

TEXT: Genesis 4:9

“And the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother? And he said, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

Hebrew Word: אָח - 'āḥ - [awkh](#) - a primitive word; a *brother* (used in the widest sense of literal relationship and metaphorical affinity or resemblance:- another, brother (-ly), kindred. Used 629 Times.

Let's Bow For Prayer.

Eternal Father, thank you for this day and the opportunity to gather together as a body of Christ. Open our hearts and minds today as we dive into your Word. Help us to understand what it means to be our brother's keeper and show us how we can apply this truth in our daily lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

INSERT SONG: HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER” 4 Minutes 18 Seconds.

God's use of questions with guilty sinners continues here ([vs. 6](#); cp. [3:9-13](#)). By claiming he did not know where his brother was, Cain added lying to his sin of murder.

Dr. John Piper: “Many People Weep At The Consequences Of Sin Who Still Love The Sin.”

God once made Adam a guardian (Hebrew *shamar*) of the garden ([2:15](#)). Cain now asked if he was to be his brother's guardian (Hebrew *shamar*).

The Bible's answer to Cain's question is an **ABSOLUTE YES** as seen in the following scriptures:

Leviticus 19:18 “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: *I am the LORD.*”

Matthew 22:39 “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Galatians 5:14 “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even in this*; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

INTRO: Good morning/evening, everyone! Have you ever thought about what it means to be your brother's keeper?

This message has been a long time coming as I have been praying and working on this for over a year and Kathie can attest to that.

Today we are going to dive in and really explore what it means in our lives. In Genesis 4:9, after Cain had done the unthinkable and murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy, God asked him, "**Where is Abel your brother?**" **And he replied, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them."

As we explore this scripture today, we're going to talk about the responsibility we have towards our family, how we can carry our brothers and sisters through tough times, and how Jesus has set the ultimate example for us in this.

BODY: Now, let us get started. This morning/tonight I want to share Three (3) important points concerning: **“He Ain't Heavy He's, My Brother.”**

Have you ever wondered where the phrase “he ain't heavy he's my brother” comes from?

According to the Boys Town website, the phrase as used by Boys Town was said to Father Flanagan in 1918 by one of the residents while carrying up a set of stairs. The boy being carried is said to have had polio and wore leg braces.

Lyricaly, the inspiration for "Heavy" came from band members' conversations about frustrations and troubles in their own lives. From that, they found that there was some heavy stuff happening in each other's lives. Bennington stated that personally, he has a hard time with life, even on a good day.

1st The Responsibility of Family

In the context of the Bible, the term 'brother' is often used to refer to not only our biological siblings but also to our spiritual siblings - those who share our faith in Christ.

This broadens the scope of our responsibility, reminding us that our duty extends beyond the confines of our immediate family. We are called to *Care For*, *Protect*, and *Love* all those who are part of the family of God.

A) It's Not Passive: It requires action, intentionality, and often, sacrifice. It's not merely about co-existing peacefully or avoiding conflict. **John 15:13** "No one has greater love [no one has shown stronger affection] than to lay down (give up) his own life for his friends."

Being our brother's keeper means actively seeking their wellbeing, standing up for them when they are wronged, and stepping in to help when they are in need. **1st John 3:17** "But if anyone has this world's goods (resources for sustaining life) and sees his brother *and* fellow believer in need, yet closes his heart of compassion against him, how can the love of God live *and* remain in him?"

B) It's Not Conditional: It does not depend on whether they've earned it, whether they're 'deserving' of our help, or whether they would do the same for us.

In fact, the Bible calls us to love even those who are difficult to love, and to forgive those who have wronged us. **Matthew 18:21-22** ²¹ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? ²² Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, **Until** seven times: but, **Until** seventy times seven. **Cp. Genesis 4:24**

Although forgiving someone only **seven times** seems stingy, this standard was generous considering the fact that some rabbis required their students to forgive offenders only three times. Interpreters dispute whether Jesus demanded forgiving one's **brother** seventy-seven times or 490 times (70 times 7), but Jesus' point was that forgiveness should be unlimited when true repentance is present.

This is a radical, selfless kind of love - the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated for us on the cross.

C) It Involves Accountability: As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to hold each other accountable for our actions, to gently correct each other when we stray from God's path, and to spur each other on towards love and good deeds. **Galatians 6:1** "BRETHREN, IF any person is overtaken in misconduct *or* sin of any sort, you who are spiritual [who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit] should set him right *and* restore *and* reinstate him, without any sense of superiority *and* with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also."

A person who falls into sin at a vulnerable point should be spiritually restored in a **gentle** manner (one of "the fruits of the spirit"; **5:23**). A danger for those doing such restoration is that they themselves might be pulled into the sin.

This is not about judgement or condemnation, but about helping each other grow and mature in our faith.

D) In Bearing Each Other's Burdens: In Galatians 6:2, Paul writes, "Bear (endure, carry) one another's burdens *and* troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill *and* observe perfectly the law of Christ (the Messiah) *and* complete what is lacking [in your obedience to it]."

This could mean providing emotional support during a tough time, helping meet physical needs, or standing alongside them in prayer.

The person whose life is controlled by the Holy Spirit - vs. 1 is to come alongside and help **carry** (Greek Word: **βαστάζω – bastazō** - bas-tad'-zo - "to bear, endure, remove, lift") the physical, emotional, or spiritual load threatening to crush his fellow believers. The **law of Christ** is "love your neighbor as yourself" - 5:14.

This is focused somewhat in Jesus' new commandment, "Love one another" - John 13:34. It was not possible to keep the entire law of Moses - Galatians 3:10,12, but it is possible to fulfill both that law - 5:14 and the law of Christ through loving actions.

E) It's Not A Burden, But A Privilege: It is an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ, to build deep, meaningful relationships, and to grow in our own faith. It's a chance to be the hands and feet of Jesus, to show the world what His love looks like in action.

F) We Can't Fulfill This Responsibility In Our Own Strength: We need the grace and power of God, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the support of our spiritual family. We need to stay connected to the vine, to abide in Christ, so that we can bear much fruit.

Pastor, here would be a good place to share a personal story about your connection with your own family, spiritual or by blood. How does God affect those relationships?

2nd Carrying Our Brothers

Carrying our brothers and sisters through tough times is an essential part of being our brother's keeper. This concept is not limited to our biological siblings but extends to our spiritual family as well - our brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is a call to action, a call to be proactive in our love and care for one another.

A) Prayer: James 5:16 tells us, "Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed *and* restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working]."

Praying for one another echoes the prayers of the elders, and these should lead to both physical and spiritual healing (i.e., forgiveness). Prayer is not a magical incantation or a guarantee of healing, but when offered fervently by a righteous person, God will respond in a way that best fits His good purposes.

Therefore, when we pray for one another, we are carrying each other's burdens, standing in the gap, and interceding on their behalf.

B) Providing Practical Help: This could be anything from providing a meal, giving a ride, helping with chores, or even just being there to listen when they need to talk.

C) Encouraging Them and Building Them Up:

1st Thessalonians 5:11 says, "Therefore encourage (admonish, exhort) one another and edify (strengthen and build up) one another, just as you are doing."

Encouragement can be a powerful tool in helping someone through a difficult time.

In all these ways, we are called to be active participants in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ, carrying them through their trials and tribulations.

C.S. Lewis once said: "The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken."

This quote beautifully encapsulates the idea of carrying our brothers and sisters. It is a task that requires humility and selflessness, characteristics that are at the heart of the Christian faith.

This Is the Essence of True Christian Fellowship and Love.

3rd The Example of Jesus

Jesus Christ, our Savior, and Lord is the ultimate example of being a brother's keeper. Throughout the gospels, we see Jesus consistently demonstrating *love, compassion, and care* for those around Him.

He didn't just care for His biological family but extended His love and care to all those He encountered, treating them as His brothers and sisters.

A) The Gospel of John:

Jesus, while hanging on the cross, looks down and sees His Mother and His Disciple John. Despite His own unimaginable suffering, Jesus takes a moment to ensure that His mother will be cared for after His death.

He says to His mother, "**Woman, behold, your son!**" and to John, "**Behold, your mother!**" (**John 19:26-27**).

In His final moments, Jesus was still thinking of others, ensuring that those He loved would be looked after. **This is a profound example of being a brother's keeper.**

B) Love Our Neighbors as Ourselves - Mark 12:31: "The second is like it and is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

This commandment goes beyond just being nice to those around us. It's about actively looking out for their well-being, standing up for them when they're being treated unjustly, and helping them when they're in need. **It's about putting their needs before our own, just as Jesus did for us.**

C) The parable of The Good Samaritan - Luke 10:25-37: {Turn and Read if times allows}

The Samaritan man, despite cultural and religious differences, took care of the injured man when others had passed him by.

✧ **He didn't just offer words of comfort; he took action. How you ask?**

✧ **He bandaged the man's wounds, brought him to an inn, and paid for his stay.**

This parable teaches us that being our brother's keeper means crossing boundaries, stepping out of our comfort zones, and doing what we can to help those in need.

D) His Interactions with His Disciples:

He washed their feet, a task typically reserved for the lowest of servants, to show them that no act of service is beneath us when it comes to caring for our brothers and sisters - **John 13:1-17.**

He taught them, corrected them when they were wrong, and encouraged them in their faith. He wept with them, rejoiced with them, and ultimately laid down His life for them.

E) His Words and Actions:

Jesus showed us what it truly means to be our brother's keeper. He calls us to follow His example, to love one another deeply, and to bear one another's burdens.

This is the heart of being our brother's keeper - it's about embodying the selfless, sacrificial love of Christ in our relationships with others.

SUMMARY:

Main Idea: Explore the concept of being our brother's keeper, emphasizing our responsibility towards our family and others, and how we can support them in difficult times, following the example set by Jesus.

Scripture: "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'" - Genesis 4:9

Key Quote: "**The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them.**" - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

CONCLUSION: In conclusion, being our brother's keeper is not about being nosy or controlling.

It's about showing love, care, and concern. It's about being there in times of need, and it's about listening.

Jesus modeled this for us perfectly.

He listened, He loved, and He gave His life for us.

So, let's strive to be more like Him, to be our brother's keeper in the truest sense of the word.

Prayer and Invitation: Now, let's close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word and the lessons we've learned today.

Help us to truly be our brother's keeper, to love as you love, and to listen as you listen.

Give us the strength and wisdom to apply these lessons in our daily lives.

We ask all these in the mighty name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

And now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now, and forevermore. Go in peace, family, and let's love and serve the Lord.