

Preparedness not Procrastination

2 Lessons from the “Character Building from the Bible” series on Good Work Habits

Positive Character Trait: Preparedness

Preparedness is the positive character trait of being ready to take advantage of opportunities because you have used your time and energies wisely to prepare for future opportunities.

Procrastination is the opposite negative character trait. To procrastinate means to put off or delay or neglect to use your time and energies wisely now, leaving you unprepared to take advantage of opportunities later on. When you procrastinate, you think you’ll do it later, but you never do, so you are never ready when opportunity knocks.

Bible Memory Passage for these lessons on preparedness:

Proverbs ch. 6, verses 6-8:

6 Go to the ant, you sluggard!

Consider her ways and be wise,

7 Which, having no captain,

Overseer or ruler,

8 Provides her supplies in the summer,

And gathers her food in the harvest.

Prov 6:6-8 (NKJV)

Songs that go along with these lessons:

Say Will You Be Ready When Jesus Comes?

Are you ready? I’m ready!

I’ve prepared well today.

Are you ready? I’m ready!

For whatever comes my way.

The ant is so wise

She has no boss

Nobody to make her work

But still she goes out

And gathers food in

Preparing a feast in her den

And when the food’s gone

And others are starving

The wise ant can laugh at them

She used her time to prepare, you see

That’s why she will never be hungry. (Repeat last two lines three times)

Bible Story on Preparedness: Joseph Prepares Egypt Genesis 41:1-39

Lesson Aim: At the conclusion of this lesson, my students will know that God gave Pharaoh dreams so that he could prepare for the future. He showed Joseph what those dreams meant so that Joseph could help Egypt prepare for a hard time. He wants His people to use their time and energy wisely so that they will be prepared for the future. Therefore, my students will begin to use their time and energies more wisely to prepare for future opportunities.

Teaching Aid: If possible, prepare a dish of uncooked corn or some grain from your area. Have a second dish available.

Introduction:

What would you do if you dreamed of doing something, but it just seemed impossible? Janna wanted to be a dance teacher. She wanted to help others learn the traditional dances of her tribe and her region. She wanted to write down the stories behind the dances so they would never be lost. Janna lived in a small village. She did not have a chance to take dance lessons. Her parents were poor, so she was not even able to attend school. But Janna worked at her dream. She asked others in the village to help her learn all the local dances. She asked them to watch her and make sure she was doing every move just right. She also asked a teacher to help her learn to read and write so that someday she could write down the stories that went with the dances. The teacher did not agree to do this for free, so Janna agreed to pay him by working in his garden.

Transition to the Bible Story: Janna’s story reminds me of a man in the Bible. His name was Joseph and we read his story in the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, chapter 41

Main Points in the Bible Story:

1. Pharaoh had some strange dreams and called on Joseph to interpret the dreams. (41:1-27). (For the purpose of this story, the details of the dreams are not important, so summarize this section in words similar to what we have given above.)

Participation: Let the children pretend they are sleeping and having bad dreams.

2. Joseph told Pharaoh that God was showing him what He was about to do in Egypt. (41:25 & 28).

Participation: Repeat as a song: God is showing you what He will do!

3. God was showing Pharaoh that seven years of plenty were coming, but they would be followed by seven years of severe famine. (41:29-31).

Participation: Let the children hold up seven fingers and say, “First seven good years, then seven bad years”

4. God showed him two dreams to let him know that the thing had to happen because it was God’s plan, and it would begin very quickly. (41:32).

Participation: Let the children hold up two fingers and say rhythmically, “Two dreams means it is sure. Two dreams means it will happen fast.”

5. Joseph suggested that God was giving Pharaoh seven good years to prepare for the seven hungry years, and suggested a plan for preparation (putting someone in charge of saving and storing up 20% of the grain during the good years). (41:33-36)

Participation: Let the children sing, “You need to prepare for the seven bad years and here’s how, here’s how, here’s how.

6. Pharaoh liked the idea and put Joseph in charge of the preparations. (41:37-43)

Participation: Let one child pretend to be Joseph. All the others point to him and say, “Joseph, YOU help us to prepare.”

7. Joseph prepared during the seven good years. (41:47-49)

(Teacher, at the point show the dish of grain. This represents the abundant food that grew during the first seven years. Let several children take a handful and put it in a different dish. This represents storing up some of the grain for the seven bad years.)

Participation: Read the verses carefully and ask these questions:

How did the earth produce during the seven good years? (By handfuls—Lots!)

What did Joseph lay up or save up? (Food)

Where did he lay it up? (In the cities)

How much corn did he save up? (Too much to count it all.)

8. God used Joseph to save many lives during the seven hungry years (41:54).

(Show the grain in the second dish. Emphasize that they did not starve because they had prepared this grain for the hungry time.)

Participation: Divide the students into two groups to put on a skit. One group cries that they are hungry and there is nothing to eat. These were people of other lands. The other group rubs their tummies and chants rhythmically, “But in all the land of Egypt there was bread.”

9. He even used Joseph to save the lives of his own family (45:4-7) when they later came to Egypt looking for grain.

Participation: Sing, “Joseph prepared and he saved many lives.”

Questions to Help the Children Think about the Bible story:

God showed Joseph that a problem was coming. What was the problem? (The coming famine when crops would not grow, there would not be enough food and people would be hungry.)

How did Pharaoh know the famine was sure to come? (Because God said so and because God gave Him two dreams to really emphasize it.)

What was Joseph's plan for getting ready for the famine? (Saving up 20% during the good years.)

What other responses could Joseph have made to the dream? (He could have said there's nothing you can do about it. He could have got angry and blamed God for a bad prophecy.)

What was the result of Joseph's preparations? (Many lives were saved, including his own family.)

Why do you think God gave Pharaoh the dreams? (He wanted to give them a chance to prepare for coming hard times.)

How was Joseph like an ant? (He prepared in good times so he was ready for bad times.)

Application:

Remember how Janna prepared to become a dance teacher? (By learning the local dances well and by learning to read and write.) What do you think is likely to happen to her later on? (She is likely to fulfill her dream because she has prepared well.) How can you use your time and energy now to prepare for the future—in school? (Let the children suggest ways.) to have a family of your own someday? To be a good citizen? You can prepare for the future by doing your very best in your schoolwork now. This week, I am asking you to prepare for the future by doing your best in your studies every day.

Invitation:

It is also important to prepare to know God so that after this life, you can live with Him someday. You can prepare to know and love God forever by receiving Jesus as your Savior. If you are not sure what that means but you'd like to know more, please ask me about it. I would love to talk with you. If you have not yet received Jesus but today you are ready to say "yes" to Him, why not pray this prayer along with me. If you truly turn to Jesus in your heart, you will be ready for heaven some day. You will be ready when Jesus comes back again. Let's pray:

Father in heaven, I believe You sent Your Son Jesus to be my Savior. Jesus, thank You for dying to take away my sins. Thank You for rising from the dead. I ask You now to be my Savior. I ask You to come into my heart and life. Take away my sins. Give me new life in You. Thank You for saving me just now. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible Story on Preparedness: Jesus teaching of foolish virgins Matthew 25:1-13

Lesson Aim: At the conclusion of this lesson, my students will know that God loves for His people to use their time and energy wisely so that they will be prepared for future opportunities. Especially, He wants people to prepare for the second coming of His Son. Therefore, my students will receive Christ as Savior and begin to deal seriously with sin so they will be ready when Jesus comes.

Materials Needed:

If possible, show two kerosene lanterns. One should be filled with kerosene. The other should be empty. Have matches handy to light the lanterns at the right time in the lesson.

Introduction:

Story: Kwasi was excited. The president was coming to his town. For weeks ahead, he helped sweep every path clean, pick up litter, whitewash buildings, and plant flowers. The town had to be clean and beautiful when the president came.

Transition to the Bible Lesson: Kwasi loved preparing for the coming of the president. His story reminds me of a story Jesus told. It's a story about getting ready, and we can read it in The Gospel of Matthew chapter 25.

Main Ideas in the Bible Lesson:

(This lesson is short and will work well with the 4 Step Active Teaching Method described below.)

1. READ Matthew 25:1

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

ASK QUESTIONS:

- Who are the people in the story? (Ten virgins and the bridegroom)
- Where were the virgins going? (To meet the bridegroom)
- What did they need to take with them? (lamps)

ACT OUT: All students should hold up ten fingers for the ten virgins, then pretend to hold a lamp in front of them and walk in place as if going to meet the bridegroom.

SING: Ten virgins took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

2. READ Matthew 25:2-4

2 "Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 "Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 "but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

ASK QUESTIONS:

- What were the two groups of virgins? (Wise and foolish)
- How many were wise and how many were foolish? (Five and Five)

What mistake did the foolish virgins make? How were they unprepared? (Took no oil for their lamps.)

Do you think the lamps gave light without oil? (No. The lamps were of no use to them without oil.)

(Teacher, at this point if you have prepared kerosene lanterns, light the one that has kerosene in it, letting the students know that you have prepared the lamp by filling it with oil. Try to light the second lamp. It will not light because you have not prepared any oil for it.)

What made the others wise? (They took oil for their lamps.)

How does this show that they prepared ahead of time? (They had to think about the oil and get it and have it ready to go with their lamps.)

Do you think their lamps gave light? (Yes, because they had oil to burn.)

Which group of virgins was prepared? (The wise ones.)

Which group was unprepared? (The foolish ones.)

ACT OUT: Students should hold up five fingers for the five wise virgins, then pretend to pour oil into their lamps. They then hold up five fingers for the five foolish virgins and yawn, saying, "I'll get some oil later on."

SING: Five wise virgins prepared the oil for their lamps. Five foolish virgins put it off, put it off, put it off.

3. READ Matthew 25:5

5 "But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

ASK QUESTIONS:

What happened to the bridegroom? (He was delayed.)

What did the girls do who were waiting for him? (They all fell asleep.)

ACT OUT: Students pretend to fall asleep.

SING: The bridegroom was late, and they all fell asleep.

4. READ Matthew 25:6

6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'

ASK QUESTIONS:

What happened at midnight? (They heard a cry that the bridegroom was coming.)

What were they supposed to do then? (Go out to meet him.)

Why did they need their lamps? (It was midnight. It was dark.)

ACT OUT: Shout, the bridegroom is coming! Go out to meet him!

SING: At midnight the bridegroom came. He's coming! Go out and meet him.

5. READ Matthew 25:7-9

7 "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 "And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 "But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'

ASK QUESTIONS:

What did the virgins do when they heard the bridegroom was coming? (Got up and trimmed their lamps to get them ready to go.)

What did the foolish virgins ask? (To give them some oil.)

Why did they ask for that? (Because their lamps were going out since they had not prepared any oil.)

What answer did the wise ones give? (They didn't have enough to share.)

When it was time to meet the bridegroom, what were the foolish virgins doing instead? (Going out to buy oil.)

ACT OUT: The foolish virgins begin to run around asking the others for oil, but the wise ones just answer, "Sorry, I don't have enough for us both."

SING: Oh, happy day for those who are ready! For those who have prepared!
What a sad day for those who put it off! Where will they buy oil at midnight?

6. READ Matthew 25:10

10 "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

ASK QUESTIONS:

What happened while the foolish virgins were out buying oil? (The bridegroom came.)

Who went with him to the wedding party? (Those who were ready)

When the guests went in to the party, what was done? (The door was shut.)

ACT OUT: One child acts as the bridegroom. The others follow him, dancing around the room.

SING: "Those who were ready went with him to the wedding—O yea! O yea!"

7. READ Matthew 25:11-12

11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

ASK QUESTIONS:

When did the foolish virgins get to the party? (Afterward, or late)

What did they say? (Lord, Lord, open to us.)

What was the bridegroom's answer. "Surely I do not know you."

ACT OUT: Half the children pretend to pound on the door, begging, Open to us! Open to us!" the Other half respond by turning away and saying, "Sorry, I don't know you. Sorry, I don't know you."

SING: “The foolish virgins pounded on the door, but they didn’t get in.”

8. READ Matthew 25:13

13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.
Matt 25:1-13 (NKJV)

ASK QUESTIONS

What does Jesus say we should learn or do about this story? (Watch. That is, be ready.)

Why should we do that? (We don’t know the day or hour when the Son of Man is coming.)

In the Bible the phrase “the Son of Man” always means whom? (Jesus)

How is He like the bridegroom? (He also is coming back and we don’t know when.)

ACT OUT: All the students open their arms to the sky saying, “Watch! Be ready! Jesus is coming back!”

SING: The song, “Say will you be ready when Jesus comes?”

Application: Christian, if you know Jesus you will go with Him when He comes. But maybe you will feel ashamed when He comes. Maybe your life will be full of sins that will make you ashamed when you stand before Jesus. If you know Jesus, you should ask God to help you stay away from sin. When you do slip and fall into sin, as soon as you realize what you have done, you should ask God right away to forgive you. He will clean your heart once again and make you stronger to do the right thing the next time. Then when He comes, you will not be ashamed. This week, would you try to live every minute in a way that will not make you ashamed when He comes? This week, will you ask God to forgive your sin right away as soon as you know you have done something wrong?

Invitation:

Maybe you are like the foolish virgins. You are not ready to meet Jesus at all because you have never received Him as your Savior. Maybe you’ve been thinking about it. Today would be a wonderful time to say “Yes” to Jesus. Remember, the foolish virgins were not ready for the wedding because they put off buying oil. When the bridegroom came, it was too late. Maybe you’ve been putting off saying “Yes” to Jesus. You don’t have to put it off any more. You can say “Yes” to Him today. When you do, Jesus will come in and you will be ready for Him when He comes.

If you’ve not yet received Jesus, but you want to do it right now, you can say this prayer with me.

Jesus, right now I’m not putting it off any more. I decide for you right now. I say “Yes” to You right now. Yes, I believe You are the Son of God. Yes, I believe You died to pay the punishment for my sins. Yes, I believe You rose from the dead. Yes, I believe You

ascended back to heaven. Yes, I believe You are coming again. Yes, I take You as my Savior right now. Yes, I put my trust in You alone. Thank You for saving me right now. Thank You for making me a real Christian. In Your name I pray. Amen.