

At the end of the meeting in Learner's house, Sara asks the mothers to wait a moment. She tells them, "Learner has helped me to become a teacher for the children. He wants us to make a list of stories for children and help them present one to the congregation each week in a short drama."

Learner adds, "Let us ask their fathers also to take part. The stories are more powerful when adults participate as well as children."

Sara begs, "Those of you who would like to teach children, please help. We will prepare together each week. We want the children to be happy and respectful as they learn. If the men take part also, that will be much better. We need your help for that, Learner."

Jacob's wife says to her children, "Starting tomorrow we will pray together as a family every morning before you go to school."



### Practical Work

- Help the families in your church follow God's design for authority in the family.
- Help your families plan times when they study God's Word, sing, and pray together.
- Teach parents to correct their children in love.
- Arrange for the children to hear Bible stories, then act them out and participate in worship.
- Ask adults also to act out the Bible stories, by themselves or together with the children.

### Ministry 9

## Strengthen Marriages and the Faith of Entire Families



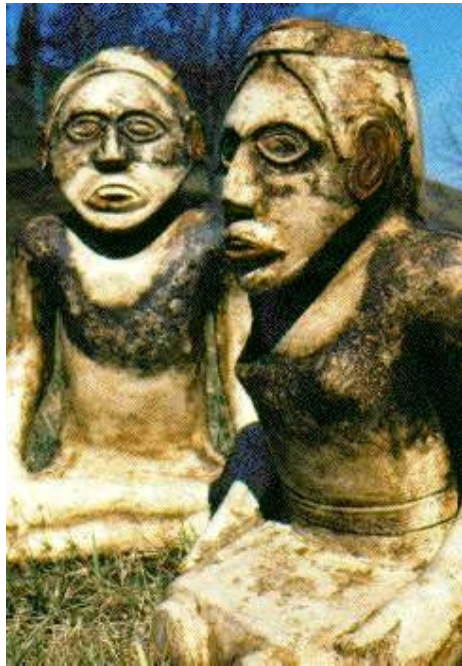
Mr. Foolish arrives at Learner's house with his sales cart, displaying several items for sale. "Look at this," he says, "A new kind of flashlight battery that will never run down. Buy a whole box of twelve for your flashlight."

Learner asks, "If they never run down, why should I buy so many? What do you have covered under that cloth?"

"Personal belongings." Learner removes the cloth and finds statues, the kind that some people worship as idols.

"They are only adornments to beautify a house!" Mr. Foolish asserts.

"Then why did you hide them?"



"I knew you would disapprove! You are narrow-minded! If you had strong faith you would know that an idol is really nothing and you

Learner asks his people to talk about what they plan to do to strengthen their families. Jacob, who has become loyal to Learner and is now growing rapidly in Christ, responds, "As parents, we protect our children from spiritual danger by training them when they are young. We explain to them what we want them to do. We expect them to obey as quickly as Samuel did. If they do not obey quickly and cheerfully, then we correct them. Do you mothers agree?"

Deborah speaks for the first time in such a meeting. "We should teach our children by our example. We teach them to avoid drunkenness and other addictions. We show them how to choose friends that will not tempt them with evil. We show them how to work hard, doing a good job at everything, the same way you would do it for the Lord. We show them how to apply God's Word to their own lives."

"Excellent!" Learner exclaims. "Here are stories about families in the Bible. They are easy to teach to children. You parents can teach your children valuable truths from them. Tell them to your children and to the other children whose parents are not Christians."

### Exercise

Find in **Genesis chapter 24** how God provided a wife for Isaac.

Find in **Genesis 29:1-30** what Jacob did to prove his love for Rachel.

Find in **Acts 7:9-14**:

- What did Joseph do to show that he forgave his brothers that sold him as a slave?
- How did God use Joseph's suffering to save his family from starving?

Find in Luke chapters 1 & 2 into what kind of family Jesus was born.

### How to Teach Children to Have Faith in Christ

At their next meeting Learner tells his congregation, "We must strengthen our family life. Paul tells children in Ephesians 6:1-4 to obey their parents in the Lord so that they can live long and well. He tells parents to train their children well, not frustrating them with commands that the children cannot obey easily. Good parents teach their children to obey them. You can use stories from the Bible to teach them to pray and to obey the commands of Jesus. Each family should plan regular times of family worship in the home. Let us learn about The Good and Bad Sons of Eli the Priest."

#### Exercise

Find in **1 Samuel chapter 3**:

- How quickly did Samuel obey when he thought Eli was calling him?
- What did Eli fail to do with his rebellious sons?

Learner continues to explain to his congregation meeting in his house, "God warned Eli to correct his sons. As the High Priest of Israel, Eli was giving a bad example to the whole nation. His sons were misusing their positions of authority to steal from the people and mistreat them, but Eli did nothing to stop them. Because Eli did not correct his sons, they all died. Samuel's parents, on the other hand, taught Samuel to obey immediately and cheerfully. God blessed him all his life for his obedience."

After a moment of silence Sara replies, "I agree, Jacob. Very young children learn quickly when we correct them immediately and physically, as Proverbs 13:24 says. When older children disobey, and we take something away from them for a while, they learn to obey us. We must respect our children and not yell at them or call them names. We must not correct them in anger or we might injure them. And we make sure that both parents teach the same rules."

would not make a fuss about it. I have strong faith, so I can sell these statues without any problem."

"I do not understand your logic," Learner replies, "The pagans who buy them use them to worship."

"You do not have real faith. No one in the church has real faith except me. Your people should be living good lives but almost all the families have problems. Husbands fight with their wives and neglect their children. They have no faith! I keep my family in order. When my wife does not do what I say, I beat her."

Learner answers, "It is true that our families have problems, and it sounds like yours does, too. I told Mr. Wise that we needed to strengthen the faith of entire families. He left me this study about Abraham the man of faith. Let us read it. But first, promise that you will not sell those idols."

Mr. Foolish grumbles, "As you say. I will not sell any more after these. I do not want trouble with my church."

Learner continues, "Good. Now let us study about Abraham the Man of Faith to discover what real faith is. God promised Abraham that He would bless all nations through one of his descendants. That is Jesus. Abraham believed this promise."

#### Exercise

Find in **Genesis 21:1-7** who made it possible for Abraham's aged and sterile wife Sarah to give birth.

Find in **Genesis 22:1-18**:

- How did God test Abraham's faith?
- How did God save Abraham's son?
- What promise did God make to Abraham because he trusted God?

Mr. Foolish leans against his cart in front of Learner's house in silence for a few moments. Then he remarks, "Abraham had more faith than any man could have today. He and his wife did those things long ago. We face very different problems today."

Learner answers, "Abraham's example applies to us today. God gave him a son, through whom the promise to bless all nations would be fulfilled. That includes us. He tested Abraham's faith by telling him to sacrifice his son, to kill him on an altar. Abraham trusted God enough to obey, and God saved Isaac by sending a ram to die in his place. This was an example, a prophecy, of how Jesus would die in our place 2,000 years later. Through Jesus, who is Abraham's descendant, God kept His promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth."



"He could bless me with a few more sales."

"About beating your wife, that is not correct. God created marriage and made it good. He sends us our children and blesses them. If we follow His Guidelines for the Family, we live in harmony."

### Exercise

Read **Ephesians 5:21-33** to find:

- To whom are Christian wives to submit?
- What must a Christian husband do to deserve this submission by his wife?
- To what degree should a man love his wife?
- What is Christian marriage an example of?

Read Ephesians 6:1-3 to find:

- What is the duty of children in a Christian home?
- What is the duty of parents?

Learner explains to Mr. Foolish, as they stand beside his cart outside of Learner's house, "Scripture tells us that a man and a woman should leave their parents to unite in marriage. They must be faithful to each other for the rest of their lives. The husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself. The wife should respect her husband and submit to him. The husband is not to rule her with angry words and threats. Instead, Paul tells them to submit to each other. If a husband loves his wife and takes good care of the family, the wife will follow him gladly."

Mr. Foolish interrupts, "That only works when both husband and wife are Christians. My wife is not. She is ignorant. I plan to divorce her and marry a younger Christian girl! Then my children will behave better!"

Learner explains, "No! Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 to stay with an unbelieving partner if the partner is willing. He tells unmarried believers to marry only other followers of Christ. Paul also tells us how to train our children." Learner starts to read the passage but Mr. Foolish leaves.