

PARENTS CHRONICLE

Growing in Grace at Grandview Park

NOT EVEN CATS AND DOGS FIGHT LIKE MY CHILDREN!

In the recent Parenting Survey, I asked, "Name 1 or 2 situations that cause the most conflict/stress in your home." The number one response? "Sibling rivalry." Another question asked survey respondents to check the top five topics they would most like information on. Tied for the top answer? "Sibling rivalry/fighting." I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that in some households, siblings do not always get along 100% of the time!

I don't think that should surprise us. After all, the first time there were siblings in all of human history the end result was the first murder (Cain and Abel)! And how about these examples of sibling harmony: Jacob deceived Esau and then Esau tried to kill him, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, James and John argued over who would be the greatest in the kingdom, and Jesus' brothers said He was crazy!

But the good news is that God is in control and can work all things, even sibling relationships, for our good and for His glory. Jacob and Esau reconciled (Gen. 33). Joseph forgave his brothers and told them, "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. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones" (Gen. 50:20-21). And James, Jesus' (half-)brother, ended up believing in Him and writing a book of the Bible, calling himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). There is hope!

The first question that should be answered is, Why do brothers and sisters argue and fight? Interestingly enough, James himself answers that question when he writes,

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:1-3)

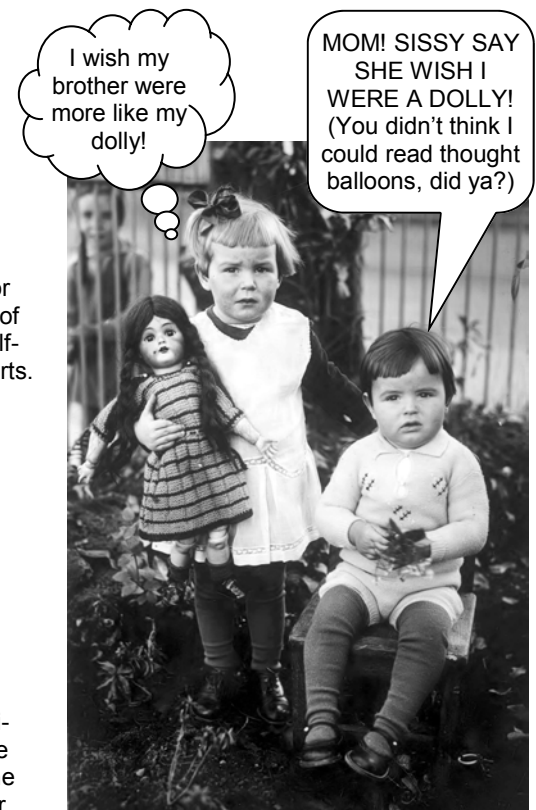
Brothers and sisters argue and fight for the same reason adults do—because of our selfish desires. We do we have selfish desires? Because of our sinful hearts. Jesus said:

For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.' (Mark 7:21-23)

Paul lists "hatred, discord (strife, fighting), jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, [and] factions" as the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21). "The flesh" is another way of referring to our

sinful nature that comes from our sinful hearts.

So now that we parents know why our children fight and argue, what do we do about it? We'll begin to answer that question on the back of this newsletter.



DEAR PARENTS

Please know that I am praying for you and for your children. Being a parent is difficult. We fail again and again to be the kind of parents we should be. Lamentations 3:22-25 says, "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him."

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to assist you as a parent. Pray that God will give me wisdom on how to strengthen and assist the parents at Grandview Park Baptist Church.

— Pastor Greg

TEACHABLE MOMENTS?

Fights and arguments are teachable moments. This is so hard to remember, especially when it happens over and over again! Honestly, my first reaction when I hear my boys arguing is not, "Oh, good, another teachable moment!" It's more like, "I wish they'd stop so I can have peace and quiet!" But we should ask God to help us view these times as training opportunities.

And rather than simply lecturing our children (which is my default teaching mode), it is helpful to use questions to get to the heart of the matter. In his book *Helping Others Change: How God Can Use You to Help People Grow* (Punch Press, 2005), Paul David Tripp suggests these questions:

1. *What happened?* This question helps you understand the situation. Be sure to get both sides (see Prov. 18:17).
2. *What were you thinking/feeling when it happened?* This question directs the child to begin to examine his heart.
3. *What did you do in response?* This question "reflects the fact that our behavior is not shaped by the facts of our situations and relationships, but by our hearts' response to those facts. In asking this question at this time, we are asking the person to admit that his behavior was not forced upon him by the situation ('It was the only thing I could do!') or by others ('She made me angry!'). It was shaped by what is in his heart."
4. *Why did you do it? What were you seeking to accomplish?* "This question reveals motives. In asking this question, we are teaching the person that the heart is always serving something...Here the person is asked to consider how his behavior is his attempt to get what is important to him."
5. *What was the result of your actions?* "This question not only seeks to uncover consequences (Gal. 6:7), but the way these consequences are a direct result of the thoughts and motives of the heart."

Once we have done our best to discover what happened and why, the next step is to help our child understand from Scripture that what he did was wrong and why. Hebrews 4:12 says: "For

the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Even though we parents cannot see the hearts of our children, God's Spirit can use the Word to discern the "thoughts and intentions (motives) of the heart."

James 1:23 compares the Bible to a mirror that reveals our imperfections. When we use Scripture with our children, it's like holding up a mirror to help them understand what they did and why they did it. I would recommend *Parenting with Scripture* by Kara Durbin (Moody, 2001) as a topical guide to Scripture (e.g., look up "anger" for verses dealing with anger). Here are some verses besides those mentioned already that are relevant to the topic at hand:

- *Phil 2:14*: Do everything without complaining or arguing.
- *James 1:19-20*: My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.
- See also Prov. 10:12; 12:16; 14:17; 14:29; 15:1; 15:18; 17:9; 19:11; 25:28; 29:22.

Now we shouldn't stop there! The next step is to help them understand what can be done to resolve their sinful behavior, but we'll save that for next month's newsletter. In coming editions we will also discuss some practical ways to help brothers and sisters not only "get along", but also build strong, godly sibling relationships. Feel free to email me with any questions or suggestions!



READ MY QUIPS

PARENTS CHRONICLE CLASSIFIED ADS

CORRECTION

The China Seafood Restaurant ad that ran in last Saturday's Green Section was incorrect. It read 中國海鮮店. It should have read 店飯鮮海園中. We regret any inconvenience this may have caused.

CHINA SEAFOOD RESTAURANT
6400 HORSEPEN RD. 282-7055

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

SUPER BOWEL PARTY

Sunday January 30th
Complimentary Buffet

Drink Specials and lots of Giveaways

Tuesday Nite - Senior Citizen Nite
All Entrees 50% OFF
(FOR SENIORS ONLY)

GRANDVIEW PARK BAPTIST CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES