

Is Blood Thicker Than Water?

Ponder: Relationships and loyalties

Scripture: “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37, NKJV).

A commonly-heard proverb says, “Blood is thicker than water.” We use that saying to mean that bonds between blood kin are stronger than those with outsiders. That is generally true and perfectly understandable. If both your mother and a total stranger share the same need, you will take care of your mother first.

The first recorded use of this proverb is from Sir Walter Scott, and is included in a collection of Scottish proverbs published in 1737 by Allan Ramsay. Whether Scott originated the saying, or borrowed or modified it, is open to debate.

There is an older saying which some say gave rise to the current one: “The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb.” This proverb means the exact opposite of the one we commonly use. The “covenant” refers to the bond of loyalty shared by soldiers who have shed blood together on the battlefield. According to this maxim, it surpasses even our devotion to family.

But let’s look at blood and water in a Biblical context. Think of your blood kin (i.e. your earthly family); then consider those who, like you, have confessed Christ as Lord and have been immersed in water for the remission of sins. Those are your spiritual family. Which bond is stronger? If the members of your earthly family have obeyed the gospel, thus being part of your spiritual family also, blessed are you! But even when this is the case, your first priority must be to Christ. Since He is the head of the church, your loyalty to the church ought to surpass allegiance to blood kin.

Looking at it another way, your fellow-Christians are your blood kin because the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin, and is the purchase price for our redemption. Blood-bought believers share a bond unlike anything the world offers.

Depending on what blood and what water you’re talking about, blood can be thicker than water, or water can be thicker than blood. Just remember to put Jesus first in everything!

Song: “I Have Decided To Follow Jesus”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from sin and that paid the price for our redemption. We also thank You for the water of baptism where we received remission of sins and were added to the church. Help us, we pray, to love our families and friends as we ought, but always to love Jesus supremely. In His name, Amen.