

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses (Proverbs 10:12)

A Proverbial Story

By Ted Hildebrandt and Chatgpt

Long ago, nestled between two tall mountains, there were two villages: Brightwood and Stonehill. Though they were close neighbors, the people of Brightwood and Stonehill didn't get along. A long-forgotten argument had turned into years of shouting, glaring, and refusing to help each other.

One morning, a little girl from Brightwood named Zoe was picking berries near the border when she slipped and twisted her ankle. She cried for help, but no one from Brightwood heard her. Instead, a boy from Stonehill named Tomas, out gathering firewood, spotted her.

Tomas hesitated. He remembered all the angry words the villagers had exchanged over the years. Should he help her, or walk away like everyone always did?

But Tomas had a kind heart. He rushed over, helped Zoe up, and made a splint for her ankle using a sturdy branch. Then, he carried her all the way back to Brightwood, even though he knew the other villagers might not be happy to see a Stonehill boy.

When they arrived, Zoe's parents gasped. "What are you doing here?" her father demanded, glaring at Tomas.

Before Tomas could answer, Zoe cried, "He saved me! I would still be hurt in the woods if not for him!"

The villagers murmured, surprised. A boy from Stonehill had helped one of their own? That had never happened before.

Tomas simply said, "My mother always tells me, 'Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.' I didn't care about the old anger between us. I just saw someone who needed help."

Zoe's father looked at Tomas, then at his daughter. Slowly, he nodded. "Thank you," he said gruffly. It was the first kind word spoken between the villages in many years.

News of Tomas's good deed spread fast. The next day, when a Stonehill family's wagon broke down near Brightwood, the Brightwood blacksmith, Mr. Jasper, went to help. When the Stonehill farmers harvested too many apples, they sent baskets to Brightwood's marketplace.

Little by little, the kindness grew. The old anger started to melt away, like snow in the spring rains. Children from both villages played together. Cooks shared recipes. Even the mayors of Brightwood and Stonehill sat down together and laughed over tea.

One evening, at a grand festival thrown by both villages together, the mayor of Brightwood stood up and said, “We wasted so many years fighting over old wounds. But Tomas reminded us all of the old proverb ‘hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.’ Thanks to love, we are no longer two villages. We are one big family.”

Everyone cheered, and Tomas, now a little taller and a little prouder, smiled shyly. He hadn’t meant to start anything big—he had just helped because it was the right thing to do.

And from that day forward, whenever someone was tempted to be mean or hold a grudge, they would remember the story of Tomas and Zoe, and how “hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses” (Proverbs 10:12).