

Relating to Siblings

By Candi Finch

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Prepare to share your answers to the following questions. First, read Matthew 12:46–50 where Jesus talked about His earthly family. Who did Jesus say are His brothers and sisters? Then read 1 Timothy 3:15. In this verse Paul write to his son in the faith, Timothy, and explained to him why he wrote the letter. What did Paul call the household of God in this verse?

Assignment Two

Read John 13:31–35. Jesus was talking to His disciples and preparing them for what will happen after He is no longer with them. Prepare to share with your group how Jesus says people will be able to tell whether a person really is a follower of Christ.

Assignment Three

Prepare to share your answers to the following questions. First, read Genesis 4:1–8 about the brothers Cain and Abel. Why did Cain get angry in this story? How did he deal with his anger?

Scripture to Memorize

“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”
Colossians 3:14

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will know specific biblical strategies guiding how siblings should relate to one another.

Candi Finch is assistant professor of Theology in Women’s Studies at Southwestern Seminary. Candi’s greatest passion is to see teenagers and women come to know the Lord and become mature disciples of Christ. Several women invested in her life when she was a new believer in high school. The impact they had on her reminds her daily of the positive influence we can have on others for Christ. Candi has contributed to several books for women and youth, including *Women’s Evangelical Commentary on the New Testament and Old Testament*, *The Study Bible for Women*, *Impact: The Student Leadership Bible*, and *Critical Issues, Absolute Answers: Solutions for Students*.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Sarah and Kyle are sister and brother. They used to get along well until they both got to high school. Now they seem to fight all the time over the littlest things—who was supposed to take out the trash, who left the bathroom dirty, etc. Kyle gets annoyed because he thinks his parents are less strict with Sarah. However, Sarah gets jealous because she thinks Kyle has more freedom. Do you think conflict and rivalry between siblings is just a natural part of growing up? Do you think God cares how siblings treat each other?

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on who Jesus said are His brothers and sisters in Matthew 12:46–50 and on what Paul called “the household of God” in 1 Timothy 3:15.

Discussion Question

Whether you are an only child or you have many brothers and sisters, what does the Bible say about your spiritual siblings? Hint: Apply the insights from **Assignment One**.

Introduction

Whether you have biological siblings or just spiritual brothers and sisters, the Bible gives us a lot of wisdom for how to treat one another. In fact, the way we treat one another actually can be a powerful testimony (positive or negative) to people who don't know Christ.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on what Jesus says will be evidence of a person who follows Him.

Read Colossians 3:1–17 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Colossians 1:2 saints and faithful brethren. The book of Colossians was addressed to the church at Colossae. *Brethren* here is used in the generic sense and can be understood as brothers and sisters or family members. When we get to chapter 3, the instructions were specifically addressed to Christians. Paul contrasted behaviors, reactions, habits, emotions and actions of a person who knows Christ with one who does not.

On Your Own

In the space below, list all the actions, emotions, behaviors, or habits in verses 5–10 that Paul told the Colossians to put aside or put to death now that they were Christians. When everyone is finished, the group can share their responses.

Studying the Passage, Colossians 3

Verse 5. Put to death. Because Christians are “hidden with Christ” (v. 3), they are to put to death anything that is characteristic of their “old self” (v. 9).

Verse 8. put them all away. This phrase uses the imagery of changing clothes. Believers are to discard their old habits like a set of worn-out clothes. Then they are to adorn themselves with the kinds of behaviors befitting a child of God, as described in verse 12. **anger.** This word is the slow-burning fuse of emotion that remains smoldering below the surface, while **wrath** is the explosive burst of emotion that rises and falls quickly but with much intensity. **malice.** This refers to a person's vicious nature that is set on doing harm to others. **slander.** This type of speech belittles a person in such a way that his reputation suffers. **obscene talk.** This word is used for talk that is filthy and abusive.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on what happened in Genesis 4:1–8 between the brothers Cain and Abel when Cain did not put aside his anger.

On Your Own

Look over the words you wrote down in the first **On Your Own** section. Also consider the tragic end of the story of Cain and Abel. Are any behaviors noted that you need to “lay aside” (see Ephesians 4:22)? Do you need to clear up any relationships with your siblings and ask for forgiveness? In the space below, write any behavior you may need to repent of and the person whose forgiveness you need to seek.

Studying the Passage

Verse 12. put on. Continuing with the imagery of clothing, Paul described the types of “clothes” disciples should wear. **kindness.** This is a gentle demeanor that is expressed through the way we treat people. **humility.** This describes lowliness of mind so that you think of others first. **meekness.** Also translated *gentleness*, this word means “strength under control.” A person who is meek has allowed the Holy Spirit to restrain his attitude, often in the face of circumstances that make meekness difficult. **patience.** This literally means long-suffering, where one bears injustice or unpleasant circumstances without seeking revenge or retaliation.

Verse 13. bearing with one another. This Greek phrase carries the idea of putting up with offenses and injuries of others. Yet, even more than bearing others' faults, disciples must also be **forgiving each other**, which is the act of releasing others from the “debt” their sin against you creates. We must forgive **just as the Lord has forgiven**, completely and without condition.

Verse 14. love. This Greek word for *love* means “self-sacrificing love.” **binds everything together in perfect harmony.** Perfect actually means complete maturity here. Love acts as the binding agent in believers' lives that produces maturity.

Verse 15. peace . . . rule. The word for *rule* literally means that peace is to “act as the umpire or referee” in your life. Just as a referee in sports sets the ground rules for a game and decides between or calls for a decision between two sides, so peace is the decider between two Christians on opposing sides of a situation.

Discussion Question

When you deal with tough situations with your siblings, what “clothes” or character qualities described in Colossians 3:12–17 are the most difficult for you to wear? What should you do when you find yourself tempted to put on the clothes of anger or slander instead of, say, patience or kindness?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Scripture gives us many examples of what happens when siblings don't get along. Cain and Abel's story ends in tragedy because Cain allowed anger to rule his heart (see Genesis 4). Jacob and Esau's story is one of competition, deceit, and selfishness (see Genesis 27). Joseph and his brothers are a heartrending example of what happens when siblings allow jealousy and bitterness to take root in their relationship (see Genesis 37).

Why is relating rightly with our siblings important? God desires for families to be witnesses for Him. He uses the concept of the home and family to reveal truth about how He relates to His people. He is our Father, fellow Christians are our brothers and sisters, and the church is God's household. When we treat our biological or spiritual siblings with love, it becomes a witness to others and testifies that we actually know God and follow Him (John 13:35). In fact, we are commanded to love one another (1 John 4:11).

Psalm 133:1 proclaims that it good and pleasant when brothers dwell in unity. We are instructed in Romans 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all men." When we allow conflict or strife to exist with our siblings, we open the door for bitterness to take hold in our lives (see Hebrews 12:14–15).

If you have done wrong related to siblings, confess your sins (see Proverbs 28:13). If your sibling has wronged you, Christ encourages you to be reconciled (see Matthew 5:23–24) and to forgive him (see Colossians 3:13). Remember, you will never have to forgive another person as much as Christ has already forgiven you. However, that doesn't mean it is easy! Yet, because you have put on Christ, He can give you the strength to be kind, compassionate, gentle, patient, and humble with your brothers and sisters.

Follow up Question

How should brothers and sisters treat one another according to Scripture?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.