

Practical Work

- Use the stories in this section to teach your congregation to pray faithfully, alone and with their families.
- Help your congregation to pray for each other and for those in need. You may need to visit them in their homes, and pray with them to help them start.
- Prepare the congregation to pray for the sick and those who are oppressed by evil spirits.
- During worship lead the congregation in prayer for cities, countries and governments of the world.
Help people who feel shame to confess their real guilt and trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, to bring them forgiveness and eternal life.

Ministry 12

Talk with God



The next morning police arrive at Learner's house and take him to jail. The judge tells him, "I will hold a trial to determine if you have led meetings unauthorized by our municipal government. The penalties for subversive activity are severe. Nobody is allowed to visit you except your wife."

That afternoon Sara comes to visit and tells Learner, "This has happened because so many people have been coming to the Lord. We have all been praying daily for the salvation of lost persons, and for opportunities to tell them about Christ. The Lord answered our prayers. But it drew the attention of those who hate Christians."

Learner prays, "Lord, give me opportunities to share your good news with the other prisoners in this jail."

God answers the prayer. After a week, six prisoners have come to Christ.



"Yes! This helps! Failing the University course was shameful but not really evil. But wanting to steal from the professor is evil before God. I felt shame for what was not really evil, but I felt no shame for a sin for which I'm really guilty. I prayed last night that God would help me hurt the professor some way. I was wrong. But how can I face my parents? They spent much money to send me to the university."

"God will help you. First, confess your sins to God and ask His forgiveness. You know about Christ's sacrifice for sin. Now you know why you need it. Confessing sin is a vital part of prayer. To want to steal from the professor is real sin and brings real shame before God. You must confess it."

"I do not know how to confess sins to God. I've never done it."

"To acknowledge real shame, it helps to understand the difference between real guilt before God and our feelings of shame. We feel shame when a parent, a teacher or some person of authority rebukes us in public. We feel shame when we do something that causes people to think that we are bad or that our family is inferior. Such feelings of shame sometimes are not deserved. Circumstances make us look bad when we have done nothing wrong in God's sight. Now, let us pray together to confess your real sins. If you want, I will say a prayer of confession in Jesus' name, and you can repeat the words after me."

Samuel repeats the plea for forgiveness in Jesus' name after Learner. Once he starts talking to God he finds it easy and continues to pray and confess his sins in his own words. A few days later his faith and repentance are confirmed with baptism.

Sara whispers to Learner, "What would Mr. Wise do with Samuel?"

Learner prays silently for wisdom, then gently assures Samuel, "You have been shamed but you did nothing wrong. God does not hold you guilty because you failed in the university. You did what you could. You do not need to kill yourself. Jesus Christ will come into your heart and remove the shame."

"If I do not die, then I have to get even with the professor. He owns expensive equipment to detect chemicals. I will steal it from him. He will not be able to prove it was me who did it!"

"No, no!" Learner emphasizes. "That would be wrong! You must understand the difference between two kinds of shame. One is only a matter of feeling. The other comes from real guilt that deserves God's punishment! To fail a course brings only the first kind of shame, which is not evil. But to steal is real sin. It brings real guilt and deserves God's punishment!"

"I do not understand the difference."

"Let me explain a Bible story about King Saul and Two Kinds of Shame."

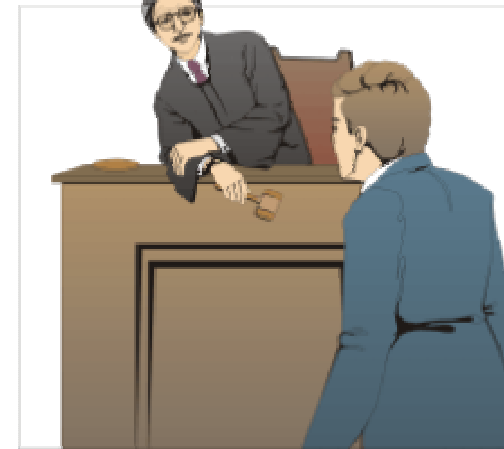
Exercise

Find in **1 Samuel 20:27-34** what Learner helps Samuel to discover:

- Find in verse 30 why King Saul said that Jonathan shamed his family.
- Find in verse 34 in what way Saul treated David shamefully.
- Which man's shame was based on real guilt before God, Saul's or Jonathan's?

Learner explains to Samuel, "Jonathan felt shame but he had no guilt before God. He had done no wrong. His jealous and vengeful father king Saul felt no guilt even though he wanted to commit an evil crime. He wanted to kill an innocent man. He had a proud and sinful heart before God. Do you see the difference?"

Three weeks later the judge holds the trial. Joseph, the elder who had been arrested earlier, is tried at the same time. They employed the same lawyer, but he makes very little effort to defend them. The prosecutor calls witnesses who accuse the believers of neglecting the good customs and traditions of the community. Mr. Foolish also gives testimony against Learner. Apparently someone paid him to spy on the congregation. The judge announces, "You both will be held in prison until I can arrange for your execution. That is the penalty for holding subversive meetings."



Helper meets secretly with the elders of Learner's congregation in Jacob's house and tells them, "My brothers and sisters, you are angry and afraid. Do not be discouraged. Mr. Wise taught us from God's Word that we are not to be angry with the people who are persecuting you. As Jesus said when they crucified Him, 'they do not understand what they are doing.' God will use it for good. Keep praying for Learner and Joseph. Remember, our battle is not against people but against evil spirit powers. Follow the examples of those who prayed in the Bible, such as Abraham, Esther and the persistent widow. Let me tell you about Abraham's Bold Prayer of Intercession"

Exercise

Find in **Genesis 18:16-33**:

- In what way did Abraham persist when he interceded for the wicked people of Sodom?
- Was Abraham proud or humble when he prayed?
- How did God respond to Abraham's compassion and persistence?

Helper explains to the elders gathered in Jacob's house, "Abraham pleaded for the wicked people of Sodom. They were foreigners to Abraham, but he felt compassion for them. God answered part of his request for mercy. Abraham never demanded anything from God but asked humbly. We also intercede for cities, countries and governments, our own and those far away from us. Please help the congregation pray this way while Learner is gone."

"Remember to pray not only for yourselves and your families, but also for the whole congregation. Pray for your leaders. Ask God to unite you and fill you with the Holy Spirit and His power so you can serve Him. Pray for those in need and in jail. Pray for God to give us all more opportunities and more workers to go far away to neglected people to tell the good news. Now, let me tell you how God Uses an Orphan Girl to Save a Nation."

Exercise

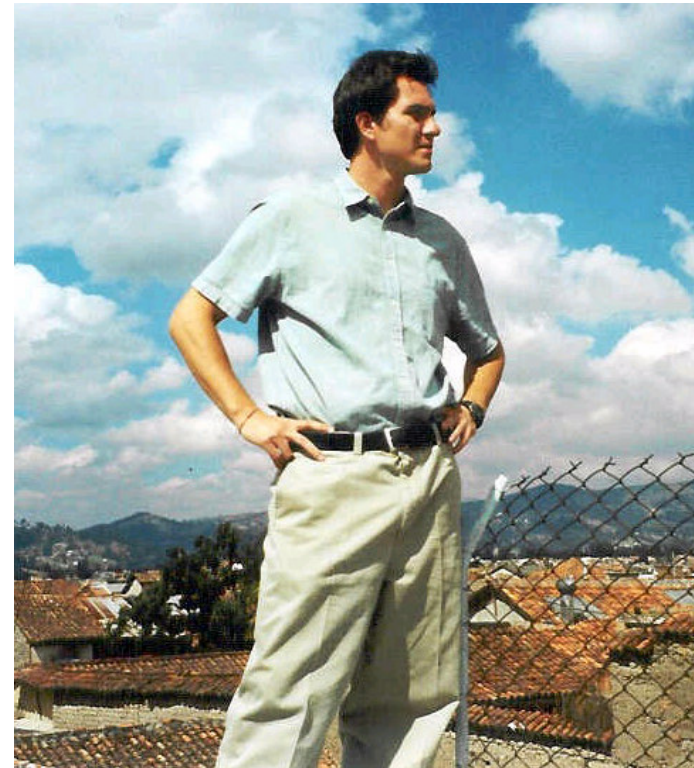
Find in **Esther 3:13 – 5:3 & 7:1-8**:

- Because of what great danger was Mordecai mourning?
- What did the Jews do to prepare for Queen Esther's meeting with the king?
- What did Queen Esther do to show her love for her people and her courageous faith?
- Review briefly the whole book of Esther, to see how, by her people's prayers, she saved a nation.

Learner and Sara rush to Deborah's house. She explains,

Samuel is holding a razor blade, weeping. Deborah rushes and takes the blade from him. Samuel sobs, "I have too much shame to live. Please go away!"

Sara asks him why he is so sad. After a long moment of silence he tells her, "An idiot university professor gave me failing grades and I can no longer continue. I cannot live with the shame. I studied as hard as I could, but I could not remember the material. I worked harder than the students who got high grades did! I brought shame on myself and on my family."



Mr. Foolish complains to Jacob, "Do not tell us what to do so much! You are a very new believer. In the absence of Learner, I am in charge. Mr. Caregiver has been leading people in this church too much also."

Another one of the elders rebukes Mr. Foolish, "What you say is not right. Jacob has every right to work with us. And we need Caregiver's help also, even though he is from another congregation, In the New Testament leaders continually served different congregations. They would travel often to help congregations in need. The Scriptures require this interaction between congregations. They are not meant to be isolated groups. Any congregation is part of the larger Body of Christ in its area." To the rest he says, "Come, let us lay hands on this demonized man and pray."

Mr. Foolish cries, "No! Do not oppose those demons! They will attack us!" The elders pay him no attention and he rushes from the room and stands peeking around the edge of the door. The elders rebuke the evil spirit in the name of Jesus. For the next hour they help Tobias to confess his sins to God in Jesus' name and receive the power of the Holy Spirit to protect him against the evil one. Finally Tobias relaxes and yields to God. He confesses his sin and asks Jesus to save him. After a few moments of silence he exclaims, "The evil spirits have left!"

They praise the Lord. Tobias tells Jacob, "I have something to confess to you. I work with the authorities and accused your leaders of subversive activities against the government. Mr. Foolish informed me of where your secret meetings were held. I would buy his junk and he would tell me anything."

The next day Tobias, freed from the demonic oppression, tells the truth to the authorities. They free Learner and Helper, who return to Learner's house and find a small group praying for their release. They praise God with great joy.

Discerning Between Shame that Is Merely Felt and Guilt Before God that Is Real

Later that day Deborah arrives at Learner's house out of breath. "Help me!" she cries, "My brother Samuel is going to kill himself! Come talk to him! I told him about Jesus but he would not listen."

Helper continues explaining to the elders in Jacob's house, "God raised up Esther as queen so that she could save her people from destruction. She and her people prayed and fasted for three days before she met with the king. She risked her life to go to him, and through her faith, her people were saved. In the Old Testament, God punished the enemies of His people to show His holiness. God punished Mordecai's enemies with death. In the New Testament, God shows grace to those who reject Him. Jesus tells us to pray for them. God works through our prayers to save people from destruction. We should be praying in our hearts all the time. We should never get tired of praying. Prayer is our main weapon in spiritual warfare. Now let me tell you about The Persistent Widow."

Exercise

Find in **Luke 18:1-8**:

- How did the widow persuade the corrupt judge to help her?
- Since God is our good judge, should we also persist in our prayers to Him? Why?
- What does Christ want to find in us when He returns?

Helper finishes teaching with these words about prayer, "The corrupt judge helped the widow because she kept asking him. She did not let anything stop her. God is a good judge. He will answer your prayers for justice. Do not let anything hinder you from faithful prayer. Consider those around you when you pray in a group. Do not bore them with long, repetitious prayers like those that pray to false gods. Stay away from criticism and gossip. Mistreating others hinders our prayers. Remember the Enemy wants to interrupt and distract us. Jesus often went away to pray alone all night. Like Jesus, take time to pray away from the distractions of the world."

When Helper steps out the door he finds three policemen waiting for him. They arrest him and take him to jail. He requests to be put in the same cell as Learner but they refuse.

The believers fast and pray in their homes. Some meet in tiny groups and pray all night for Learner and Helper. Mr. Foolish arrives at a meeting in Jacob's store and says, "If we really want God to answer our prayers, we must pray on our knees. Not standing. Not sitting. Not lying down. Only on our knees. The Bible says King Solomon prayed kneeling with his hands spread toward heaven. That is the only way!"

Jacob responds, "You distract everyone from the real purpose of prayer. Two men are in jail and you want us to focus on the posture of our bodies! God is more concerned about the posture of our hearts. In the Bible they talk to God in different ways. Sometimes they pray in silence. Other times they pray aloud. Sometimes they pray standing or lying face down. Some of them use psalms from the Bible or sing their prayers. 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.'"

Mr. Foolish leaves. They talk about ways to help the congregation pray more effectively. All agree to pray every day, alone and with their families. Two older women promise to gather every morning very early to pray together. Jacob asks the believers to form a prayer chain. "When someone learns of a need, he tells another person. That person tells another, until everyone who participates in the chain is praying. Everyone can pray in different ways and at different times."

The Power of praying in Jesus' Name

The next day Jacob and the elders go and pray for Ruth, a newly married young woman who is seriously ill. She explains, "My husband Tobias beat me and I fell. He has been taking illegal drugs. I have much pain now. Mr. Foolish comes also and starts to preach, using big words. He tells the elders, "Now that Learner is in jail, I should lead the church."

"No, you will not!" Jacob asserts. "And stop using big words to impress these people with your spiritual power! Now, let the elders follow the instructions in James 5." They pour a bit of oil on the woman's head and pray in Jesus' name. They pray in faith and humility, using simple words.

"Is it my fault?" Deborah asks in her fever, "Have I have sinned so much?"

Mr. Foolish starts to say yes but Jacob tells her, "If some sins are troubling you, confess them and trust God to forgive you."

While they are praying, her husband Tobias pushes open the door. He hears them pray in the name of Jesus and curses. He hits Jacob, but falls in the process and sprains his wrist. He curses again incoherently. Jacob tells the elders, "Tobias let drugs weaken his mind and open it for evil spirits to control his thoughts."

Mr. Foolish yells, "Run! We are no match for this power!" Ruth, however, cries, "Do not go! I beg you to stay. Learner taught us about Jesus' power over evil spirits. He said to resist the devil and he will flee from us."

"Yes," Jacob replies. "That is James 4:7. We will not flee from the devil but will stay here and resist him. We will force him in the name of Jesus to flee from us." He tells the story of The Boy who Was Tormented by Demons.

Exercise

Find in **Mark 9:14-29**:

- What were the disciples doing when Jesus found them?
- Why could the disciples not cast out the evil spirit?
- What did Jesus ask the father to do?
- What did Jesus do to cast out the spirit?

Jacob explains, "Instead of praying, Jesus' disciples were arguing when He arrived! They could not cast out the spirit because they were not relying on the power of God. Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith. He told the father to believe. Then He commanded the spirit to leave the boy and never return. He cured the boy completely. Now, let us do what Jesus did, for Tobias. Come, pray with me for him!"