parents to children, friend to friend, sibling to sibling. Living in close proximity to others can try the faith. We see too easily the faults of those we live with. It is so easy to compare our Christian walk with those around us.

Yet it is to those closest to us that we need to demonstrate true Christianity. It is in the home that we must let the light of God’s love radiate forth. In this prison ministry, I talk with inmates who can relate to this problem. Bunked hundreds to a room with about 48 inches of space between bunks, it is easy to get irritated. When you are trying to sleep or rest, and others are bumping, wiggling and shaking your bunk, it is easy to lose the temper. Noise all hours of the day and night. Radios playing and people talking, the nerves can get frayed.

Yet with all this, and the pressure that comes from being locked up, they still must keep their self-control. If they want to parole they must walk a very narrow path and not react too adversely to difficulties. A maxim I have heard repeated goes like this. “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” “A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.” Proverbs 12:16.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is

not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. **Love never fails.**" 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 8.

Does a wife stand by her husband when he is in trouble and needs her help and support? Or is it too embarrassing? Do the parents stand by the child who is experiencing the troubles of the world? Do brothers and sisters stand by each other to give support and comfort to each other? Or, do they all desert and run when the going gets tough? Do they feel "embarrassed" at the actions of a brother or sister and run? Or do they stand by no matter what?

Jesus stood by the disciples even when they made fools of themselves. Jesus practiced brotherly kindness, as we must. Is it time to reach out a loving hand to one who needs it? Is it time to mend the holes the devil has made in our families and relationships? "Like water spilled on the ground which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But God does not take away life; instead He devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from Him." 2 Samuel 14:14.

If we are to follow the example of Christ, it will be our highest duty to repair the breaches that Satan has torn open. To bind up the wounds that evil slices open. To search out and bring back the ravished lambs of God. To be peacemakers for Christ is the highest calling we can attain to. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Galatians 6:10 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'" Matthew 25:40.

Forgiveness is part of this brotherly kindness step. It is very difficult being kind to the one we harbor hate, resentment and jealousy against. The Bible is very plain on forgiving. Jesus taught in His prayer, "Forgive us our debts, **as we** also have forgiven our debtors." Matthew 6:12. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will

not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14, 15.

How can we expect God to love us and lavish upon us His blessings when we refuse to do the same to those we feel have hurt us? How can God live with us, when we refuse to live in love with those who have hurt us? He can't. The Bible is plain on that point. If we think we are really something and that God needs us; think again.

What God really needs are men and women who will stand up for Him by humbling themselves and being obedient to His Word. By doing and teaching exactly what He has taught. That is the greatest light and witness He can ask for. Just do what He asks of you.

Read Matthew chapter 18 verses 23 through 35. Jesus is emphatic in making sure you understand your responsibilities to your brothers and sisters. "This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Matthew 18:35. Read it and find out what He is talking about.