

After writing about my baby, Benjamin, last week, I felt it only fitting to share something about his brother, Samuel. Samuel is the 'middle child,' which makes him an automatic diplomat. He has always been in the position of trying to settle differences, whether it was between his siblings or his friends. He had the advantage of watching his older sister make mistakes, learning quickly what he should and shouldn't do. He had the power of being an older brother, being able to exert some authority over his little brother, sometimes a little too enthusiastically.

But Samuel has such a tender heart. He always has. When he was quite young, we were watching "Hook," with Robin Williams as Peter Pan. When Peter is telling the human 'Tink' about what he remembered about his childhood, they showed Peter as a baby who apparently had fallen out of his pram. The baby was lying on the ground, and Tink, the fairy, was hovering over the baby with a huge leaf to protect the crying baby's face from the pouring rain. I looked over at my Samuel, probably only about four or five years old. His little chin quivered, and tears welled up in his eyes over that helpless baby.

I believe Samuel was in the second grade when he and another boy got in trouble for passing notes to a little girl. I guess the competition between them became heated enough that the teacher had to separate them. I knew nothing about the incident until unexpectedly I received a note from the teacher, asking for me to come in and speak with her about a note Samuel had given to the little boy that day. As it turned out, the teacher was upset because Samuel's note to the little boy basically said, "I don't care what Mrs. X says, I want to be your friend."

Apparently, the note passing had been going on for some time, as well as the disagreements, and I can understand how that can be frustrating for a teacher who is trying to wrangle twenty of these little people. But as it turned out, the teacher refused to let the boys even speak to one another, enforcing distance between them daily. I asked her, "Aren't we supposed to encourage the kids to work out their differences? Isn't it a good thing for them to try and get past this?"

She became mad with me because I told her plainly, "I'm proud of Samuel for doing the right thing and telling this little boy he wanted to be his friend." I think Samuel was as shocked as she was when I stood up and said, "Come on, Samuel. Let's go."

To see photos of Samuel as a schoolboy, you would have never thought he would work his way up to being the quarterback of his high school football team. He had two parents who could have cared less about sports in general. Samuel loved sports. As his mom, but also as a spectator, even I could say he was good. He worked hard at whatever he set out to do, and he had a personality tailor made for rallying his teammates.

As I later realized, there is quite an honor to achieving quarterback status. All I knew was my Samuel, who saw something he wanted and shot for it and achieved it. He made us immensely proud during those high school years, but not because he was the quarterback. His willing heart and being a team player are just a part of what made him such a good young man.

Samuel turned twenty-eight years old this year. He has continued to work hard and is almost finished with school. As I have always told him, he can do whatever he puts his mind to. My heartfelt prayer for 'Sambo,' as I call him, is that he will remember the scriptures from his youth and will seek God's direction in all that he pursues. I believe he could be one of those special men after God's own heart, if he would just allow it. I love you dearly, son.

