

# Blood Is Thicker Than Water

**Question:** Dear Sir: My husband spends more time and money with his mother than he does with me, his wife, and his children. When I do have a chance to talk with my mother-in-law about it, she always retorts with the old proverb, "Blood is thicker than water." Once in a while even my husband's remarks suggest that he should be more loyal to his mother who gave him birth, than to his wife and children. This makes me feel cheated and abandoned. Should this really be this way? I feel that my husband does not understand what it means to be one in marriage. Please help me.

**Answer:** Dear friend: Obviously, blood is thicker than water because of the number of cells present in 70 percent of water. However, the old adage is not talking about literal blood. What does it really mean when one says, "Blood is thicker than water?" Here is what it means:

"Our loyalty to our family – that is, to our blood relations – is strong no matter how we may feel about them."

## KEEP OUT

This is not the only way we use the proverb. It is also used when we want to "distance blood" family members or non-blood relatives. The relationship here is closer than any other kind of relationship. Some mothers-in-law often use the phrase to send a message to their daughters-in-law that their sons are closer to them because they gave birth to them. It's often used to refer to a misguided kind of loyalty.

When controversies arise, this phrase is used to divide family members and ostracize others. Here are the messages given when this proverb is used: "Keep out. This is not for you right now." "You have no voice or vote in this conversation." "Your opinion does not matter here because we are not blood relatives." "I know you married my son, but his responsibility is to take care of me first."

Where did this overused proverb come from? "This proverb on the bonds of family and common ancestry first appeared in the medieval German **beast** epic, 'Reinecke Fuch' (c. 1130 'Reynald the Fox') by Heinrich der Glichezaere, whose words in English read, '**Kin-blood is not spoiled by water.**'"

In 1412 it was stated this way: "Relationships within the family are stronger than any other kind." The saying was first cited in John Lydgate's 'Troy Book'. In most countries around the world this proverb is used with similar intent and meaning.

## MARRIAGE IS THICKER THAN BLOOD

Yes, blood is thicker than water; however, **marriage is thicker than blood.** The relationship between a husband and a wife is by the Creator's design and very nature closer than any other kind of relationship, even between a parent and child. Marriage is indeed "thicker than blood." The nine months of pregnancy and the long painful hours in the delivery room cannot match the intense passionate closeness between a husband and a wife. This is something many Bahamians have not grown to understand and respect. Too many Bahamians, especially mothers and grandmothers, have not respected the sacred union of their children's marriages. They have made it their duty to challenge the true meaning and practice of loyalty to one's spouse. The truth is that they have actually ruined countless marriages because of their interferences and misguided notions.

The Bible states in Matt 19:5 and Mark 10:8: "And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh." The term "one flesh" is used to describe the unique and sacred union of

a man and wife, and no other. What is one flesh in marriage?

**“One flesh in marriage encompasses the blending of the physical (sexual), emotional, psychological, mental, spiritual, and financial aspects of both husband and wife.”**

There is no other relationship that involves such integration and intense closeness. However, many get involved in similar but non-Biblical kinds of “oneness” relationships. We call them common-law, shacking-up, or cohabiting, relationships. Generally, neither of these involves mother and son or father and daughter. However, if parent and child become sexually involved, it is called incest. Incest is morally, legally, and spiritual wrong. This alone suggests that there is no comparison between a marriage relationship [of a man and a woman] and a parent-child relationship. Even a definition of marriage makes no mention of parents, grand parents, or any other earthly relative. Note carefully my definition of marriage:

**“Marriage is a divine covenant between a man and a woman with similar goals and values, to live together in a permanent, loving, and mutually supportive relationship.”**

## PARENTS MUST KEEP OUT

Parents, it is high time that you left your married children alone. Get out of their business. Get out of their bedrooms. Let them truly become “one flesh.” Parents, stop demanding from your married children a greater loyalty to you than to their spouses. You are messing up their lives. Stop calling them on the phone and insisting that they “come over right now” to do something that could wait until a more feasible time.

Sons and daughters, stand up on your own two feet and remind your demanding parents or grandparents that you are married and that means your spouse and children are number one in your life. You no longer will share personal information with them that should only be shared with your spouse. Although you value their opinions, you will only seek their advice when you chose to do so. You will make your spouse the primary beneficiary on your insurance and not your parents. From this point onward you will be spending more time with your spouse and children than with your parents.

Remember parents, your sons or daughters are not married to you. Yes, blood is thicker than water, but **marriage is thicker than blood. Barrington Brennen is a marriage and family therapist and counseling psychologist. Send your questions and comments to P.O. Box N-896 or email [question@soencouragement.org](mailto:question@soencouragement.org) Call 242 323 8772 or visit the website [www.soencouragement.org](http://www.soencouragement.org)**

