Am I My Brother’s Keeper?

**Introduction:** Relate the story of Cain and Abel then read Gen. 4:8-9.

“Keeper” in Hebrew means to hedge about, to guard, protect or attend. So in essence, Cain is answering God’s question, “Where is your brother?” with, “How should I know. Am I my brother’s protector? He can tend to himself? Is it MY responsibility to guard my brother, to hedge or shield him?

It is hard to know the tone of Cain’s voice or the motive for saying this, but there may be a hint of sarcasm. “What are you asking me for? Am I his baby-sitter or something? Isn’t he old enough to take care of himself? I never volunteered to take care of him.” -- Or is he taking a bit of slap at God?...as if to say, “Are YOU not his keeper? If YOU don’t know where He is, then don’t ask me. I didn’t lose him.”

In the end though, the question stands as a soul searching probe of our care for others. What do you think? Are YOU your brother’s keeper?

Are you and I obligated to help the lonely people in this world?
Is it our job to feed the hungry...to clothe the poor?
Do we owe anything to the downtrodden—the orphans—the widows?
Is it our job to minister to the sick?
Are other people’s problems, our problems?
If we see a fellow Christian engaging in sin, is it our job to warn them? Do we have any responsibility for helping guide them away from sin and back to righteous living?

Answer: YES & NO.
I) YES - We are expected by God to be a keeper of our brothers. The love of them requires it...the commands to care for them requires it...the many “one another” passages imply it...the examples of Christ, Paul and others teach it.

Speaking of Paul he says, Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4).
* Read I John 3:16-18
* The Good Samaritan story impels us NOT to pass by on the other side.
* True Religion is not only about keeping me, but keeping others - James 1:27
* So, how are we doing along these lines?
* What is involved in being our brother's keeper?
  1. Teaching him the gospel.
  2. Loving him as we love self.
  3. Restoring him when he falls.
  4. Sharing his burdens and joys.
  5. Doing good to him.
  6. Helping him when he is in need.
  7. Treating him the way we want to be treated.

II) NO - Read Galatians 6:1-2 as proof of the YES answer to our question, but read on...verses 4-5. The same Bible plainly says that this keepership of others only goes so far. Someone once said, “God helps those who help themselves.” That is true.

Listen to these inspired words to verify that point...

Seek and you shall find, Knock and it shall be opened, Ask and it shall be given - Luke 11:9 - I must make the first move!
**Draw near** to God, and He will draw near to you. - James 4:8

**Humble** yourself, and He will lift you up - James 4:10

I must approach God properly first!

**Come out and be separate** and I will receive you - II Cor. 6:17 Me first? Yep!

**Forgive others** their trespasses, then you will be forgiven - Mt. 6:14-15

The WORD plainly says, “Do not cast your pearls before swine.” There are others who God has given permission not only to flounder in their sin, but to not even waste my time and effort on. -- The same Scriptures say, “if a person does not work, feed him and continue to prop him up, for that is the obligation of any good brother’s keeper” Ha! Ha! NO! It says, if he will not work, let him starve!

So am I my brother’s keeper? Only to a point.

**III) The Extremes**

**Yes** - cult like lording it over people. People not being permitted to stand on their own two feet or to FALL on their face.

**No** - No one cares - “Look on my right hand, and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me: refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul.” (Psalms 142:4)

We have to strike a balance - Be our brother’s keeper, but allow them space to be their own person

**IV) Who Is My Brother?**

**Your physical kin** - My brother is Quinn, my sisters are Jimona, Tami and Jori. I am there keeper, protector, guardian. A God-given duty I am happy to accept.
But, it is also other relatives, parents, children. Am I my father’s keeper? God tells me that if I do not take care of Jim Sasser I have denied the faith and am WORSE than an atheist!

Tommy Poarch to son Hobby...“remember when I am old to take care of me.” The Scriptures make it abundantly clear, he is responsible for the upkeep of his parents.

**How about my kids?** Am I their keeper? Is there any question? Of course. You birth them, you keep them! Ha! For always? I don’t see why not. But, don’t they have to learn to stand on their own two feet? Am I ultimately their keeper? God has no grandchildren. They sooner or later will have to stand or fall on their own faith...or lack thereof.

**My neighbor is my brother** and I am to be his keeper.

And of course, my **brother in Christ** is my brother and I am his keeper.

A good place to begin to appreciate the Bible's plan for being a brother’s keeper to fellow Christians is to look at the "one another" passages in the New Testament. There are approximately 58 of them in all and they tell me how to manage the upkeep of my brother.

First, Hebrews 10:24 says, "And let us **consider one another** in order to stir up love and good works." This goes beyond knowing the names of all the others, or even chatting with them after a church service, for it carries with it the idea of pondering thoroughly and being truly considerate of one another.
Next, **Love one another**; for this encompasses all the other "one anothers" of the Scriptures. If we would sincerely love every other brother and sister, then this whole business of brother's keeper would be a breeze. Many passages contain the expression "love one another," but let me single out 1 Peter 1:22, where we read, "...love one another fervently from a pure heart."

And what are these other one anothers? Devoted to one another...give preferential treatment to one another...accept and receive one another...greet one another...be of the same mind toward one another...forbear one another...serve one another...bear one another's burdens...forgive one another...and submit to one another. Whew! I am exhausted. But, as the song said, “He ain’t heavy......he’s my brother!” by Bob Russell and Bobby Scott

The road is long
With many a winding turn
That leads us to who knows where
Who knows where
But I'm strong
Strong enough to carry him
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

So on we go
His welfare is my concern
No burden is he to bear
We'll get there
For I know
He would not encumber me
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

If I'm laden at all
I'm laden with sadness
That everyone's heart
Isn't filled with gladness
And love for one another

It's a long, long road
From which there is no return
While we're on the way to there
Why not share
And the load doesn't weigh me down at all
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

Conclusion: Am I my brother’s keeper? YOU BET!