

One of My Greatest Treasures

By Benjamin D. Gribaudo – July/August 2002

One of my greatest treasures is the friendship I have with my brother, Elliot. He is 12 years old. I am 18. We enjoy doing all kinds of things together—walking, roughhousing, biking. And, we especially like to talk. Elliot talks with me about almost everything—from the number of German submarines sunk in World War II to how checks go through the banking system to how to respond to a friend’s painful words.

It wasn’t always that way. I used to take advantage of the fact that I was the big brother. I was unkind in little ways. Once I told Elliot that red pepper tasted like brown sugar. He found out it didn’t! When we would play war with our toys, I would make sure I won. It was easy. I made my weapons the most advanced and my armor indestructible. Elliot took second place in my mind when my friends were around. My belittling ways damaged his heart.

God began a work in me to really love Him and to delight in Him. As a result, my attitude toward Elliot changed. Mom, also, spoke to me about building a close relationship with my brother. I began to pray about that idea.

I decided to exhort Elliot to love the Lord and apply God’s principles. When we were together, I would talk about the Lord. Elliot would listen but detailed discussions of Biblical truths weren’t of great interest to him. Our friendship wasn’t deepening very much. Barriers from my past unkind nesses were still there. I needed to ask Elliot’s forgiveness for the way I had treated him. As things came to mind, I asked him to forgive me (I learned that those little things were not little to him.). Thankfully, he was very forgiving.

God showed me that I didn’t need to change Elliot’s heart (God would do that). I needed to win it. I realized that to win my brother’s heart, I needed to delight in my brother. I needed to talk about what he wanted to talk about. I needed to make myself interested in what interested him. I had to be excited about what excited him.

I began to try to delight in Elliot. Because of our age difference, our interests aren’t always the same. I made myself interested in Elliot. Elliot likes to talk. When we would talk, I sought to ask him questions about things he liked. I wrote a letter to him each week. I took time to play with him—to play what he wanted to play.

It took time, but it began to work. At first, it went something like this. I would ask, “What did your friends say at church today?” Elliot would reply, “Not much.” “But what did you talk about?” I would probe. “What boys talk about.” would be the answer. When he saw that I really was interested in him, he began to open his heart to me. He began to really enjoy being with me. Now, with eagerness, he anticipates our times together.

As Elliot has opened his heart to me, my initial desire is being fulfilled. I have been able to help him apply God’s truths. I am thankful God has blessed me with Elliot. I am now my brother’s “best pal.”