

SIBLING RIVALRIES

A Lord's Flock General Assembly Topic

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We are one family of God who wants us to love one another. This command was reiterated by Jesus during His mission on earth: "Love one another with brotherly affection" (Rom. 12:10). Moreover, Jesus taught us the love (agape) of God and love for one another (Phil. 4:1). However, there are siblings who are in conflict with one another due to envy, hatred, jealousy, pride, disagreement, and greed. Conflict is not part of God's plan for the family. The story of the prodigal son is a classic example. Hence, God who is our Father in His compassionate/merciful nature welcomes a sinner despite his/her failings/shortcomings.

A. Siblings in the Bible

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|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Cain and Abel | Gen. 4:1-8 |
| 2. Jacob and Esau | Gen. 25:19-27 |
| 3. Joseph & his Brothers | Gen. 37: 12-28 |
| 4. Moses, Aaron & Miriam | Num. 26: 59 |
| 5. Peter & Andrew | Matt: 4:18 |
| 6. Martha, Mary & Lazarus | John 11:1 |

B. The Prodigal Son. The story of the prodigal son is a typical example of a person who led a profligate life and returned to his father full of remorse. The father who is full of compassion welcomed him with open arms.

1. Description of the youngest son:

- Disrespectful
- Rebellious
- Selfish (ambitious)
- Carefree and irresponsible

2. Description of the eldest son:

- Arrogant
- Proud
- Envious
- Self-righteous
- Demanding
- Unconcerned with his father's heart
- Unconcerned about his lost brother
- Unforgiving
- Disrespectful
- Falsely accused his younger brother

C. The Prodigal Son's Return. The prodigal son decided to return home to ask forgiveness and to work as a servant.

1. Upon his arrival, his father celebrated his homecoming. In addition, he was also given a purple robe, signet ring and sandals: a symbol of authority in the family.

2. The older brother was jealous and furious. He had been faithful and worked all along, but his father had not given him a big celebration.

3. The father explained to him that he was with him all the time and everything (half of his wealth) belonged to him being the first-born son (Deut. 21:17).

Similarly, we too are like the prodigal son. We were once lost and now God found us. He would leave the 99 sheep to look for one lost sheep. Our Father in heaven is delighted that we returned to Him and repented for our sins. There is nothing unforgivable to Him for He doesn't condemn sinners. He loves us unconditionally.

Conclusion:

Let us be thankful that we have a heavenly Father who forgives and loves us unconditionally though we have sinned against Him. Truly, He welcomes His prodigal children with open arms as long as we humbly ask for forgiveness of the sins we have committed.

Reflection:

- Referring to the story of the prodigal son, who do you identify with: Is it the eldest or the youngest son?
- No matter how wayward we are, are we aware our heavenly Father patiently waits for our return to Him?
- What are the ways to inherit God's eternal wealth and his amazing grace?

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