

Lessons from Ants: Initiative

Quarter 7 • Lesson 8

Focus on Character Development

- 1. Connecting:** Complete a task as a group.
- 2. Teaching:** Learn from ants how to take initiative (Proverbs 6:6–8; Galatians 6:2).
- 3. Responding:** Show initiative when acting out situations.

SUPPLIES

- Bible
- 2 cups
- Several objects that do not belong in a teaching space such as wash basins, towels, and cooking pots

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse Poster
- Student Pages
- Scissors
- Crayons

Before class place objects throughout the learning space that do not belong in the space. Choose objects that are easily moved by children.

Teacher Devotion

*You people who don't want to work, think about the ant!
Consider its ways and be wise!
It has no commander. It has no leader or ruler.
But it stores up its food in summer. It gathers its food at harvest time.
Proverbs 6:6–8*

Why would anyone want to be like an ant? Why would God use an ant as an example of how we should act? Ants are small, and they seem to always be in motion. Did you know that ants do all the things they do without anyone telling them what to do? Ants show great initiative—the ability and readiness to get things done without being asked to do anything.

How can you be like an ant? How can you take initiative when something needs to be done? Whether at church, at home, or in your community, there are always tasks that need to be done. Perhaps you are the type of person who takes so much initiative that it causes stress in your life. Like all things in life, it is important to take initiative and help others. But it is equally important to balance this with your time with family and friends. Consider the ant, but also know that people need rest!

Family Connection: Encourage families to look for ways to help each other without being asked. For children, this could mean helping with chores around the house. For adults, this could mean helping children learn to do things for themselves.

LESSON TIME

1. Connecting: Complete a task as a group.

Teacher Tip: This activity requires children to enter your teaching space and do an activity immediately upon entering. To help the children who are uncomfortable with changes in routines, you may consider having all of the children stand or sit outside your regular meeting place and listen for instructions before entering the teaching space.

Welcome the children as they come to class. Explain to them that there is something different about the teaching space today. Ask them to help you to move the extra objects into a pile in the middle of the space. Allow 3–5 minutes for the children to complete the task.

Teacher Tip: Try to allow the children to begin finding and moving objects without helping them. Watch them to make sure they are being safe, but otherwise allow them to decide who will do what to complete the task. This will help you to see which of the students like to lead and which of them follow the guidance of others.

You may also notice some children who are not sure what to do or do not want to get in the way of those who seem to know what they are doing. These children may not naturally take initiative when given a problem or task, but this does not mean they are trying to disobey what you asked them to do. If the whole class does not figure out a way to move the objects, then you may give them directions to help them get started.

When you see that most of the objects have been moved out of the way, ask the children to sit in a circle around or near the objects.

It can be difficult to do something big, such as moving objects out of the way, on your own. When you work together with others, you can do big things faster and more easily than you could by yourself. When you do something that needs to be done without being asked to do it, you take initiative. This is what we will talk about today.

2. Teaching: Learn from ants how to take initiative (Proverbs 6:6–8; Galatians 6:2).

When you take initiative, you do not wait to be told to do something. Instead, you see what needs to be done and you do it. For example, if you knew that the dishes are all dirty, but your mother was not home to ask you to wash them, you might take initiative by washing them before she gets home.

- **What is it called when you do something that needs to be done without being asked to do it?**

You may choose to have 1 or all of the children answer: initiative.

Teacher Tip: If needed, explain that an ant community is called a colony.

Did you know that ants take initiative within their colonies? Scientists have found that ants do the jobs that need to be done without any other ants telling them what to

do. This includes building the colony's nest, cleaning up the colony, looking for food, and bringing food back to the rest of the colony. No one tells the ants what to do and when to do it. They just do what needs to be done. This initiative helps the entire colony to survive. The Bible even tells us we can learn from ants.

Read these verses directly from your Bible.

You people who don't want to work, think about the ant! Consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander. It has no leader or ruler. But it stores up its food in summer. It gathers its food at harvest time.

Proverbs 6:6–8

Ants do not need to be told what to do by another ant. They figure out what needs to be done and they do it!

- **Have you ever done anything to help someone? If so, what did you do?**

Allow 2–3 children to respond.

If you have done something without being asked, you know what it is like to take initiative!

Teacher Tip: Some children have never thought of showing initiative since many aspects of their lives are guided by the adults around them. Encourage the children that showing initiative is good, especially when serving others. Initiative will help children succeed in life.

God created us to do good things. Listen to what the Bible tells us:

*Carry one another's heavy loads. If you do,
you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:2

This Bible verse explains that when we see someone struggling with something, we should help that person. God wants us to help others because we were created to live together and do things together in communities.

Ants are a good example of what a community can look like. When an ant is hurt, other ants will come, pick up the hurt ant, and carry it back to the colony. This may help the hurt ant to survive. If the hurt ant survives, that ant can continue helping the colony.

Let's pretend that one of us is hurt. I need a volunteer who is willing to be picked up by other children. Raise your hand if you would like to do this.

Choose 1 child to pretend to be hurt. Have this child stand with you.

Now, let's decide how many children we need to safely carry our hurt friend. Everyone hold up the number of fingers that shows how many people you think we will need to carry our friend. For example, if you think we would need 4 people, hold up 4 fingers.

Pause to see how many fingers most children hold up.

Raise your hand if you would like to carry our friend.

Teacher Tip: It is best to have boys lift a boy or girls lift a girl. You could choose a girl and a boy to volunteer and have other children of the same gender lift the corresponding friends.

Choose the number of volunteers that corresponds to the number of fingers most of the children held up. Tell the volunteers they can lift the hurt friend by picking up his legs near his feet, his back, or his arms from the back. They may not touch the front of the friend's body, his bottom, or his neck. They should move the "hurt" child across your teaching space. If the chosen number of children cannot pick the hurt friend up, choose another child to come and help. Continue adding children until they can successfully move the hurt child or there are up to 5 volunteers.

Wow! We just learned that it takes more than 1 child to move our hurt friend. Moving this friend required some of you to come up and help him. You took initiative when you chose to come up and help. When you see someone who needs help and you do what needs to be done, you take initiative.

3. Responding: Show initiative when acting out situations.

Let's have some fun as we show examples of initiative. I will put out some objects and tell you a short story about what is happening with them. A group of you will come and take initiative by helping me with the objects.

For each situation, choose 3 children to help you with the objects involved. Make sure to choose 3 different children for each situation so that several children are able to participate in the activity. Try to choose children who did not participate in the last activity to help you with this activity.

Place a few cups, or basin in front of you.

Situation 1: You come home after school with your brother and sister and you notice some dirty dishes in the kitchen. Your mother is at work and will not be home for another hour.

Let's think:

- **What needs to be done?**

The dishes need to be washed.

- **What can you do to take initiative?**

Wash the dishes or ask your brothers and sisters to help you wash dishes.

Ask the group of 3 children to take initiative by pretending to do what needs to be done. They will pretend to wash and dry the dishes. Thank the volunteers for taking initiative. Then choose 3 different children to come up and act out the next situation.

Situation 2: You are playing football with some friends when you notice that there is a 3-year-old girl playing by herself beside the road. You do not see any adults or older children near her. You think she might have wandered off and is not safe by herself.

Ask the class to answer the following questions before the group of 3 children act out what they would do.

Let's think:

- **What needs to be done?**

The girl needs to be taken somewhere safe or to an adult.

- **What can you do to take initiative?**

You could invite her to come play with you while she waits for her family to find her or, if you are near a safe adult, you could talk to that person and ask him for help.

Ask the group of 3 children to take initiative by doing what needs to be done. One child will pretend to be the 3-year-old, and the other 2 will come and invite her to play or take her to you and ask for help. Thank the volunteers for taking initiative.

Optional: If you are using Student Pages, give the children crayons and scissors. Allow 3 minutes for them to color and cut or tear out their person. Then give them about 30 seconds to act out what they would do in the situation.

When you take initiative, you do what needs to be done to help someone. Ants take initiative to build their homes, gather food, and take care of each other. Our memory verse today reminds us that we can learn a lot about God from animals.

If you are using the Memory Verse Poster, show it to the students.

But ask the animals what God does. They will teach you.

Or ask the birds in the sky. They will tell you.

Job 12:7

Read the Bible verse again. This time, do the motions that go with each part. Then repeat the verse and the motions 3 times with the children.

But ask the animals—Make a gesture as if you are about to ask a question, such as shrugging.

What God does—Use 1 hand to point up to the sky.

They will teach you—Indicate the top of your head and pretend to pull something from it.

Or ask the birds in the sky—Look up. Reach your arms out to your sides and flap them up and down.

They will tell you—Put a hand near your ear.

End class by saying this blessing, based on Proverbs 6:6–8, over the children.

Blessing: May you think about the work of ants when you see something that needs to be done. May this encourage you to help others and work with others to get things done.

Lead the children in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

Raise a Hallelujah" by Bethel Music https://youtu.be/JvXBf_dEiHU