

Sermon on Prodigal Son
March 10, 2013

I'm the oldest of six in my family and those of you who are also the first born know hard it is being the oldest. You're the one on who these newbie parents learn to be parents. You're made to toe the line; no fooling around for you. And probably the hardest to deal with is that they put all of their hopes on you!

The next born is my sister and we couldn't be more different than night and day—in fact if you told her it was night, she would swear that it was daytime! My mom told me that when I was born I had a peaches and cream complexion with hair so blond you couldn't see it. She said that when I was put in my crib she had to put her hand on my back to make sure I was still breathing; I was so quiet. Not so with my sister—she came into the world with red hair and a red face all scrunched up because she was screaming her lungs out—and she never stopped!

Oh my sister is stubborn! When trying to potty train her, our mom would have her sit on the training potty for what seemed like hours and she would do nothing. Nothing that is until you took her off and then she would run behind a piece of furniture and go in her pants. When our parents would reprimand her for misbehaving; she would laugh in their faces!

It didn't get better when we started school. As the oldest I was expected to great really good grades. My parents rejoiced when my sister had a C report card. I got yelled at if I had more B's than A's on mine. My sister is a people person and can talk a blue streak to anyone. When our mom would go to parent teacher conferences; the teachers always commented on what a joy my sister

was to have in class. Our mom would always ask if they were both talking about the same child!

Growing up we all helped on the farm except for my sister; which wouldn't have been so bad if she would have helped at home. She was too busy with her friends downtown to be bothered. We could always tell when it was my sister's turn to wash the dishes. Mom would find large, dirty bowls filled with one potato or a spoonful of corn in the cupboard or the refrigerator. Mom also learned quickly to check the oven for any Tupperware dishes before turning it on to preheat. The smell of melting Tupperware is horrendous!

After high school I was the first one in my family to go on to college. Talk about pressure! When I got my first C which was in Organic Chemistry I was scared to show my parents because I feared I'd get yelled at and for letting them down. My feelings of inadequacy only grew stronger when my veterinary aptitude test scores weren't high enough for me to get into veterinary school in one of the five slots available for out of state students.

It didn't surprise our family when my sister moved out of the house to live in Milwaukee as she went to school. What did surprise them was the phone call my mom received one day from my sister. She told my mom that she and her boyfriend were getting married on June sixteenth in West Allis and if she and dad loved her they'd be there! Since my mom doesn't drive I was the one who got to take her to the farm to talk to my dad. I still remember the hurt look in his eyes when my mom talked to him. All he wanted was for his daughters to be married in

our home congregation, but my sister wouldn't budge; not even when dad said he would pay for everything if she would just get married at home.

She wanted me to be her maid of honor, but I couldn't. I just couldn't be part of something that had hurt my parents so much. Dad tried to talk me into it, but I guess I lost it with him. I brought up every hurt she had caused the family and threw in about how all my life I had done what they asked me to do and I couldn't even get a graduation party out of them when I graduated from college!

Dad just looked at me and shook his head. "I know," he said to me. "I know your sister has done some foolish things and I don't always like what she's done, but she's my daughter and your sister—and I love her. So please change your mind and come to her wedding, be part of it and celebrate with us!" I just looked at him in anger and disbelief and walked away.