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The Samoan Way

The ONLY thing
more BEAUTIFUL
than the island
is the way the
islanders
CHOOSE TO LIVE.





Not many of us have the chance to crack open a snack with a machete on a regular basis. Or eat bananas right off the tree. Or swim and fish in the warm ocean just down the road.

Life in Samoa moves at its own pace and rhythm. It's a stunningly beautiful and peaceful place to live. (Well, peaceful so long as you're not falling out of a mango tree, as you'll learn in a bit.)

Sefa L., 19, and his younger brother Don L., 15, have lived in Samoa their whole lives. They've grown up learning to live off the land, and they love where they live.

But their love for each other is what keeps them strong. Samoans often refer to "the Samoan way," which can be summed up in four simple words: they help each other.

NOT YOUR AVERAGE CHORE LIST

For Don and Sefa's family, the fridge is never empty. That's because there's no fridge in the first place. Their meals come fresh from the land, as well as from selling or trading that food for other supplies.

On their land, they have all the food they'll ever need. But that doesn't mean it's easy. Mealtime requires serious work.

"I like to do my duties to help my family," Don says. And he's not talking about loading and unloading the dishwasher. He's

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got some impressive duties! Using nothing but a machete and a metal spike in the ground, Sefa and Don de-husk and crack open coconuts, hollowing them out to eat as well as feed to pigs. They gather firewood so that the family can cook.

They go fishing. They make banana chips. They climb tall trees without ladders to gather fruit. On this last point, things can sometimes get a bit dicey.

"I once fell out of a mango tree and hit my head," Sefa said. "I was sick and in the hospital a long time. I prayed for a fast recovery, and God gave me back my strength."

Does that incident with the mango tree keep Sefa from climbing these days? He actually laughs at this particular question. "No!" he says emphatically. It's sort of like asking Sefa if he still breathes air. And his younger brother is right there with him. "I climb all the trees too," he adds.

SCHOOL AND SIBLINGS

The Samoan way is much more than shared chores. It's about lifting each other to a higher place whenever possible. And for a lot of families, that includes siblings helping siblings with the cost of their education.

"I work in the city to help provide money for my family, including paying for my younger brother's schooling," Sefa explains.









This sacrifice means a lot to Don. “This makes me feel closer to my brother,” he says. “I love him and appreciate what he’s doing for me.”

Sefa also knows that Don will ultimately be able to pay it forward. He likes to imagine the man his younger brother will grow to be. “I know that someday Don will do great things for his own family,” Sefa says. He wants his brother to have every shot at success.

Once again, it’s the Samoan way. They help build each other’s future.

GATHERING ISRAEL, SAMOAN STYLE

A particular sight that outsiders can’t fail to notice is the abundance of pigs on the island. They’re everywhere! And they are quite valuable. These pigs are used mainly for selling or for celebratory feasts.

One of the main occasions when pigs are used for feasts is to celebrate a missionary’s return. Missionary work is a big deal in this culture. A missionary is celebrated and sustained not just at the family level but also at the village level.

“My biggest goals in life are to serve a mission and be married in the temple,” Sefa says. Don nods his head in agreement eagerly.

If the Samoan way is to help others, what better way is there to help than by bringing someone closer to Christ?

MY BROTHER’S KEEPER?

Sefa and Don may carry and use machetes with the same ease that other teens might carry and use a smartphone. But they’re still just typical brothers who love to goof off, tease each other, and play games together (their favorite is rugby). They enjoy each other’s company and find small ways to help each other every single day.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles once said, “Although I may not be my brother’s keeper, I am my brother’s brother, and ‘because I have been given much, I too must give’” (Oct. 2014 general conference [*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 42]).

Don and Sefa might say, “That’s just living life the Samoan way.” **NE**