

FAR ABOVE RUBIES:

*Insights on living the Christian life
– from a female perspective*

Family Matters



Over the past couple of years, many have come to realise just how much their family matters to them. During the lockdown they found it very hard and distressing being unable to visit family and friends as they once did. Although necessary, the restrictions placed on funerals, weddings, hospital visits and family gatherings also greatly affected many. Looking back, I feel it did help us to appreciate just how precious our families are to us. Family life however, isn't always easy and needs to be worked at. We all have to face the same problems and challenges that life throws at us.

I'm sure you have heard the expression "*You can choose your friends but you can't choose your family*", a saying generally used by those who have issues with other family members. If a friend hurts or offends, you can choose to stop being their friend at any time. You cannot however choose to stop being related to your family, no matter what they do. The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu put it like this: "*You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you as you are to them.*" Your family was chosen for you at birth as we see in Psalm 139 v 13, "*For thou didst form my inward parts, Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.*"

Families matter to God – after all, they were His idea in the first place! In Genesis 1 v 27-28 we read: "*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...."*" Even after Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, marring their perfect relationship with God, the Lord continued with His plan for families and blessed them with two sons, Cain and Abel. The first family, however, was not without its problems. When Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord, Genesis 4 v 4-5 tells us that "*the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering He had no regard. So Cain was very angry and his countenance*

fell.” Although the Lord warned Cain of the danger of anger and sin (v 6-7), Cain still allowed his emotions and anger get the better of him and killed his brother Abel. Devastating as the situation was for Adam and Eve, there is no record that they allowed it to take over their lives. In Gen. 4 v 25 we see that God blessed them with another son, whom Eve named Seth, for she said, *“God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him.”* There may be times when we too will have extremely serious family issues to deal with, but we mustn’t allow them to overwhelm us, but seek the Lord for wisdom and guidance. We can trust God to see us though as He has promised in Isaiah 43 v 2 *“When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers they shall not overwhelm you.”*

As we all know, maintaining harmonious relationships within the family is easier said than done. In Genesis 37 we see appalling treatment Joseph received at the hands of his brothers who, through jealousy, were going to kill him but instead sold him to slave traders. One of the main reasons for their jealousy was the favouritism shown by Joseph’s father towards him and the fact that he loved Joseph more than them. This reminded me of the dangers of favouritism as seen in Col. 3 v 21 (updated AMP) *“Fathers, do not provoke or irritate or exasperate your children (with demands that are trivial or unreasonable or humiliating or abusive; nor by favouritism or indifference; treat them tenderly with lovingkindness), so they will not lose heart and become discouraged or unmotivated (with their spirits broken).”* It strikes me that if we all treated each other like this, the world would be a much better place!

We all know that since the fall there has never been a perfect family on earth, and that included Jesus’ family. In Mark 6 v 3 we see that Jesus had sisters and four brothers – James, Joses, Judas and Simon. Growing up with the Son of God couldn’t have been easy for them, as they didn’t know who He really was. To them, Jesus was the brother who never sinned and always did everything right, thereby highlighting their own sinful natures. Even after living with Jesus for many years and witnessing His miracles, we read that *“...even His brothers did not believe in Him.”* (John 7 v 5)

Praise God, their relationship with Jesus didn’t end there. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, His brothers came to faith and we see in Acts 1 v 14 that they were gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem to pray with His disciples. Also, in James 2 v 1, we see a wonderful example of a changed life as James refers to his brother as *“our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.”* This demonstrates how a revelation of Jesus can change the lives of any family and is an encouragement to us all with unsaved loved ones. Never forget that you and your family matter to God!