

# BOARD GAMES AND BROTHERS

My chance to play left a lasting impact, but it wasn't what I'd expected.

By David Christensen

I felt the hot tears of anger slowly slide down my face. I wiped them away with my hand, but I could still feel the slightly salty taste on my lips as sobs of anguish began to pour out. I just wanted to hang out with my brother. Why couldn't he be my friend, too?

Just a few hours before, I had stared at my older brother, Steve, in complete surprise, waiting for him to tell me that he was only joking. "Well, do you want to play?" Steve asked impatiently.

I gave myself a quick pinch to make sure I wasn't dreaming, and then I voiced a timid, "Yeah, sure." I still couldn't believe that my brother had invited me to play a game with the "big kids"! After all, I'd been told for three years that I was still too young to play more difficult board games with my brother and his friends.

I went into the room where the older boys were setting up the board game. As the game started pieces, I felt like I was dreaming. For the first time, I felt equal to my brother—not like I was just his tagalong.

The dream ended quickly, however. The game was tough, and my inexperience and lack of knowledge became painfully obvious as the other players quickly and soundly defeated me.

Losing so quickly was bad enough, but to make matters worse, the other guys started to make fun of me. I tried to continue playing even though they were being mean, but it was hard to hold back my tears of frustration. Unfortunately, one tear trickled down my cheek before I could wipe it away. My brother saw it and teased me too. I couldn't take it anymore and ran to my room.



So there I was, crying by myself, wondering why my brother couldn't just be my friend. I went to sleep that night feeling sad and alone.

The next morning I woke up still feeling worthless. I decided to get dressed and climb the hill behind our house to a secluded place where I could think and be alone. But when I got to the door of my bedroom, I noticed that a piece of paper had been slipped below my door. Unfolding it, I read:

Dear David,  
I would like to ask for your forgiveness for the way I acted last night. I was more interested in winning than in helping you figure out the game. As it turned out, I did end up winning the game, but if you had been a few years older and had just a little more experience, you would have easily won. Next time we play, I'll try to teach you a few pointers that might be helpful. Again, I ask for forgiveness and wish you better luck next time. You're really an exceptional player for your age.  
Love, Steve

True to his word, Steve did help me with some strategy ideas during the next game. He was also very careful not to hurt my feelings. In fact, I noticed that Steve began to take a greater interest in me. That's not to say that he suddenly became my best friend, but he gave me more encouragement and became more willing to listen when I told him about things that were important to me.

Neither of us ever mentioned the letter or the change that occurred in our relationship. I guess it's just one of those things that guys don't talk about much. I kept Steve's letter, but it wasn't until I began reading the Old Testament that I understood why I had become so attached to it. I was struck by Genesis 4:9, which reads, "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" I realized that my brother had been faced with the same question but had given a much different response from Cain. The letter is a wonderful reminder to me that I am blessed with a brother who answered, "Yes, I am my brother's keeper." **NE**

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#### FAMILY LIFE



"Some of our greatest opportunities to demonstrate our love will be within the walls of our own homes. Love should be the very heart of family life, and yet sometimes it is not. There can be too much impatience, too much arguing, too many fights, too many tears. ... And yet the bottom line is that the reasons do not matter. If we would keep the commandment to love one another, we must treat each other with kindness and respect."

President Thomas S. Monson, "Love—the Essence of the Gospel," *Ensign*, May 2014, 92-93; read the talk at [lds.org/go/loveNE8](http://lds.org/go/loveNE8).