

Sometimes big brother knows best (but don't tell him I said so)

During our commute home last night, Daniel spotted an almost empty bottle in the car—leftover from days ago. He had to have it.

I don't know what can happen if you drink something that's been sitting in the car for days, but I'd rather skip it. And I told him so.

Daniel got very upset. He couldn't move on, and he cried the rest of the way home. Now, there are mothers who would sensibly have cleaned out the car after getting home, but I forgot. So the same bottle was still there when we began today's commute.

"Mama, I want my drink," came Daniel's voice from the back seat.

I calmly explained that he couldn't have it.

"Noooooo!" he said.

I took a deep breath and prepared for another argument. Then I heard his big brother's voice.

✖ "Little Angry Bird," said Leo, and I realized he was talking to the stuffed bird in Daniel's hands. "Are you thirsty?"

Daniel stopped whining.

And then I heard a very different voice coming from his mouth—the voice he uses when he's pretending to be a baby bird.

"Yes," he said in his sweet little voice.

"Well," said Leo, using his own stuffed animal voice. "Here is a special drink for you—just for a baby bird."

Leo's bird handed Daniel's bird an invisible drink. He drank it. The birds started playing together. And we had a pleasant drive to school.

Now I could have tried that. And I do need to remember to appeal to the boys' imaginations more often. But even if I had, I'm not sure I could have sold Daniel on the idea. There's something special about a big brother's suggestion. Unless he's deciding which of them gets the bigger treat, Leo's ideas are always the best.



Do these boys argue? Of course.

They're children. They're brothers. They're human.

But they truly enjoy each other's company. When they get upset with each other, the empty threat is always "If you don't do what I want, I'm never going to play with you again!" The most extreme punishment we have around here is making them sleep in

separate bedrooms.

They have a special friendship—one that has far surpassed the hopes we had when they met a little less than two years ago. If you had told me then that I would be worrying about how they'd transition to spending time apart when Leo begins kindergarten, I would have thought you were talking about a different family.



But here we are.

Tonight a happy, laughing—and not all that thirsty—Daniel had long forgotten that drink in the car. He was too busy dancing through the house with his brother as they waved flyswatters around and sang, “Me ole bamboo, me ole bamboo,” from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

And even though I've made six trips to the car tonight to bring in groceries, stuffed animals, and discarded clothing, it's only now that I realize that yet again I have forgotten that bottle.

I could go get it. Or I could wait and see what Leo has up his sleeve tomorrow.



What parenting lessons have your children taught you?

Joining Theology Is a Verb and Reconciled to You for Worth Revisiting Wednesday on May 27, 2015.