

## INFLUENCE OF A BROTHER

When country music legend Johnny Cash, 71, died on September 12, 2003, the nation and the world lost an icon in the music industry, but one who also influenced many people because of his faith in Christ. He died because of complications from diabetes, just four months after his wife of 35 years, June Carter Cash, had passed away. In a life that was significant, who set the example for Johnny Cash?

In his autobiography, Cash told the story of his older brother, Jack, who was only 14 when he died. Jack worked at the high school agriculture shop, where he had a job cutting oak trees into fence posts. The money he earned helped support their family, which was struggling to survive by working in the cotton fields of rural Arkansas. A terrible accident occurred one day. A table saw severely cut Jack, resulting in his death a few days later.

Sometime before his death, Jack had announced to his family and the community that he intended to be a preacher. Everyone agreed he would make a fine preacher, for his strong Christian character was already well known.

Johnny Cash looked up to his older brother, and Jack's example continued to influence him throughout his life. Cash wrote, "Jack isn't really gone, anyway, any more than anyone is. For one thing, his influence on me is profound. When we were kids, he tried to turn me from the way of death to the way of life, to steer me toward the light, and since he died, his words and his example have been like signposts for me. The most important question in many of the conundrums and crises of my life has been, 'Which is Jack's way? Which direction would he have taken?' I haven't always gone that way, of course, but at least I've known where it was."

It's a powerful tribute to a brother, who -- even though gone -- fulfilled his life's dream through Johnny Cash in pointing people to God.

The question for you today is: Who will see you as an example? A son or daughter? A brother or sister? A friend? A resident in the centers of Life Care and American Lifestyles and the work of Life Care at Home? It is a sobering consideration.

--Beecher Hunter