

Families of Faith



SABBATH—JUNE 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 10:1–28, 34, 35; Genesis 18:19; Genesis 12:1–5; Judges 2:7–13; John 3:16.

MEMORY VERSE: “So we, too, should run the race that is before us and never quit. We should remove from our lives anything that would [will] slow us down and the sin that so often makes us fall. We must never stop looking to Jesus. He is the leader of our faith, and he is the one who makes our faith complete. He suffered death on a cross. But he accepted the shame of the cross as if it were nothing because of the joy he could see waiting for him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God’s throne” (Hebrews 12:1, 2, ERV).



“Then you will shine among them like [the same as] stars in the sky” (Philippians 2:15, NlrV).

FAMILIES are changed every day by the different beliefs and ways of life in their community. Sometimes these ways of life are good. Sometimes they are not. Some of them are very powerful. They can even change the church. Just drive past any church with a sign out front that invites you to worship on Sunday. That sign for Sunday worship shows you that some ideas and ways of life are powerful.

The ways of life around us bring us many problems and questions. The good news is that the Bible gives us answers to these questions. This week, we will learn how we can be “families of faith” in our communities. “Then you will be pure [clean] and without blame. You will be children of God without fault among sinful [fallen] and evil people. Then you will shine among them like [the same as] stars in the sky” (Philippians 2:15, NlrV).

**HOLD ON TIGHT TO THE GOOD THINGS
(Acts 10:1–28, 34, 35)**

Christians must take the Good News about Jesus everywhere on earth. As we do this work, we will meet people with different beliefs and behaviors. Their ways of life may seem strange to us. One of the big questions Bible workers must answer is: How should I behave in a land with a way of life that is different from mine? Some new ways of life will not make us feel comfortable at all.

Read Acts 10:1–28, 34, 35. What important rule can we learn from these verses? How can this rule help us learn not to judge people who do not live the same way we do?

Jesus died for each person on this earth. But many people do not know about this wonderful truth. So, we must go tell them about it. We must remember that God loves everyone the same. So, we as Christians must respect people in the same way too.

Read Acts 15:19, 20, 28, 29; 1 Corinthians 2:2; and 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22. What important rules do these verses teach us? What did the New Testament Christians decide about sharing the Good News with people who followed other ways of life?

Communities and their ways of life show us that people on this earth are weak and full of sin. Some ways of life may have beliefs that agree with the Bible. Can you think of examples? What about the family? Many people put a lot of value on families and communities. Bible workers can accept the good beliefs in a community. They can help these beliefs grow stronger in the community too.

At the same time, we must never make God's truth less important than it is. Church history shows us what happens when people made their own beliefs and ways of life more important than Bible truth. Satan brags that he is the god of the whole earth. He is happy when he confuses people and mixes them up about the truth. But Jesus bought us with His blood. He came to save us from sin and Satan's lies. God's Spirit guides His followers into all truth (John 16:13).

Is your faith different from the beliefs and the way of life of the people around you? Or do you share many of their beliefs and ways of life?



Jesus bought us with His blood. He came to save us from sin and Satan's lies.

**THE WAY OF LIFE AROUND YOU AND YOUR FAMILY
(Genesis 18:19)**

“ ‘I have chosen him. He must direct [teach] his children to live in the way that pleases me. And he must direct the members of his family after him to do the same. So he must guide all of them in doing what is right and fair. Then I, the LORD, will do for Abraham what I have promised him’ ” (Genesis 18:19, NIV).



Families are the “building blocks” of communities.

Families are the “building blocks” of communities. So, of course, many of our beliefs and ways of life are tied to family. Here are a few examples of some ways of life from the past. These examples seem strange to us today. In one community, the men were expected to eat the bodies of their dead parents. In another community, a man who wanted a wife had to chop off his enemies’ heads first. Then the man gave the heads to his bride’s father as a gift. After that, the father allowed the man to marry his daughter. We do not live this way today. But we have our own ideas and beliefs about kids, dating, divorce, marriage, and parents. Your ideas may be different from someone else’s. We must remember that our ideas are different as we share the Good News with people in faraway lands. We must learn to understand people and their ways of life. At the same time, we must not let their different ways of life change what we believe. We also must understand how these ways of life can change our families.

Read about the people in the verses below. How did the ways of life around these people change their families? What important rules do these verses teach us?

Genesis 16:1–3 _____

Genesis 35:1–4 _____

Ezra 10 _____

1 Kings 11:1 _____

As Christians, we must live in peace as much as we can with the ways of life around us. We may accept the good. But we must stay away from anything that makes our faith weak.

YOUR FAMILY AND TIMES OF CHANGE (Genesis 12:1–5)

Change is part of life. It is part of family life too. We cannot escape it. Some change happens with no warning: death, troubles, war, sickness, moving to a new house, or losing your job. Some change happens because of changes in your government or country. Other changes are caused by your community and its way of life.

Here are some examples of hard times and difficult changes that happened to people in the Bible. How did the hard times change their lives? What gave them strength and support during this time? Would you behave differently in these stories? If yes, how?

Abraham, Sarah, and Lot (Genesis 12:1–5) _____

Hadassah (Esther 2:7–9) _____

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Daniel 1) _____

Change can cause loss. Then we worry about what will happen in the future. Some families are stronger than other families. Change will help them to grow. They will become more spiritual. But change can break families that are weak. Satan attacks us during times of change and trouble when we feel weak and afraid. He hopes to make us doubt God and not trust Him. But the stories we read can teach us how to stay strong during change and hard times.

Do you know someone (or even a whole family) who is in the middle of an awful change in life? What can you do to help and encourage them?



The stories we read in the Bible teach us how to stay strong during change and hard times.

THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS (Judges 2:7–13)

What happened to Israel’s faith in God after Joshua and the other leaders who were Joshua’s age died? Read Judges 2:7–13 for the answer.

Studies show that the people who start a church or religion have very strong faith in their beliefs. These people are the first ones to take a strong stand for these truths. But by the time their kids and grandkids grow up, things change. The kids and grandkids may go along with their parents’ or grandparents’ religion because of habit. But often they do not have the same “fire” burning for the truth in their hearts.

Someone said: “God has no grandchildren, only children.” Why is that statement true? For the answer, also read John 1:12, 13; John 3:7; and 1 John 5:1.

What is one of the best ways for older Christians to teach younger Christians about the truth? The older Christians must tell the younger ones what they believe. Remember, our learning what our parents believe is not the same thing as our believing the truth ourselves. Young people must study and accept the truth too. Is being a Christian only about belonging to a church? No. It is much more than that. True faith is not something you are born with. It is not something you can give to your children. Each person needs to know Jesus for himself or herself. Parents can teach their kids about Jesus. Then the choice to follow Jesus is up to the child. Churches and parents need to do all they can to help children want to make the right choices. In the end, we each must decide for ourselves to be saved or lost.



What is one of the best ways for older Christians to teach younger Christians about the truth? It is for the older Christians to tell the younger ones what they believe.

Joe grew up not believing in God. Then he had a powerful experience with Jesus. Joe gave his life to the Lord and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He married an Adventist woman. They had a few kids. Joe and his wife took the children to church and taught them about Jesus. But the children did not have any interest in their parents’ faith. That broke Joe’s heart. He said, “Oh, if only my kids had the experience with Jesus I had!” If you had been there, what would you say to Joe?

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS KEEPS GETTING BETTER (John 3:16)

Eugene Peterson wanted to make a copy of the Bible that was easy to read. So, he made *The Message Bible*. In *The Message Bible*, Peterson put the word “message” in the same place as the word “gospel,” which means “Good News.” We continue to need the Good News today. It is the message we need most. God commands Christian families to live the Good News and share it with everyone they can.

Read John 3:16; Matthew 28:5–7; Romans 1:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 2:2; and 2 Corinthians 5:18–21. What is “the message” for us in these verses?

What was the first news that Jesus’ followers shared with everyone on earth? They preached the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is the truth that Jesus woke up from the dead. Christian families today also share this good news too. “ ‘Run fast and tell His followers that He is risen [woke up] from the dead’ ” (Matthew 28:7, NLV). Jesus’ resurrection makes everything else true that Jesus said about Himself. We can believe what He said about God, His love for sinners, and forgiveness. We can trust His promise to us about everlasting life.

The New Testament shows us how the Good News changed the lives of Jesus’ first followers. They opened their homes to each other. They studied the Bible together. They prayed and ate together. They shared their money and land. They took care of each other. And what happened? Whole families gave their lives to Jesus! Did that happen because Jesus’ followers were perfect? No! Did they have disagreements and fights? Yes. But Jesus’ followers saw their deep need of God and for each other. They worked hard to have peace and agreement in the church. They wanted Jesus’ prayer for them at the Last Supper to come true. They wanted to be one with each other in heart and mind (John 17:20–23). So, they shared their faith with each other. They witnessed to people who did not believe the truth. They put their lives in danger for their beliefs.

We must want the same things too. We must do what Jesus’ followers did. Yes, we live on an earth where people do not seem to care much about God or the Bible. But the Spirit wants to fill their hearts with love for the Good News. When the Spirit fills our hearts, we will want to share the Good News with other people too. Nothing will be able to stop us!



We must let our love for the Good News fill our hearts. Then we will want to share it with other people too.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Ellen G. White, “In the Court of Babylon,” pages 479–490, in *Prophets [special messengers for God] and Kings*; “Words of Caution [warning],” pages 324, 329; “No Respect [no favorites] of Persons With God,” pages 330, 331, in *Gospel [about the Good News] Workers*; “Rejoicing [feeling joy] in the Lord,” pages 115–126, in *Steps to Christ [Jesus]*.

“The religion of Jesus makes us better people. It improves our thoughts and actions. At the same time, the religion of Jesus shows us that God loves us very deeply. God bought us with the blood of His Son, who died for us. At the feet of Jesus, we all meet together. The poor meet together with the rich. The simple meet together with the wise. As we meet at Jesus’ feet, we forget our wish to be first. When we look at Him, we stop thinking we are better than anyone else. Our sins cut His body. He left heaven to come and save us. His life of love puts the selfishness in our hearts to shame! We feel ashamed of our pride. We feel ashamed of our wish to be first. The religion of Jesus makes us clean and holy. It separates us from sin. It joins us all as one in the truth. We all depend on Jesus, who bought us with His blood. Jesus connects us with God again.”—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, page 330, adapted.



At the feet of Jesus, we all meet together.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Talk with your class about your answers to the questions in Sunday’s study.
- ② Read again what Ellen G. White wrote. What important rules do you see in her words? How can following these rules change your family life in a big way?
- ③ What is your local church doing to help young people in the church accept Jesus? What can you do as a class to help the church in this important work?
- ④ In what ways does your community and its way of life help your family grow stronger? Does your community cause your family to become weak too? If yes, in what ways?