



WHEN I AM WEAK

The Story of One of America's Founding Fathers

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This story may be told in one or two sessions.

The triangle (▶) indicates where to divide the narrative when teaching two sessions.

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Show Illustration #1

On a bright, sunny Fourth of July, in the year 1791, the people of New Haven, Connecticut, were out in large crowds, excited to celebrate the 14th birthday of the United States of America. Rebecca Sherman peered out of her front

door onto the bustling street, as she searched the crowds of happy holiday makers for her young grandson, Roger. Spotting him perched on the front fence, she called, "Roger! Time to come in for dinner!" The boy quickly jumped down from the fence and hurried inside where his grandfather was already seated at a large table. "Grandfather!" the boy exclaimed, "the people are speaking of you on the street! They look at the house as they go past and tell me that you are a great man and that our nation would not be as strong without you! What did you do, Grandfather? Did you defeat the whole British army? Are you a hero?"



Show Illustration #2

The elderly Roger Sherman took off his spectacles and smiled down at his young namesake. "No, no, I am certainly not a hero. The good people of this city have exaggerated the story a bit. I was trained as a shoemaker, not

as a soldier. Besides, I was too old to fight in the war for our independence. Despite all this, God has blessed me by allowing me to help with the founding of our nation in such ways as I am able. But," he chuckled softly, "I have certainly done nothing to earn the name of 'hero,' unless you count the ability to make a good, strong shoe."

"Listen to the man!" exclaimed Rebecca, bringing a dish of meat to the table, which was now full with children, grandchildren, and friends. "Now, Roger dear, your grandfather may not have been a soldier, but he is being far too humble. Let me tell you a few stories, and you will soon see why people love and respect him. Now, hush!" She laughed, stopping her husband, who looked ready to protest. "You sit quietly and eat, my love, but I want to tell my family the story of a great and godly man, and of a great God."



Show Illustration #3

After Roger led a prayer of blessing for the meal, Rebecca continued her story. "Your grandfather was the second oldest in a family of seven children. After his father died, he had to leave school early to learn shoemaking

and support his family. However, God had given him a passion for learning, and he was determined to learn all he could on his own. In fact, he would prop up books on his workbench and read in every spare moment he had! Even though he never finished school or went on to university, God blessed him as he taught himself. In fact, just recently Yale University gave him a college degree, saying he has learned enough to earn it even though he hasn't taken a single class!"



Show Illustration #2

The children around the table looked up eagerly, the younger Roger asking, "Do you think I could do that? I would be very happy not to go to school!" Down the table Uncle Josiah, Grandfather's younger brother,

stopped midbite and chuckled. "Although you may not always love school, children, it is a good thing, I promise! I used to feel the same way about school, especially after our father died. I wanted to leave school and care for my family. But even though your grandfather was only 19 when our father died, he worked hard to provide for us. In fact, although he would have loved to go to university, he worked and saved so that my brothers and I could go."

Roger looked up at his grandfather. "Wasn't that hard, Grandfather? Giving up something you wanted so much and letting someone else do it?"

Roger Sherman put down his fork and looked around the table for a moment before speaking thoughtfully. "Yes, it was a difficult time in my life. Losing my father was very hard and so was becoming responsible for my family at such a young age. But it was during this time that I truly learned to depend on the Lord for my strength. It is easy to think that we are strong, and that we can do anything we want to if we work hard enough.