

Read the short story. Then answer each question.

The Bundle of Sticks

One of Aesop's Fables

Stacy sighed as she stood at her living room window. Her three sons were working in the yard, and they were arguing like they always did.

“You fix the gutter,” Larry said.

“No, you do it. I want to prune the roses,” said Harry.



“No, I want to prune the roses,” Barry said. “You mow the grass.”

On and on it went, and Stacy was tired of listening to it. She had talked to her sons over and over again about the importance of helping one another, but they never listened. Every task took much longer than necessary because of their bickering. They just couldn't seem to agree on anything.

“You rake the leaves,” Larry said.

“No, you do it. I want to sweep the walk,” said Harry.

“No, I want to sweep the walk,” Barry said. “You wash the windows.”

Stacy sighed and turned away to cook dinner. Her sons had been out there for hours and had gotten almost nothing done.

“Dinner’s ready!” Stacy called out the front door.

The three young men hurried in to eat. Their mother was the best cook in the world.

“You sit on the right,” Larry said.



“No, I want to sit on the right,” said Harry.

“No, you sit on the left,” Barry said. “I want to sit on the right.”

Stacy gritted her teeth. “Enough!” she said.

Her sons stopped and stared at her. Their mother almost never raised her voice.

“Larry, you go get a bundle of sticks from the woods,” Stacy said.

“But Mother--.”

“Go.”

Larry grumbled and stomped out the back door. Harry and Barry smirked and snickered until Stacy gave them The Look, that special look that all mothers have. They stopped at once.



Barry started to sit down at the table. He was hungry and ready to eat, but another Look stopped him. He stood quietly with Barry while they waited for Larry.

Larry soon returned with a bundle of three sticks. He handed them to his mother.

“Now, look,” she said. She tried to break the bundle of sticks, but she wasn’t strong enough. “You try, Larry.”

Larry tried to break the sticks, but he wasn’t strong enough.

“Now you, Harry.”

Harry tried to break the bundle of sticks, but he wasn't strong enough.

"Now you, Barry."

Barry tried to break the bundle of sticks, but he wasn't strong enough, either.

"Give me the sticks," Stacy said.

The boys watched their mother took one stick from the bundle.

"You take a stick and break it, Larry."

Larry easily broke the stick.

"Now, you take a stick and break it, Harry."

Harry broke the stick.

"Now, you take the last stick and break it, Barry."

Barry broke the stick.



"See how easy it was to break a single stick?"

“Yes, Mother,” all three boys said.

“Did you see how hard it was to break the bundle of sticks?”

“Yes, Mother,” all three boys said.

“You boys are like the bundle of sticks. When you stand alone and fuss and fight, you are easily broken. When you stand together and help each other, you are stronger and harder to break. Remember that.”

Stacy sat down at the table and motioned for her sons to do the same. The family ate in silence as the boys thought about what their mother had showed them.

The next day, the sons went out to do the day’s work.

“I’ll fix the fence,” Larry said.

“I’ll help,” said Harry.

“Me, too,” Barry said.

In less than an hour, they had fixed the fence.



Questions:

1. What did Stacy's sons do all the time?

2. What kind of work were the sons doing?

3. How did the sons' arguing affect their work?

4. How did Stacy show the boys the value of working together?

5. What is the lesson from this story?

Answers:

1. What did Stacy's sons do all the time?
Stacy's sons fussed and argued all the time.
2. What kind of work were the sons doing?
The sons were doing yard work. They were raking leaves, mowing grass, and pruning roses.
3. How did the sons' arguing affect their work?
The arguing made the work take a lot longer.
4. How did Stacy show the boys the value of working together?
Stacy had her sons try to break a bundle of sticks. The bundle wouldn't break. Single sticks were easy to break.
5. What is the lesson from this story?
People who are divided are easy to break. People who work together are stronger.