

STORYTELLING

BIRDS OF A FEATHER



Simon held the feather in his hand, carefully inspecting both sides of the soft, gray quill. He was on his way to the meadow to join some boys for archery practice, but Simon was in no hurry. Unlike most of the boys he knew, Simon wasn't very good at shooting a bow and arrow. When the large, shiny feather caught his eye, he stopped to pick it up. The feather reminded Simon of what his father, Abba, had taught him earlier that morning.

"How good it is," Abba read as he opened the scroll filled with Scripture, "when God's people live together in unity."

"It pleases the Lord when His children love one another. Do you understand?" he asked.

"Yes, Abba," Simon answered.

"Yes, Abba," Simon's older brothers answered.

Simon's little sister, Sarah, shook her head. "No, Abba," she said.

Abba gently pulled Sarah onto his lap. "My sweet Sarah, God is our Father, which makes us His children. **Just as your mother and I want you and your brothers to love one another, God wants His children to love one another as well.**" Sarah smiled at her father and nodded her head.

"When people share faith in the Lord," Abba continued, "when they read the Holy Scriptures and worship together at the synagogue, they become like a family. Like birds with the same color feathers, our faith makes us alike. We stick together."

Simon was still standing on the side of the road holding the gray feather when a group of boys ran past, each clutching a bow and carrying a pouch of arrows on his back.

"You'd better get going, Simon!" one of the boys called.

"It will be dark before you get to the meadow!" another shouted. The boys laughed and kept running. Only Joshua, a friend Simon knew from the synagogue, stopped to wait for him.

"Wow! Where'd you get that?" Joshua asked, pointing to the feather in Simon's hand. "It looks like it's from an ostrich." Simon nodded.

"Hey! You should put it on the end of one of your arrows," Joshua suggested.

Liking the idea, Simon pulled an arrow from the pouch on his back. He untied the string at the top and replaced the old, worn feathers with the sleek, gray ostrich feather. Simon held up the arrow and smiled.

"Perfect!" Joshua said.

When Simon and Joshua got to the meadow, they watched as the other boys practiced. Most of them hit the red bull's-eye in the center of the target with ease. Joshua took a turn and hit the bull's-eye, too. Then it was Simon's turn.

Simon picked up his bow and ostrich-feather arrow. He put the arrow in place and raised the bow. Slowly, Simon pulled back the string and POW! released the arrow. It sailed up ... up ... up ... over the target with a SWOOSH and landed in the tall grass on the far side of the meadow. Simon took a deep breath and sighed. The other boys laughed.

But Joshua didn't laugh. Joshua said, "Hey, Simon, try keeping your arm a bit straighter and loosen your grip on the bow so the arrow won't wobble." Simon practiced straightening his arm and loosening his grip on the bow. Soon he was hitting the target! Simon could hardly wait to tell Abba.

As the boys walked home from the meadow, something shiny caught Simon's eye. Could it be? Yes! A big, glossy gray feather. An ostrich feather! Simon ran to pick it up. "Here," said Simon, handing the feather to Joshua.

"Really?" Joshua asked. "I can have it?"

"We are birds with the same color feathers," Simon said. "We stick together."

by Kathryn O'Brien

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