

Lead on ... Session Nine

Doing things God's way

Aim: To encourage children's awareness that each one of us has to make choices to do what we know is good and right, even when it isn't easy.

Preparation: You will need a blackboard and chalk, or flipchart and broad marker pens. Also have prepared strips of thin card to make bookmarks and felt-tips, scraps of coloured paper, paper doilies, etc. Provide paper punch and thin wool to decorate, plus clear contact paper.

Warm up Activity: 'If I could have anything I wished for I would wish for ...' encourage each child to answer.

Looking at the Bible: Start the story by saying that today we will be looking at a man who wished for a rather strange thing.

Using Nehemiah 1-4, create a story of Nehemiah choosing to do the right thing (even though this wasn't easy). *The younger the children the shorter and less complicated the story needs to be.* For a story to work well it needs to be thoroughly prepared – including the beginning and the end. Keep to the key points and tell it as an exciting adventure story. (You may want to use dressed up dolls to represent the key characters).

Discussion: Ask children whether they thought that Nehemiah had an easy job. Why? Discuss particular challenges he had to face. (E.g. leaving the comfortable place he had in the palace, persuading the people to help, getting enough food, building materials, making a plan to deal with the enemy, encouraging the people when they were tired and upset. Make a list of these.

(Try to ask questions that will encourage the children to think and identify these things for themselves – much more learning comes from having to think through issues ourselves than from just being given the answers. You may need to remind them of particular parts of the story to help them identify what he had to do).

Then ask the children what Nehemiah needed to be like, to be a good leader. E.g. 'Do you think it was easy to ask someone as important as the king that he wanted to go away? So he needed to be ...' List the qualities that the children suggest. (E.g. wise, brave, patient).

Ensure the children understand the word 'qualities'.

Ask children to think of someone who has been a good leader to them. Explain that this might be as country leader, or a hero on TV but it could also be a teacher, a parent, somebody at church. Encourage them to share in pairs, taking a minute to tell the child sitting next to them about the leader they chose and then the other child telling of their choice.

Then remind the children of Nehemiah's qualities as a leader, discussed earlier. Ask them to tell the group qualities that they can see in the leaders they chose. List all these qualities on the blackboard / flipchart. Ask how we feel when somebody leads us well. When children have finished making their suggestions, read through the list on the board and ask children if they agree that these are the qualities of a good leader.

Then explain to the children that each of us is 'a leader of one' – each one of us has to 'be a leader to ourselves'. 'You are the only person who is with you wherever you go.' God wants to guide us, just like he guided Nehemiah – but we have to choose how we will lead ourselves – we can be bad leaders and grumble at ourselves or we can be good leaders who encourage ourselves and help us make good /wise choices. How we talk to ourselves on the inside makes all the difference!

Activity: Remind children that today will be the last session of our work on 'lead on' encourage them to read through the list of leadership qualities and to think of at least three qualities that they think they are good at or would like to get better at . Provide materials for making bookmarks. Ask the children to decorate the bookmarks to keep for themselves, by writing in bright colours the three or more qualities that they chose for themselves. Encourage them to decorate the bookmark and when they are finished, help them to cover it with clear contact paper for protection. They may also like to write the date on the bookmark.

With poor readers / writers create bookmark with a positive image (e.g. sunflower, smiley face), rather than using words.

Conclusion: Sit in semi-circle with each child holding his / her bookmark. Encourage children to put the bookmark in their Bible or other favourites book, as a reminder of the sort of leader they choose to be. Say a short prayer, which reflects on today's learning, encouraging children to be positive 'leaders of one – or more'!