

B E S T I L L  
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# A FRIEND NEARBY

*Better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away. (Prov. 27:10)*

## **My brother was my hero growing up.**

Craig was eight years older than me and seemed like the coolest guy in the world. I still have vivid memories of the times he showed up in his car to help me with my paper route, or when he let me tag along for a night of roller skating and pizza with his college-aged friends. The fact that he gave really expensive Christmas gifts didn't hurt his standing in my eyes, either.

When we grew older, his influence shifted but didn't diminish. I can remember sitting in a restaurant with Craig the summer before Melanie and I got married. The stories he shared from his own marriage and the advice he offered stayed with me through those early turbulent years of married life. When our families get together these days, the room grows loud and the laughter flows freely. My brother is a blessing.

## **But he's also far away.**

Melanie and I have never lived in the same province as the rest of our families. After spending our first married years in British Columbia, we skipped right over Alberta and settled into Saskatchewan for twenty-one years. Now we've added another 500 kms to the trip "back home." We're thankful for the ways we can stay connected through things like Facebook and Video Messaging, but it's not the same as being there together. Perhaps you can relate.

If so, then this verse probably resonates for you like it does for me. It suggests that a near neighbor is better than a far brother (or sister, or parent).

This isn't because our neighbor is a better person than our family member - or because we like the neighbor more than our family - but simply because they are *here*. With us.

*And the actual presence of a loving neighbor is important, especially in a time of need.*

Have you experienced this? It's a friend dropping off a meal at your house after your miscarriage. It's a hug in the foyer after church (back when we could do that!) when you're going through a rough patch. It's someone in your house church offering to watch your kids so you can have some time alone.

I love my far-family but I'm thankful for my near-neighbors.

Someone once said "There are two things we cannot do alone: one is to be married and the other is to be a Christian." We need each other! So take some time today thanking God for the people he has placed in your life: the lady who lives across the street, your church family at PAC, your house church, your MOPS group, and others. Though we need to be careful and creative in these days, we still need to be neighbors.

What is one thing you could do today to encourage someone?  
If you need help, who could you reach out to?

## FURTHER READING:

Romans 12:9-21

## KEY VERSE:

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly [and sisterly] love." (v. 10)

## CALIBRATING PRAYER:

*Father, thank you for your big, boisterous family. Thank you that you haven't left us to walk through these days on our own. Give us eyes to see those around us who need our attention, and give us the courage to reach out to others when we are lonely or hurting.*