

Family Lesson 42

Principle: Prayer, dependence on God, and hard work

Bible Character(s): Nehemiah

Scripture Reference: Nehemiah 1-3

1. Worship - Gather your family and play the [worship video](#) found on the curriculum resource page. Have fun, sing loudly, and follow along with the motions!

2. Skit Video - Watch the [skit video](#) with your family to hear a special message about what you will be learning this weekend.

3. Bible Lesson - Read through the lesson with your family. The bold font is meant to be read aloud along with the Scripture references.

Bible Lesson

Who remembers the names of the two kings we learned about last week? (King Hezekiah and King Josiah.) **Were they good leaders or bad leaders?** (We saw how they were both great leaders during their reigns.) **Remember the key chains we worked on last week? What did we learn about leadership from these kings' lives?** (King Hezekiah clung to the Lord, and King Josiah always did what was right in God's sight. Both kings humbled themselves under God's authority and obeyed his commands.)

This week, we will continue our study of leadership. We will read about a man named Nehemiah. Nehemiah is an Israelite who lives in Susa, a city in Persia. His brother brought him news about Jerusalem. He said the people were in great trouble and disgrace because the wall of Jerusalem had been torn down and the gates had been destroyed by fire.

Let's read the Bible to see how Nehemiah responds to this news in Nehemiah 1 [NLT].

Nehemiah 1:4-7

⁴ When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ Then I said,

"O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶ listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! ⁷ We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, decrees, and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

How does Nehemiah feel after hearing the news about Jerusalem? (Allow responses.) **He is very upset. What does he do?** (Look back at verse 4.) **He mourns and fasts, and he prays to God. He praises God for who he is, our "great and awesome God." He then humbles himself, confessing his sins and the sins of his people and his family. Then he cries out to God for help. Let's continue reading the Bible.**

Nehemiah 1:11

"O Lord, please hear my prayer! Listen to the prayers of those of us who delight in honoring you. Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me. Put it into his heart to be kind to me."

Nehemiah asks God to remember his promise of unfailing love and to help him when he asks the king for permission to rebuild the wall.

Prayerful Foundation

The purpose is to examine how the children can each be a leader.

Have your child build a tower out of blocks, first using a small, odd-shaped block at the bottom. Talk about the foundation of the tower; will it stand

up or will it fall easily? Next, build the tower with a large solid block at the bottom. **Will this tower stand up or will it fall easily? How important is the first block—the foundation?**

Are there times in your life when you feel sad about something? (Allow responses.) **What kinds of things might make you sad? What do you do when you feel sad about something?** (Allow responses.) **We can try to fix things ourselves, but that is like building a tower on a shaky foundation. There is a better way to go. When we are sad or have troubles, we can pray and ask God for help. That is like building a tower on a strong foundation. God always wants us to come to him first for anything we need. He wants us to begin with prayer instead of trying to take care of problems ourselves. He wants us to trust in and depend on him instead of ourselves.**

After Nehemiah prays, he goes to the king to ask for permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem because he knows that is what God wants him to do. Once before, the Israelites had asked to rebuild the wall, and the king had said no. Nehemiah is very afraid to ask the king. But Nehemiah trusts and depends on God to help him. What do you think the king will do? Do you think he will say no, or do you think he will let Nehemiah rebuild the walls?

Let’s read the Bible to see what happens when Nehemiah asks the king in chapter 2.

Nehemiah 2:4-6

⁴ *The king asked, “Well, how can I help you?”*
With a prayer to the God of heaven, ⁵ I replied, “If it please the king, and if you are pleased with me, your servant, send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried.”
⁶ *The king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked, “How long will you be gone? When will you return?” After I told him how long I would be gone, the king agreed to my request.*

What does Nehemiah do after the king asks him, “how can I help you?” Let’s look back at verse four again. What does he do? (Allow responses.) He prays! Once again, Nehemiah prays to God

and depends on him. He is afraid but he does what God wants him to do. God works in the heart of the king, just like Nehemiah asked him to do back in chapter 1, and the king gives him permission to go to Jerusalem!

As we have seen, the first thing Nehemiah does is go to God in prayer. God wants us to depend on him by seeking his wisdom and help through prayer. No matter what happens in life, we can always go first to God in prayer, asking for him to provide what we need.

Nehemiah also asks the king to send letters to the leaders of the cities on the way to Jerusalem so he can travel safely. He arrives safely in Jerusalem, and three days later, he tells the city officials he is there to begin rebuilding the walls. Let’s continue reading the Bible.

Nehemiah 2:17-18

¹⁷ *But now I said to them, “You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!”* ¹⁸ *Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, “Yes, let’s rebuild the wall!” So they began the good work.*

Nehemiah gathers men and begins to rebuild the city walls. Does he sit back and let the others build the walls? (Allow responses.) No, he works hard at the task God gives him to do. Do you work hard at the things you are supposed to do (chores, school work, sports teams, etc)? (Allow responses.) When your parents ask you to do something, do you do your best or just enough to get it done? How do you think God wants you to work at the things he has given you to do? (Allow responses.) God calls us to do everything for his glory. He wants us to depend on him and work hard on the things he has called us to do. Let’s read this verse together.

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive

an Inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

What does this verse talk about? (Allow responses.) **It talks about working hard. Why should we work hard?** (Allow responses.) **Because we work for the Lord. The verse tells us to work with all of our heart at whatever we do; it does not say to work with all of our heart only at what we want to do. In everything we do, we are doing it for God. What are some things that you are asked to do by your parents, teachers, coaches, etc?** (Allow responses.) **Do you always work hard at whatever you are asked to do?** (Allow responses.) **For example, if your parents ask you to clean your room, how do you clean it? Would you clean it up really well, or would you push everything under the bed?** (Allow responses.) **What if God asked you to do the same thing your parents asked you to do? Would you do a better job if God asked you?** (Allow responses.) **God wants us to submit to our parents or any people of authority in our lives, just like we would submit to him if he asked us to do something. The next time you're asked to do something you don't want to do, what can you remember to help you do your best?** (Allow responses.)

Let's review what we learned. What are the steps you would take when you are faced with a difficult situation or a hard task? How does God want you to respond?

- **BEGIN WITH PRAYER.** Take the situation to God.
- **DEPEND ON GOD.** Do not try to solve the situation by doing what you think is right. Depend on God and trust that his way is the best way.
- **WORK HARD** at whatever God has given you to do, even in the small things.

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer to close the lesson. Ask God to help us pray, depend on him, and work hard for him.

Activity

"I Pray For" and "Leadership" Worksheet

The purpose is for your child to examine their lives and how they can depend on God through prayer.

Supplies:

[Worksheet](#) - "I Pray For" side (1 per camper)

Have your child draw pictures or write words under each section header to remind them to depend on God through prayer.

Nehemiah gives us a great example of how to depend on God by going to him in prayer. God wants us to depend on him for our whole life, and we can do that by going to him first through prayer. We can pray for our church, our family, and our friends. Take this home and put it somewhere you will see it each day as a reminder to pray and depend on God.

Your child can also complete the Leadership Worksheet as an additional activity.

Additional Activity

Paper Prayer Chain

The purpose is to recognize how we can be dependent on God.

Supplies:

Strips of blank paper (4 per child)

Glue sticks

Markers/crayons

Give your child four strips of paper. Ask them to think about times when they have been worried about something, and tell them to draw pictures or write about each of these times on a strip of paper. How can you trust God instead of worrying? When we ask God for help, we are depending on him instead of ourselves. Once the children have finished all four strips of paper, assist them in creating a paper prayer chain. Glue the ends of one strip together. Take another strip and put it through the first "link," gluing its ends together. Follow this pattern to make a four-link chain.

Nehemiah depended on God to help him when he was in a difficult situation. God knows what is best for each of us, and he wants us to depend on him to help us when we are in need. How can you turn from depending on yourself to depending on God? (Allow responses.) Nehemiah turned to God in prayer. You can turn to God in prayer instead of trying to take care of things on your own.

