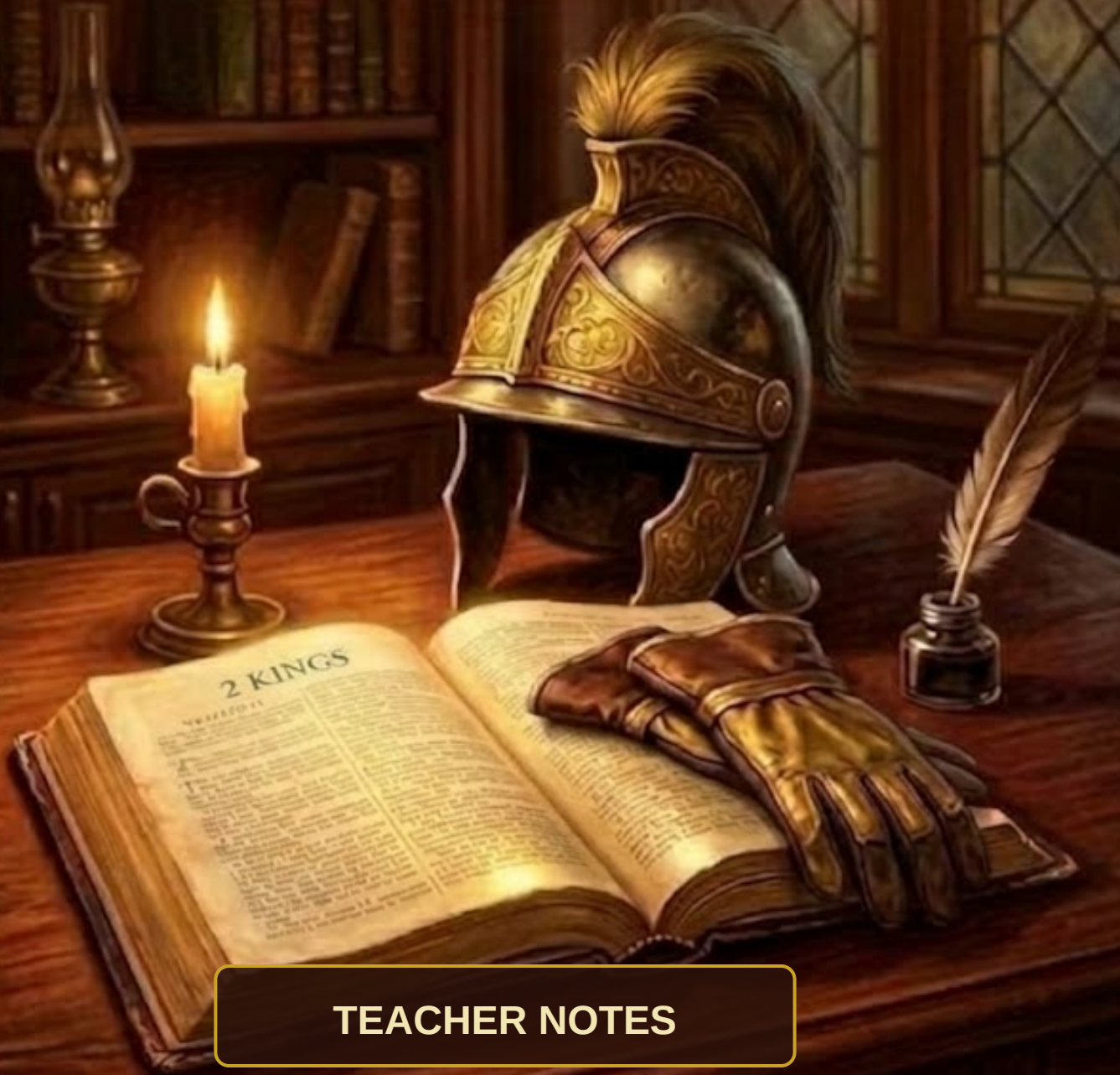


SECOND KINGS

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH



TEACHER NOTES

Welcome, Teacher

Second Kings is the story of a kingdom coming apart: about 300 years from Elijah's last day to the burning of Jerusalem. It is not a happy book on the surface. But it is full of people who loved God and loved others when almost no one around them did, and of a promise God would not break. This study walks through all 25 chapters in 13 sessions of about 45 minutes each, for middle school students.

Every session answers three questions: Who does God admire, and why? Who does God warn, and why? And where do we see Jesus, the King who is better than every king in this book? The books of Kings are written from God's point of view, and again and again the writer gives a verdict: “he did what was right in the sight of the LORD,” or “he did evil in the sight of the LORD.” We have kept that same lens so students learn what a life that pleases God looks like, especially a life of Christ-like love, defending the weak and encouraging others.

The thread through the whole course: the lamp

In 2 Kings 8:19 God promises to “give a lamp” to David and his sons forever. Every session moves the flame along: Jehosheba hides the baby Joash, Isaiah comforts Hezekiah, Josiah finds the Book, and in the last four verses Jehoiachin eats at a king's table in Babylon. The lamp is not extinguished. It becomes Jesus, “the Light of the world.”

What you receive with this course

- Teacher Notes (this document): the lesson content, the flow, discussion questions with sample answers, background, handout answer keys and the Think/Feel/Do quiz for each session.
- Student Handouts: one page per session, ready to print.
- 13 podcast episodes (MP3): two voices talking through each session at about a 5th–7th grade level. Good for the car ride, for review and for absent students.
- A companion web app with all 13 sessions, the podcasts, downloadable handouts and a Think/Feel/Do reflection after each session.

A typical 45-minute session

Welcome and hook (5 min), set the scene (5 min), teach the story (15 min), discussion (8 min), Jesus in the story (7 min), Think/Feel/Do and prayer (5 min). The times are in each session; adjust them to your group.

A word about the hard parts

Second Kings contains violence, idolatry, child sacrifice and a siege famine. Middle schoolers can handle the truth if it is told with care. In each session you will find a teacher tip with guidance on how much detail to give. Never use the hard stories to scare; use them to show that God hates what harms the weak and that He is patient and merciful.

Heroes and Warnings: the whole course at a glance

Use these two lists in Session 13, and any time you want to remind students what a life that pleases God looks like.

QUALITIES GOD ADMIRES (session numbers at right)		
Hunger for God	Elisha asked for God's Spirit, not for money or fame.	1
Loyalty	Elisha: "I will not leave you."	1
Humility	The third captain, Naaman's servants, Jotham, Hezekiah's tears, Josiah's tender heart.	1, 3, 8, 11, 12
Generosity and hospitality	The widow's neighbors' jars, the woman of Shunem's room for Elisha.	2
Compassion for enemies	The servant girl, Elisha feeding the Syrians, Oded and the men of Ephraim.	3, 4, 8
A conscience that shares good news	The four lepers: "We are not doing right."	4
Courage to defend the weak	Elisha and the widow, Jehosheba, the people who protected Josiah.	2, 6, 11
Wise mentoring and encouragement	Elijah, Jehoiada, Isaiah, Naaman's servants, Gedaliah.	1, 3, 6, 10, 13
Integrity	The temple workmen who dealt faithfully; an honest man with a borrowed ax.	3, 6
Trusting prayer	Hezekiah spreading the letter before the LORD.	10
A tender heart toward God's Word	Josiah and Huldah's message.	12
Faithfulness in hard places	Jeremiah, Daniel and the exiles.	13

WARNINGS: WHAT GOD DESPISES		
Running to false gods in a crisis	Ahaziah and Baal-Zebub; Ahaz and the altar from Damascus.	1, 8
Pride	Gehazi's greed; Naaman at first; Amaziah; Uzziah; Hezekiah's show-off moment.	3, 7, 8, 11
Greed and lying	Gehazi.	3
Half-hearted obedience	Jehoram, Jehu, King Joash and his three arrows.	2, 5, 7
Abusing power over the weak	Jezebel and Naboth, Athaliah, Manasseh, Jehoiakim.	5, 6, 11, 12
Blaming God and giving up	Jehoram in the siege of Samaria.	4
Mocking God or His messengers	The young men of Bethel, the Rabshakeh, Jehoiakim's burned scroll.	1, 10, 13
Trusting power instead of God	Ahaz buying help from Assyria.	8
Mixing God with idols	The people of Samaria who "feared the LORD, yet served their own gods."	9
Stiff-necked ignoring of warnings	Israel's last century; Zedekiah.	9, 13
Selfish short-sightedness	Hezekiah: "peace and truth at least in my days."	11

Kings of 2 Kings at a glance

Dates are approximate (BC) and some reigns overlapped as co-regencies. “Did right” and “did evil” follow the verdict in the book itself; “mixed” marks kings who obeyed in part or only for a season.

King	Kingdom	Years (BC)	Verdict	Session
Ahaziah	Israel	853–852	Did evil	1
Jehoram (Joram)	Israel	852–841	Did evil	2, 4
Jehoram	Judah	848–841	Did evil	5
Ahaziah	Judah	841	Did evil	5
Jehu	Israel	841–814	Mixed	5
Athaliah	Judah	841–835	Did evil	6
Joash (Jehoash)	Judah	835–796	Mixed	6
Jehoahaz	Israel	814–798	Did evil	7
Jehoash (Joash)	Israel	798–782	Mixed	7
Amaziah	Judah	796–767	Mixed	7
Jeroboam II	Israel	793–753	Did evil	7
Azariah (Uzziah)	Judah	792–740	Mixed	8
Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah	Israel	753–732	Did evil	8
Jotham	Judah	750–735	Did right	8
Ahaz	Judah	735–715	Did evil	8
Hoshea	Israel	732–722	Did evil	9
Hezekiah	Judah	715–686	Did right	10, 11
Manasseh	Judah	697–642	Did evil	11
Amon	Judah	642–640	Did evil	11
Josiah	Judah	640–609	Did right	12
Jehoahaz	Judah	609	Did evil	12
Jehoiakim	Judah	609–598	Did evil	12, 13
Jehoiachin	Judah	598–597	Did evil	13
Zedekiah	Judah	597–586	Did evil	13

No king in this list was perfect, which is the point. The book keeps asking, “Where is the King who will do it all right?” The answer is Jesus.

Session 1: The Mantle Passes

2 Kings 1–2 | about 852 BC

BIG IDEA

God looks for people who hunger for Him, and He passes His work from one faithful generation to the next. The ones who run to false gods in a crisis lose everything; the ones who stay close to God's servant receive His power.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." **2 Kings 2:9**

The Story to Teach

Second Kings opens with a king in a hospital bed. Ahaziah, son of the wicked King Ahab, fell through a wooden lattice in his upper room and was badly hurt. Instead of praying to the LORD, he sent messengers to ask Baal-Zebub, the false god of Ekron, if he would get well. God sent Elijah to meet the messengers on the road with this question: "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?" (2 Kings 1:3). Ahaziah's answer to God's question was to send soldiers to arrest the prophet. Two captains came with fifty men each and ordered Elijah to come down, and each time fire fell from heaven. The third captain was different. He dropped to his knees and begged for the lives of his men. God spared him. Ahaziah died, just as Elijah had said.

Then the story moves to one of the greatest days in the Old Testament. Elijah knew God was about to take him to heaven, and he walked from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan River. Each time Elijah said, "Stay here," and each time Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." Fifty prophets in training watched from a distance. At the Jordan, Elijah rolled up his mantle (his cloak), struck the water, and it parted so the two men could cross on dry ground.

On the far side Elijah said, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha did not ask for gold, a palace, or a famous name. He said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." In Bible times the oldest son received a double portion of the family inheritance. Elisha was saying, "Let me be your true son and carry on your work, with God's Spirit." Elijah answered, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you" (2 Kings 2:10). Then, as they talked, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Elisha cried, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" and tore his clothes in grief. Then he picked up Elijah's fallen mantle, walked back to the Jordan, struck the water, and asked, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" The water parted again. The prophets watching said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." Soon after, Elisha made the bad water of Jericho good by throwing in salt and saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.'" He cared about the ordinary needs of ordinary people.

The chapter ends with a hard story. As Elisha walked to Bethel, a gang of young men came out and mocked him, shouting, "Go up, you baldhead!" They were really mocking the God who had just taken Elijah to heaven, and Bethel was the city where people worshiped a golden calf. God's judgment came swiftly. The point is not that God is touchy. The point is that making fun of God and His messengers is serious, and the whole kingdom of Israel needed to learn it.

Love in Action

Elijah did not keep his ministry to himself. He walked with a younger man day after day, and he asked, “What may I do for you?” That is encouraging someone younger in the faith. Elisha, for his part, never let go of his teacher in the hard moments.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	Elisha. Hungry for God, not for money or fame. Three times he said, “I will not leave you,” and he stayed loyal to the end.
Admired	Elijah. Faithful to the very last day, and he poured his life into the young man who would come after him.
Admired	The third captain. Humble. He fell on his knees and begged for mercy instead of barking orders at God's prophet.
Warning	King Ahaziah. Hurt and afraid, he sent messengers to ask Baal-Zebub, a false god, whether he would live. He ran to everything except the true God.
Warning	The mocking young men of Bethel. They made fun of God's prophet and of the miracle God had just done.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “If a genie offered you ONE thing, what would you ask for?” Collect a few answers, then say: today a man was offered one wish by a prophet, and what he picked tells us a lot.
5–10	Set the scene	Use the map of Israel. Place Samaria (capital), Bethel, Gilgal, Jericho and the Jordan. Explain what a mantle is (a heavy cloak, like a prophet's uniform).
10–25	Teach the story	Tell the story in three scenes: (1) Ahaziah and the false god, (2) the walk to the Jordan, (3) the double portion. Read 2 Kings 2:9–14 aloud from the NKJV.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below in small groups.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Compare Elijah going up to heaven with Jesus going up (Acts 1:9) and Elisha's name with the name of Jesus.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the three-question quiz and pray together.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. Why do you think Ahaziah asked Baal-Zebub about his future instead of asking the LORD?

Sample answer: He did not know God personally, and he trusted what he could see and what was popular. Many people look to everything but God when they are scared.

2. Elisha said “I will not leave you” three times. When is it hard to stay loyal to a friend, a teacher or God?

Sample answer: Allow honest answers: when things get scary, when others are leaving, when it costs us. Loyalty is proved in the hard moments.

3. Elisha could have asked for anything. Why was “a double portion of your spirit” such a good request?

Sample answer: He wanted God's power and God's work, not riches. He knew he could not do the job alone.

4. What does it look like to help a younger person grow in faith the way Elijah did for Elisha?

Sample answer: Spend time with them, include them, answer their questions, pray with them.

5. The mocking young men did not respect God's messenger. Where do we see people making fun of God today, and how should we respond?

Sample answer: We respond with respect and courage, not by mocking back. Remind students that God is patient but not to be taken lightly.

Jesus in the Story

Elijah went up into heaven while his friend watched, and the friend received power for the work. Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus did the same thing. “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). Before He left, Jesus promised His followers power from the Holy Spirit, not just a double portion but His Spirit for every believer. Even Elisha's name points to Him: Elisha means “God is salvation,” and Jesus means “the LORD saves.”

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

In the northern kingdom of Israel, the royal family of Ahab and Jezebel had led the nation into worship of Baal, the Canaanite storm and fertility god. Baal-Zebub (“lord of the flies”) was the local Baal of the Philistine city of Ekron. Notice the irony: Israel's king asked a Philistine idol for help while the God of Israel sat in His own land. Later Jews used a mocking form of this name, Beelzebub, for Satan (Matthew 12:24).

The mantle was a heavy woolen or hair cloak. When Elijah first threw his mantle on Elisha (1 Kings 19:19), it meant “you are my successor.” “Double portion” comes from Deuteronomy 21:17, where the firstborn son received twice the share of any other child. Elisha was asking to be Elijah's heir. The “sons of the prophets” were groups of young men training for ministry, living in communities at Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal.

About the young men of Bethel: the Hebrew word describes young men, not tiny children, and there were enough of them to be a threat. Bethel was home to one of Jeroboam's golden calves (1 Kings 12:28–29). This was not a punishment for a joke about baldness. It was a judgment on a city in open rebellion against God and His servant. Teach this honestly: it is a hard passage, and it is fine to say so.

TEACHER TIP

Students may be bothered by the bears. Do not rush past it. Say that God takes mocking seriously and that the Bible also shows how patient He is (Elisha's next stories are all about mercy). Keep the focus on the bigger picture: the passing of the baton.

Handout Answer Key

1. **Baal-Zebub**
2. **leave**
3. **double**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: Elisha could have asked for anything. What would you ask God for if He offered you one thing, and why?

FEEL: When have you felt afraid and run to something other than God for help? How did that feel?

DO: Name one person younger or older than you that you can encourage in their faith this week. What will you do?

Companion podcast: Session 1, “The Mantle Passes” (about 5 minutes).

Session 2: Oil, Kindness and a Little Boy's Return

2 Kings 3–4 | about 850–840 BC

BIG IDEA

God sees the poor and the overlooked, and He uses kind, generous, faith-filled people to meet their needs. He is never short of what we need, even when all we have is a little jar of oil.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

So Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.” 2 Kings 4:2

The Story to Teach

Chapter 3 begins with a war. Jehoram, king of Israel, joined Jehoshaphat of Judah and the king of Edom to fight Moab. They ran out of water in the desert. Jehoram's first thought was to blame God. Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there not a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?” Elisha came, and he said that he would not even look at Jehoram, but for Jehoshaphat's sake he would help. God filled the dry valley with water, and Israel won. Jehoram had removed one of Baal's pillars, yet he still followed the golden calves of Jeroboam. His obedience stopped halfway.

Chapter 4 tells four small stories about large kindnesses. First, a widow of one of the prophets cried out to Elisha. Her husband had died owing money, and the creditor was coming to take her two sons as slaves. Elisha asked a simple question: “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” All she had was a small jar of oil. Elisha told her to borrow empty jars from all her neighbors, as many as she could, close the door, and pour. The oil kept flowing until every jar was full. She sold the oil, paid the debt, and lived on the rest.

Next comes the woman of Shunem. She was wealthy and respected, and she noticed that Elisha passed by often. She said to her husband, “Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly.” She built a small room on their roof with a bed, a table, a chair and a lamp. Elisha wanted to repay her, and he promised that she would hold a son in a year. She had been childless and her husband was old, and it happened just as he said.

Years later, the boy was out in the field with his father when he cried, “My head, my head!” and by noon he died in his mother's arms. She laid him on Elisha's bed, saddled a donkey, and rode to find the prophet. When asked how things were, she said only, “It is well.” She grabbed Elisha's feet and would not let go until he came. Elisha stretched himself over the boy, prayed to the LORD, and the child sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. She picked up her son and bowed.

The last two stories are small but important. During a famine, someone put poisonous gourds into the stew pot for the prophets, and Elisha made the stew safe by adding flour. Then a man brought twenty loaves of barley bread. His servant said it would never feed a hundred men, but Elisha said, “Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: ‘They shall eat and have some left over.’” And they did.

Love in Action

This chapter is full of people defending the weak. Elisha stood up for a widow whose sons were about to be taken as slaves. A woman of Shunem welcomed a stranger. Neither the widow nor the Shunammite woman had power, but God's love moved through both of them.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	Elisha. Moved with compassion when a widow was about to lose her sons to a money lender. He did not walk past her need.
Admired	The widow. She brought her need honestly to God's prophet and obeyed even when the instructions sounded strange.
Admired	The woman of Shunem. Generous and thoughtful. She noticed a traveling prophet's need and built him a room, asking for nothing in return.
Warning	King Jehoram of Israel. He removed Baal's sacred pillar, but he kept the sin of Jeroboam. Half obedience is still disobedience.
Warning	The money lender. He was ready to take two boys as slaves to pay a debt, a cruel treatment of a grieving family.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “What is the nicest thing someone has done for you without being asked?” Let several students share.
5–10	Set the scene	Briefly review Session 1. Explain that Elisha is now a traveling prophet; show Shunem and the Jezreel Valley on the map.
10–25	Teach the stories	Tell the widow's oil and the Shunammite woman as the two main stories, and the stew and loaves as a quick finish. Read 2 Kings 4:1–7 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Connect the twenty loaves with Jesus feeding the five thousand, and the raised boy with the widow of Nain's son.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz; pray for the widows, orphans and lonely people they know.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. The widow had “nothing but a jar of oil.” What do you have that you think is too small for God to use?

Sample answer: Draw out that God starts with what we have. Time, a talent, a kind word, a few dollars.

2. Why do you think Elisha told the widow to borrow EMPTY jars and shut the door?

Sample answer: Faith has to be shown. The more jars, the more room for God to work. Shutting the door shows this was between her and God.

3. What did the woman of Shunem notice about Elisha, and what did she do about it?

Sample answer: She noticed a need no one asked her to meet, and she met it with a room, a bed, a table, a chair and a lamp.

4. When she said, “It is well,” her son had just died. How can we trust God when we do not understand?

Sample answer: Faith is not pretending nothing hurts. It is running to God with our hurt, as she ran to Elisha.

5. How can we defend and care for the poor or the lonely in our school and neighborhood?

Sample answer: Include the new kid, share lunch, collect food, notice who is sitting alone.

Jesus in the Story

The loaves in 2 Kings 4 are a small preview of a bigger miracle. Elisha fed a hundred men with twenty loaves, with food left over. Jesus took five barley loaves and two fish and fed about five thousand men, besides women and children, with twelve baskets left over (John 6). When He met a widow whose only son had died, Jesus touched the coffin, spoke, and gave the boy back to his mother (Luke 7:11–15). Elisha did great things as a servant. Jesus is the Lord of life itself.

When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.”

*So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. **Luke 7:13–15***

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

In the ancient Near East, a widow had almost no legal protection or income. Under the Law, debtors could be forced into servitude, and a widow's sons could be taken as workers (Exodus 21:2; Leviticus 25:39). God's Law commanded care for widows and orphans (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18). The creditor in this story was within the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law called for mercy. God's prophet stood in the gap.

Olive oil was a household treasure: it was used for cooking, lamps, skin care and as currency. A jar of oil was all she had, but it was an investment God multiplied. The Shunammite woman's "room on the roof" was a small, flat-roofed upstairs space, a common addition on Middle Eastern homes, and it gave the prophet privacy. Shunem lay in the Jezreel Valley, on Elisha's route between Mount Carmel and Samaria.

The historical background of chapter 3: Moab had paid heavy tribute to Israel (3:4), and it rebelled after Ahab died. The outcome is also recorded on the Mesha Stele, a stone found in Jordan in 1868 in which King Mesha of Moab boasts of his victories. It is a rare outside confirmation of the biblical story.

TEACHER TIP

Some students come from families struggling with money or loss. Handle the widow and the boy's death with gentleness, and end the session with an invitation to pray for anyone going through a hard time.

Handout Answer Key

1. **oil**
2. **room**
3. **well**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: What is something small you have (time, talent, kindness) that God could multiply if you gave it to Him?

FEEL: Have you ever felt too small or too poor to help? How does the widow's story change how you feel?

DO: Who in your world has a need you could notice and meet this week, like the woman of Shunem? Write down one thing you will do.

Companion podcast: Session 2, "Oil, Kindness and a Little Boy's Return" (about 5 minutes).

Session 3: The Servant Girl and the General

2 Kings 5:1–6:7 | about 840 BC

BIG IDEA

God loves outsiders and even enemies. He uses the kindness of a small servant girl, the wise words of humble servants, and the faithfulness of an honest prophet to bring a proud man to healing, while greed and lies destroy those who use God for gain.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

Then she said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.” **2 Kings 5:3**

The Story to Teach

Naaman was the commander of the Syrian army: strong, successful and respected, but a leper. In the Bible, leprosy was a terrible skin disease that made a person unclean. Syrian raiders had taken a young girl from Israel and she became a servant in Naaman's house. She had every reason to be angry. Instead she said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.” A child, a prisoner and a servant had the most important message in the whole house.

Naaman set off with a letter from his king, ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothing. When he arrived at Elisha's door, Elisha did not even come out. He sent a messenger who said, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you.” Naaman exploded. He had expected a show. The Jordan was a muddy river, and Syria had better rivers. He stormed away.

Then his servants came to him. They said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” Notice their kindness: they called him “my father” and reasoned gently. Naaman listened. “So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” Naaman went back to Elisha and declared, “Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.”

He offered Elisha gifts. Elisha refused them all. He wanted Naaman to know that grace cannot be bought. But Gehazi, Elisha's servant, whispered to himself that his master had let Naaman off too easily. He ran after the general, invented a story about two young prophets needing money, and took silver and clothing. He hid them at home. When Elisha asked him where he had been, Gehazi lied: “Your servant did not go anywhere.” Elisha knew. “Is it time to receive money and garments?” he asked. The leprosy of Naaman clung to Gehazi from that day on.

The chapter ends with a gentle little story. The prophets' school was growing, and while they were cutting logs by the Jordan, a man's borrowed iron ax head fell into the water. “Alas, master! For it was borrowed,” he cried. Elisha cut a stick, threw it in, and the iron floated. God cares about big problems like leprosy and small problems like a borrowed ax.

Love in Action

A girl with every reason to be bitter was the first to show love to her enemy. That is Christ-like love. Naaman's servants encouraged him at the exact moment he was about to quit. Anyone can encourage like that: tell someone, “Go ahead. It's worth it.”

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	The servant girl. Taken from her home as a prisoner of war, yet she cared about the man who owned her house. She spoke up with hope.
Admired	Naaman's servants. They respectfully encouraged their angry boss: "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?"
Admired	Elisha. Honest and generous. He refused payment so that God, not Elisha, would get the credit.
Warning	Gehazi. Elisha's own servant. He saw a chance to get rich off God's miracle, chased Naaman, lied twice, and was stricken with leprosy.
Warning	Naaman's pride (at first). He was furious that the cure was so simple, and almost walked away from healing.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: "Would you ever help someone who was mean to you?" Let students answer.
5–10	Set the scene	Show Syria (Aram), Damascus and Israel on the map. Explain why leprosy meant isolation and shame.
10–25	Teach the story	Tell it in four scenes: the girl, the river, the servants, Gehazi. Read 2 Kings 5:1–14 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Read Luke 4:27 and talk about why Jesus' hometown was angry that He mentioned Naaman: God's love reaches outsiders. Connect washing seven times to the cleansing we receive by faith in Jesus.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz. Pray for people who have been mistreated.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. The servant girl was captured and taken from her family. What does her kindness teach us about how to treat people who have hurt us?

Sample answer: Romans 12:21: do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. She did not hold a grudge. She wanted him healed.

2. Why did Naaman almost miss his healing?

Sample answer: Pride. He wanted a dramatic cure and was offended by simple obedience.

3. What did Naaman's servants do that was so helpful?

Sample answer: They spoke respectfully, gave a good reason, and encouraged him at the right time.

4. Gehazi saw Elisha refuse money, yet he took it anyway. How can we be tempted to profit from our faith or our influence?

Sample answer: Draw out: popularity, grades, attention, status. Gehazi's problem began as greed and ended as a lie. One sin leads to more sin.

5. The ax head was "borrowed." What does the story say about honesty and about God's care for small things?

Sample answer: The man worried about someone else's property. God cares about the little problems that worry us.

Jesus in the Story

When Jesus preached in His hometown of Nazareth, He mentioned Naaman and said, "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27). The people of Nazareth were so angry that they tried to throw Him off a cliff. They did not like hearing that God's

mercy reaches outsiders and enemies. But that is exactly the heart of the gospel. Jesus touched lepers and healed them, and He came for every nation. Naaman washed seven times and was made clean; we are made clean by the blood of Jesus.

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

Syria (Aram) was Israel's neighbor to the north and a frequent enemy. Its capital was Damascus. Raiding parties regularly captured Israelites to use as servants, and a young girl in this position had little power or protection. Naaman's rank, "commander of the army," made him second only to the king, and 2 Kings 5:1 says the LORD had given Syria victory through him. Even a pagan general's success was under God's hand.

"Leprosy" in the Bible covers several skin conditions, and the Law required a person with it to live outside the camp and cry "Unclean!" (Leviticus 13). Touching a leper made someone unclean, yet Jesus touched them (Mark 1:41). The cure Naaman received was sometimes compared to a new birth, with skin "like the flesh of a little child." The rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, were clear mountain rivers, which is why Naaman scorned the muddy Jordan.

Naaman asked to take two mule-loads of Israel's soil home so that he could worship the LORD on it (5:17), a sign of his sincere new faith, since people of that time believed gods were tied to their land. He also asked about bowing in the temple of Rimmon, the Syrian god, while helping his king. Elisha's reply, "Go in peace," is a gentle one. Scholars differ on how to read it, so avoid dogmatism.

TEACHER TIP

Be sure students see both outcomes: Naaman is healed and Gehazi is judged. Spend time on the servant girl. Middle schoolers often feel powerless and need to hear that God uses small voices.

Handout Answer Key

1. **girl (servant girl)**
2. **seven**
3. **Gehazi**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: Why do you think God chose a captured servant girl to start Naaman's healing?

FEEL: Is there someone you find it hard to be kind to? What do you feel when you think about the servant girl?

DO: Say or write one encouraging sentence to someone this week who needs it, the way Naaman's servants did. Who will it be?

Companion podcast: Session 3, "The Servant Girl and the General" (about 4 minutes).

Session 4: Open Our Eyes

2 Kings 6:8–7:20 | about 840–835 BC

BIG IDEA

God's people are never outnumbered, even when it looks that way. He opens the eyes of the fearful, turns enemies into guests through kindness, and uses a few outcasts with a conscience to carry good news to a starving city.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 2 Kings 6:16

The Story to Teach

The king of Syria kept setting up ambushes for Israel, and every time Israel's king seemed to know where they were. The Syrian king thought he had a spy, but a servant said, "Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." So the king sent horses, chariots and a great army by night to surround the little town of Dothan, where Elisha was staying.

Early the next morning Elisha's servant stepped outside and saw an army all around the city. "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" he said. Elisha was calm. "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then he prayed, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." The servant looked again, and the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

When the Syrians came for Elisha, he prayed again, and God struck them with blindness. Elisha led them to Samaria, the capital, and then prayed that their eyes would be opened. They found themselves in the middle of the Israelite army. Israel's king asked, "My father, shall I kill them?" Elisha said no. "Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master." The king prepared a great feast, and the raiders went home. The story says the Syrian bands came no more into the land of Israel.

Later, however, Syria came back with a full siege of Samaria, and the city ran out of food. Prices climbed so high that people paid for scraps, and heartbreaking things happened in the city. The king tore his clothes (he was wearing sackcloth underneath), but instead of repenting he blamed Elisha and said, "This calamity is from the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?" Elisha answered, "Hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the LORD: 'Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel.'" An officer scoffed that even if God opened windows in heaven it could not happen. Elisha told him, "In fact, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it."

Meanwhile, four lepers sat outside the city gate. They had no hope inside the city or out. They said to each other, "Why are we sitting here until we die?" They decided to walk to the Syrian camp. The LORD had made the Syrian army hear the noise of chariots and a great army, and they had run for their lives, leaving tents, horses, food, silver and gold. The lepers ate and drank and hid some treasure. Then they stopped. "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent." They ran to tell the city. At first the king thought it was a trap, but scouts confirmed it, and the people rushed out, so that flour was sold for a shekel, exactly as Elisha had said. The officer was trampled at the gate and died.

Love in Action

Elisha captured an entire enemy army and fed them. Four lepers could have hoarded the Syrian food, but they thought of a hungry city. That is love that overcomes evil with good, and love that shares the good news with others.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	Elisha. Fearless under pressure, and he prayed for his frightened servant instead of scolding him. Then he fed his enemies and sent them home.
Admired	Elisha's servant. Honest about his fear, and willing to see what God showed him when his eyes were opened.
Admired	The four lepers. Outcasts who found good news and refused to keep it to themselves: “We are not doing right.”
Warning	King Jehoram of Israel. In trouble, he blamed God's prophet and gave up on God: “Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?”
Warning	The royal officer. He mocked God's promise, and he did not live to enjoy it.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “What is the scariest thing you have ever faced? Who helped you?” Let a few students share.
5–10	Set the scene	Locate Dothan, Samaria and Syria on the map. Review the previous sessions in one sentence.
10–25	Teach the story	Tell it in three scenes: the army at Dothan, the great feast, the four lepers. Read 2 Kings 6:15–17 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Connect the blindness, the feast and the “good news” to Jesus giving sight, Jesus loving enemies and the gospel.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz and pray for anyone who is afraid.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. What do you think Elisha's servant saw when his eyes were opened, and what did that change?

Sample answer: God's army was already there. Our fear shrinks when we remember who is with us.

2. Why do you think Elisha fed his enemies instead of defeating them?

Sample answer: Kindness stopped the raids. Compare Romans 12:20–21: “Overcome evil with good.”

3. How did King Jehoram respond when things got worse? How is that different from Elisha?

Sample answer: Jehoram blamed and quit. Elisha prayed and trusted.

4. Why did the four lepers feel guilty keeping the good news a secret?

Sample answer: They knew people were starving. We have good news too, and it would be wrong to keep it to ourselves.

5. Who in your life needs to hear some good news right now?

Sample answer: Allow a few honest answers and tie to the gospel.

Jesus in the Story

Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes.” Jesus actually opened blind eyes, and He opens the spiritual eyes of those who trust Him. Elisha told the king to feed his enemies. Jesus said, “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you,” and on the cross He prayed for the people who nailed Him there. The four lepers discovered bread in a starving city and shared it. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35), and He sends us to tell hungry people where

bread is found. The city's good news is a picture of the gospel.

*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. **Luke 4:18***

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

Dothan lay about twelve miles north of Samaria, in a hill country on a trade route; it was the town where Joseph's brothers once sold him (Genesis 37:17). The Syrians (Arameans) used chariots and horse raiders, so a night surround was a serious military action. "Struck with blindness" in 6:18 uses a rare Hebrew word that describes a dazzling, confusing blindness, not total darkness. That explains why they could still walk and follow Elisha.

The famine in Samaria was a siege famine, a common horror in ancient warfare, and the Law warned about it (Deuteronomy 28:52–57). Prices in 6:25 show the desperation: a donkey's head, an unclean animal, sold for about eighty shekels of silver. Lepers were kept outside the gates by law (Leviticus 13:46), so these four men had no place within the city and, as Syrians would see them as enemies, little hope outside. Their gamble was the last choice they had.

"Good news" in 7:9 is the Hebrew basar, the root behind the Greek word for "gospel." The same word is used for announcing a military victory. A runner would bring the news that the battle had been won. The gospel is the announcement that Christ has won the victory over sin and death for His people.

TEACHER TIP

Some middle schoolers feel afraid at school, at home or about the future. Let this story comfort. Do not give a quick "don't be afraid." Say that Elisha prayed for the servant. We can pray for each other.

Handout Answer Key

1. **more**
2. **food**
3. **good**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: What do you think God wants you to learn from Elisha feeding his enemies instead of fighting them?

FEEL: When have you felt outnumbered or afraid? What would it feel like to "see" God's army around you?

DO: What good news (about Jesus or about something God has done for you) will you tell one person this week? Who will you tell?

Companion podcast: Session 4, "Open Our Eyes" (about 5 minutes).

Session 5: Zeal Without a Whole Heart

2 Kings 8–10 | about 841 BC

BIG IDEA

God judges evil rulers, protects the vulnerable and keeps His promises to David. But fierce zeal for God's cause is not enough; He wants leaders and followers who obey Him with all their heart.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin. 2 Kings 10:31

The Story to Teach

Chapter 8 begins with the woman of Shunem. Elisha warned her that a seven-year famine was coming, and she moved her household to the Philistine coast. When she returned, someone had taken her house and fields. She appealed to the king. At that very moment the king was asking Gehazi to tell him the stories of Elisha's miracles, and Gehazi was describing how Elisha raised a dead boy. He looked up, and there was the woman and her son! The king asked her to tell it herself, and then he ordered an official, "Restore all that was hers and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now." God arranged the timing to defend a widow.

Elisha then traveled to Damascus, where King Ben-Hadad was sick. Hazael, an official, came with forty camels loaded with gifts to ask if the king would recover. Elisha stared at Hazael until he was embarrassed, and then he wept. "Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel," he said. Hazael became king and a cruel enemy of Israel. In Judah, King Jehoram, who had married Athaliah the daughter of Ahab, "did evil in the sight of the LORD." "Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah, for the sake of His servant David, as He promised him to give a lamp to him and his sons forever." That lamp is a thread through the whole book.

Chapter 9 is the beginning of the end for Ahab's family. Elisha sent a young prophet to the army camp to anoint Jehu as king of Israel and to tell him that God would bring judgment on Ahab's house, as Elijah had foretold, for the blood of the prophets and for all the innocent people Jezebel had harmed. Jehu's fellow officers blew trumpets and shouted, "Jehu is king!" Jehu drove his chariot so fast that the watchman said, "The driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously!" Jehu met King Jehoram of Israel on the field of Naboth, the very vineyard Jezebel had stolen, and God's judgment came there. Jezebel's end came exactly as Elijah had prophesied.

In chapter 10, Jehu completed the removal of Ahab's family and then got rid of Baal worship. He invited the worshipers of Baal to a great festival, and when they were all inside the temple of Baal, he had them removed and the temple torn down. "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel." He said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD." But then the verse we remember: "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam." He kept the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel, and Hazael defeated them.

Love in Action

A king listened to a widow and gave back everything that had been taken from her. That is a leader defending the weak. By contrast, Jezebel stole a poor man's vineyard and killed him. God notices how rulers treat the powerless.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	The king who restored the Shunammite woman's land. He listened to a widow's case and ordered everything restored, even the income from her fields while she was away.
Admired	Elisha. A tender-hearted prophet who wept for the suffering he saw coming for Israel.
Admired	Jehonadab son of Rechab. A man of integrity and loyalty who stood with Jehu against the worship of Baal.
Warning	Queen Jezebel. She had an innocent man named Naboth killed so she could take his vineyard, and she never repented.
Warning	Jehoram and Ahaziah of Judah. They married into Ahab's family and walked in his evil ways.
Warning	Jehu. He wiped out Baal worship, but he refused to give up the golden calves. His heart was only partly God's.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “Can a person be very passionate about God and still not obey Him? What might that look like?”
5–10	Set the scene	Briefly explain Ahab, Jezebel and Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). Show Samaria, Jezreel and Damascus on the map.
10–25	Teach the story	Tell the Shunammite scene first (a story of hope), then Hazael, then Jehu in a few strong strokes. Keep the judgment scenes brief and factual.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Talk about the lamp of David and how it leads to Jesus, the true and whole-hearted King.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz. Pray for the vulnerable and for leaders.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. What did the king do for the Shunammite woman, and why does it matter that God arranged the timing?

Sample answer: He restored everything. God sees injustice and works behind the scenes. We can trust Him when we have been treated unfairly.

2. Elisha wept when he saw what Hazael would do. What does that tell you about his heart?

Sample answer: He did not enjoy the coming judgment. God's people should grieve over sin and suffering.

3. Why was Jezebel's treatment of Naboth such a big deal to God?

Sample answer: She abused her power to harm a weak and innocent man. God defends the powerless.

4. Jehu was zealous, but 10:31 says he did not follow God with all his heart. How can someone look religious and still hold back from God?

Sample answer: Doing the visible things but keeping private sins. Zeal without obedience is not enough.

5. What is one “golden calf” that you or students your age tend to hold on to?

Sample answer: Phone, popularity, a secret habit. Encourage honesty without shaming.

Jesus in the Story

God promised David “a lamp” forever, and He kept the promise even when David's descendants failed. That lamp finally became a Person: Jesus, the Son of David, “the Light of the world” (John 8:12). Jehu was zealous, but he was divided. Jesus is the King who obeyed the Father with all His heart, even to death on the cross. He also defends the weak. Where Jezebel took a poor man's vineyard, Jesus gives the poor in spirit the kingdom.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

The northern kingdom's “house of Ahab” had been the dominant dynasty for about forty years. Ahab's marriage to Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, brought Baal worship into the royal court. Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21) was the clearest example of the royal family's contempt for the Law: land inheritance was sacred in Israel (Leviticus 25:23). Elijah had prophesied the end of Ahab's line, and chapters 9–10 record its fulfillment.

Hazael was a real king of Damascus (about 842–800 BC), mentioned in Assyrian records. Jehu is the only king of Israel (or Judah) whose name appears in an ancient artifact outside the Bible: the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (now in the British Museum) shows an Israelite king, identified as “Jehu, son of Omri,” bowing and bringing tribute to the Assyrian king.

Be careful and balanced when teaching Jehu. Scripture says God approved of what Jehu did against Ahab's house (10:30), yet Hosea 1:4 later says God would avenge “the bloodshed of Jezreel” on Jehu's house. That tells us Jehu went further than God asked, and acted from ambition as much as from obedience. For middle schoolers, keep the violent details light, but be clear that God is just and that He hates abuse of the weak.

TEACHER TIP

The violence in chapters 9–10 is real. Do not hide it, and do not dwell on it. A good summary: “God said He would judge Ahab's family for their evil, and He did.” Spend more time on the Shunammite woman, Elisha's tears and Jehu's divided heart.

Handout Answer Key

1. **restored**
2. **wept (cried)**
3. **Baal**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: What is the difference between being zealous for God and obeying God with all your heart?

FEEL: Is there something you are holding on to that you know God wants you to let go of? How do you feel about it?

DO: Pick one area where you can obey God more fully, not just look good. What will you do this week?

Companion podcast: Session 5, “Zeal Without a Whole Heart” (about 4 minutes).

Session 6: The Hidden King

2 Kings 11–12 | about 841–796 BC

BIG IDEA

God protects His promises. He uses courageous people who defend the helpless, wise mentors who point a young person to Him, and honest workers, even when evil rulers try to wipe out His plan. And a young person must make faith their own.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him.
2 Kings 12:2

The Story to Teach

When Jehu killed Ahaziah, king of Judah, Ahaziah's mother Athaliah saw her chance. She was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and she “arose and destroyed all the royal heirs,” including her own grandchildren, so that she could rule. Judah had a queen who hated the LORD, a Baal temple, and a royal family nearly wiped out. This was a threat not just to a family but to God's promise that David's line would rule forever.

But one woman stepped in. Jehosheba, Ahaziah's sister (and the wife of Jehoiada the priest, according to 2 Chronicles 22:11), took the baby Joash and his nurse and hid them in a bedroom in the temple. For six years the little boy was hidden in the house of the LORD while Athaliah ruled. Jehosheba's courage saved the line of David, and through that line, the Messiah.

In the seventh year Jehoiada called together the commanders and the temple guards. He showed them the king's son, they made a covenant, and he put the boy under heavy protection. Then he brought out Joash, put the crown on his head, gave him a copy of the testimony (the Law), and anointed him. The people clapped their hands and shouted, “Long live the king!” When Athaliah heard it, she came running and cried, “Treason! Treason!” She was taken out and put to death. Jehoiada then led a covenant between the LORD, the king and the people that they would be the LORD's people, and the people tore down the temple of Baal.

Joash was seven years old when he began to reign. Chapter 12 says that “Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him.” When he was grown, Joash saw that the temple needed repairs. The priests were slow, so Jehoiada put a chest by the altar with a hole in the lid. The people dropped in their gifts, and the money was used to pay carpenters, builders, masons and stonecutters. The workmen were so honest that no one even asked for an accounting of the money.

Sadly, Chronicles tells us what came next. After Jehoiada died at 130, the king's officials flattered him and Joash turned from the LORD to idols. Jehoiada's son Zechariah warned him, and Joash had him stoned in the temple court. The kindness of Jehoiada was forgotten. A small Syrian army came against Judah, Joash paid them off with the temple treasures, and his own servants killed him. A faith that depended on one godly mentor did not last. Each of us has to make our faith our own.

Love in Action

Jehosheba stole a baby from a palace full of killers. This is what defending the weak looks like: it costs something and it is quiet. Jehoiada then gave the boy a chance by teaching him. Godly leaders encourage the young.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	Jehosheba. A princess who risked her life to rescue a one-year-old boy from a murderous queen and hid him for six years.
Admired	Jehoiada the priest. A patient, wise leader who protected the boy, taught him the Law and led the people to renew their covenant with God.
Admired	The temple workmen. They handled money so honestly that no one had to check their records.
Warning	Queen Athaliah. She murdered her own grandchildren to take the throne of Judah, and she led the nation to worship Baal.
Warning	King Joash (later). After Jehoiada died, he listened to flattering officials, abandoned the LORD and even had Jehoiada's son killed.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “Who is a person who has believed in you or helped you grow? What did they do?”
5–10	Set the scene	Draw a quick family tree: Ahab, Jezebel, Athaliah, Ahaziah, Joash. Explain David's promise that his line would not end.
10–25	Teach the story	Tell it as a rescue story: the murder plot, Jehosheba's courage, the six hidden years, the coronation. Read 2 Kings 11:1–3 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Compare the hidden baby with baby Jesus escaping Herod (Matthew 2), and Jehoiada the priest with Jesus our High Priest.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz. Pray for mentors and for students to own their faith.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. How was Jehosheba's rescue of Joash dangerous, and what can we learn from her courage?

Sample answer: If Athaliah had found out, Jehosheba would have been killed. Standing up for the weak costs something.

2. Why do you think God let Joash stay hidden for six years instead of removing Athaliah right away?

Sample answer: God works in His time. The boy needed time to grow, and God's people needed time to be ready.

3. Joash did right “all the days” Jehoiada instructed him. What can go wrong when your faith depends only on someone else's?

Sample answer: Faith must become personal. Talk about parents, youth leaders and pastors, who point us to Christ but cannot replace our own relationship with Him.

4. What does it mean that the workmen “dealt faithfully”?

Sample answer: They were honest even when no one was watching. Integrity is a part of godliness.

5. Who is a Jehoiada in your life, and who could you be a Jehoiada for?

Sample answer: Allow personal answers; encourage students to thank a mentor.

Jesus in the Story

The enemy tried to destroy the royal baby, and God hid him in His own house. When Jesus was a young child, King Herod tried to kill Him, and Joseph and Mary took Him to Egypt until it was safe (Matthew 2:13–15). Satan has always tried to destroy the line that would bring the Savior, and he has always failed. Jehoiada was a godly priest who brought a young king to his throne. Jesus is both our King and our High Priest, and He does not die or fail, so we do not depend on Him only for a season.

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

Athaliah ruled Judah from about 841 to 835 BC, the only woman to rule as a queen in Judah or Israel. She was a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 8:18, 26). She had been married to King Jehoram of Judah as a political alliance with the northern kingdom. After Jehu killed her son Ahaziah and her relatives in Israel, she moved to seize the throne in Judah, which meant eliminating David's descendants, a direct attack on the Davidic promise (2 Samuel 7:16).

Jehoiada was the high priest, and 2 Chronicles 22:11 tells us that his wife Jehosheba was a sister of King Ahaziah (probably a half-sister, a daughter of Jehoram by another wife). That is how she had access to the palace and the temple. The temple was a safe hiding place because only priests entered certain areas. "The temple guard" in 11:4–8 were the Carites and the royal bodyguard, who were brought into the plan. "Testimony" in 11:12 refers to the covenant document, the Law, given to the king (Deuteronomy 17:18–20).

Be honest about what happened to Joash. Second Chronicles 24 is clear that his drift came after Jehoiada's death, and Jesus Himself referred to the killing of Zechariah "between the temple and the altar" (Matthew 23:35). This is a great warning for students in a youth group: godly parents, teachers and leaders can set the foundation, but each student must choose to follow the LORD.

TEACHER TIP

Some students have a parent or leader who is the main reason they are in church. Use this lesson gently, so they are encouraged to build their own walk with Jesus through Scripture and prayer.

Handout Answer Key

1. **Jehosheba**
2. **king**
3. **Jehoiada**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: What is the difference between following Jesus because of someone else and following Jesus because you know Him yourself?

FEEL: Who has been a Jehoiada in your life? What do you feel when you think about them?

DO: Do one thing this week to make your faith your own, such as reading a Bible passage by yourself, praying on your own or thanking a mentor. What will you do?

Companion podcast: Session 6, "The Hidden King" (about 4 minutes).

Session 7: Elisha's Last Arrows

2 Kings 13–14 | about 800–753 BC

BIG IDEA

God is gracious and compassionate even to a nation that keeps failing Him. He wants us to obey with our whole heart and not stop halfway, and He wants leaders who are humble and who protect the innocent.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

But the LORD was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence. 2 Kings 13:23

The Story to Teach

Jehu's son Jehoahaz and then his grandson Joash (also called Jehoash) ruled Israel after him. Syria under Hazael crushed the army of Israel until only fifty horsemen and ten chariots remained. Jehoahaz did evil, but when he was in trouble he “pleaded with the LORD, and the LORD listened to him, for He saw the oppression of Israel.” God provided a deliverer even when the king did not deserve it.

Then Elisha became sick with the illness that would take his life, and King Joash came to see him. He wept and said, “O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!” (the same words Elisha cried when Elijah was taken). Elisha told him to take a bow and arrows, and he placed his own hands on the king's hands. They opened the east window and shot an arrow. “The arrow of the LORD's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria,” said Elisha.

Then Elisha said, “Take the arrows,” and told Joash to strike the ground. The king struck three times and stopped. The man of God was angry and said, “You should have struck five or six times, then you would have defeated Syria till you had destroyed it. But now you will strike Syria only three times.” The king believed God but did not believe all the way. He was willing to take what God offered, but not to ask for everything.

Elisha died and was buried. Some time later, a funeral party spotted raiders and threw the body they were burying into Elisha's tomb. When the dead man touched Elisha's bones, he came to life and stood on his feet. God was showing that His power did not die with His prophet. And then the writer says: “But the LORD was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” He kept His promise to Abraham, not because Israel earned it, but because He is faithful.

Chapter 14 turns to Judah. King Amaziah did right “but not like his father David.” When he had power, he executed the servants who had murdered his father but he did not put their children to death, because the Law said “a person shall be put to death for his own sin.” He won a big victory over Edom, but his success went to his head. He sent a challenge to King Jehoash of Israel, who answered with a parable about a thistle that tried to be a cedar, and warned him, “Glory in that, and stay at home.” Amaziah would not listen. Judah was defeated, Jerusalem's wall was broken, and the temple treasures were carried off.

Meanwhile Jeroboam II ruled Israel for forty-one years. He did evil, but God used him to restore Israel's borders, as the prophet Jonah the son of Amittai had foretold. “For the LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter ... And the LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam.” The kingdom grew rich, but prophets like Amos said the rich were selling the poor for a pair of sandals. God cared about the people being trampled by the prosperity.

Love in Action

Elisha's last act was an act of love: coaching a discouraged king with a promise of victory. And “the LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter.” Our God notices when people suffer. Amaziah's decision to spare the children of the killers is a small, quiet defense of the innocent.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	Elisha. Even on his deathbed, he was still coaching the king and pointing him to God's victory.
Admired	King Jehohaz (his prayer). A weak and wicked king, but when his people were crushed he “pleaded with the LORD,” and God listened.
Admired	Amaziah (one moment). He obeyed the Law and refused to put the killers' children to death, protecting the innocent.
Warning	King Joash of Israel. He wept over Elisha but struck the ground only three times. Half-hearted faith gets half a victory.
Warning	King Amaziah (later). Pride after a victory led him to pick a fight he could not win.
Warning	King Jeroboam II. He made Israel rich and strong, but the poor were crushed. God sent the prophets Amos and Hosea to confront the injustice.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Hand each student a pencil or arrow shape. Ask: “Have you ever stopped trying right before the finish? What happened?”
5–10	Set the scene	Briefly recap Jehu's dynasty. Show the borders under Jeroboam II (the biggest since Solomon).
10–25	Teach the story	Tell the arrows story slowly. Then do a fast survey of Amaziah and Jeroboam II. Read 2 Kings 13:14–19 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Connect Elisha's bones to the empty tomb of Jesus, and Jonah to the sign of Jonah.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz and pray.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. Why was Elisha upset that the king struck the ground only three times?

Sample answer: The king stopped short. He did not trust God for the full victory. God invites us to ask for big things.

2. What does it show about God that He helped Israel even when Jehohaz and Joash were doing evil?

Sample answer: God is gracious. He keeps His promises because of who He is, not because of who we are.

3. Amaziah spared the children of the killers. Why is that important, and where do we see people punished for others' mistakes today?

Sample answer: Everyone is responsible for their own sin. We should protect children and the innocent from blame for what others did.

4. What is dangerous about winning a big victory? How did it affect Amaziah?

Sample answer: Pride. Proverbs 16:18. Humility keeps us close to God after success.

5. Where in our school or town are people being overlooked while others do well? How can we help?

Sample answer: Encourage students to name real needs and real actions.

Jesus in the Story

When a dead man touched Elisha's bones he came back to life. It points to Someone far greater. Jesus did not just touch life, He is the resurrection and the life. The tomb that Jesus was buried in did not hold Him. Jonah, who was mentioned in 14:25, was also a sign pointing to Christ. Jesus said, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). And the covenant with Abraham that God remembered in 13:23 was fulfilled in Jesus, through whom all the nations are blessed.

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." **John 11:25***

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

The Assyrian king Adad-nirari III attacked Syria around 805 BC, which weakened Hazael's son Ben-Hadad and helped Israel recover. The Bible does not mention it, but historians think this is the "deliverer" God sent in 13:5. Israel then enjoyed a recovery under Joash and a golden age under Jeroboam II (793–753 BC), with the biggest borders since Solomon (14:25).

Archaeologists have found the remains of Jeroboam II's era: the Samaria ostraca (receipts for wine and oil) show a thriving economy, and carved ivories found in the royal palace match Amos 6:4, which condemns people who "lie on beds of ivory." The prophets Amos and Hosea ministered in this time of prosperity and corruption. Jonah, the prophet from Gath-Hepher, also worked in the days of Jeroboam II.

Elisha's burial: Israelites in the period buried the dead in rock-cut tombs. The raiders from Moab came every spring (13:20). The miracle is a rare moment in the Old Testament. Do not overstate it, because the Bible says only that the man revived. It was a sign that God's power stayed on His prophet's ministry even after he died.

TEACHER TIP

Students may feel they will never be good enough. Stress that 13:23 is about God's grace and promise, not our performance. Then challenge them: God invites us to ask for more, and not to stop at three.

Handout Answer Key

1. **three**
2. **bones**
3. **Abraham**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: What do you think it means to stop at "three" when God wants to give "five or six"?

FEEL: Where do you feel tempted to give God only part of your effort or trust? How does it feel to know that He is gracious anyway?

DO: Name one thing you will pray for boldly this week, something you have been afraid to ask for. What is it?

Companion podcast: Session 7, "Elisha's Last Arrows" (about 4 minutes).

Session 8: Steady Kings, Shaky Kingdoms

2 Kings 15–16 | about 790–715 BC

BIG IDEA

When the world shakes, leaders who stay steady and humble before God, who listen to His prophets and who show mercy to the weak, shine brightly. But those who panic and copy the world's ways, like Ahaz, lose their way.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. 2 Kings 15:34

The Story to Teach

Chapters 15 and 16 move quickly, and they show us two very different kingdoms. In Israel, kings changed fast: Zechariah reigned six months and was murdered; Shallum lasted a month; Menahem reigned ten years, paying the Assyrian king Pul (Tiglath-Pileser) a thousand talents of silver to stay away; Pekahiah lasted two years and was killed by his officer Pekah; and Pekah was in turn killed by Hoshea. Every one of them “did evil in the sight of the LORD.” The nation was falling apart from the inside.

In Judah, things were steadier. Azariah, also called Uzziah, reigned fifty-two years and “did what was right,” and God prospered him as long as he sought the LORD. But pride grew in his heart. The Chronicles tell us that he walked into the temple to burn incense, which only priests could do, and God struck him with leprosy. He lived in a separate house until he died. Isaiah wrote, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up.” The earthly king was gone, but the true King was on His throne.

Uzziah's son Jotham took over. Second Kings 15:34 says, “He did what was right in the sight of the LORD; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.” The Chronicles add one important thing: Jotham did not enter the temple as his father had. He learned from his father's mistake. Jotham built the Upper Gate of the temple and many towers and cities. But the people still followed corrupt ways.

Then came Ahaz, one of the worst kings of Judah. He walked in the way of the kings of Israel and even offered his own son as a sacrifice to a false god. When Syria and Israel attacked Judah, the prophet Isaiah told him, “Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear.” God offered him a sign, and when Ahaz would not ask for one, God gave this promise: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” But Ahaz sent the silver and gold from the temple to the king of Assyria instead and asked him for help. Assyria did come, and it attacked Damascus, and then it became Judah's master.

Ahaz traveled to Damascus to meet the Assyrian king, and when he saw an altar there he liked, he sent the plans to the priest Urijah, who built a copy in Jerusalem. Ahaz pushed the LORD's bronze altar aside, so he could use the new one. Chronicles says he even shut the doors of the temple. In the middle of this terrible time, though, there is a moment of mercy. Judah's army was beaten and 200,000 people were taken to Samaria. A prophet named Oded met the army and told them to send the captives back, warning that God's anger was already against them. The leaders of Ephraim agreed. They took the captives, clothed the naked, gave them food and drink, anointed them with oil, put the weak on donkeys, and brought them back to Jericho. In the darkest chapter of the nation's history, someone chose mercy.

Love in Action

Oded and the leaders of Ephraim did something wonderful. Their own army had come home with 200,000 prisoners from Judah, and they said, “Stop.” They fed, clothed, healed and carried the weak. It is a striking picture of mercy, which Jesus would later teach with the story of the Good Samaritan.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	King Jotham. Steady and humble. He did right, built the Upper Gate of the temple and did not copy his father's pride.
Admired	The prophet Oded and the men of Ephraim. They stood up to their own army and insisted on setting free the Judean captives. The men clothed them, fed them and carried the weak on donkeys.
Admired	The prophet Isaiah. He told King Ahaz, “Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear,” and he offered a sign from God.
Warning	King Ahaz. He copied the pagan nations, offered sacrifices to idols and, instead of trusting the LORD, bought help from Assyria with temple silver.
Warning	The coup kings of Israel. Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah and Pekah: five kings in about twenty years, and most of them took the throne by murder.
Warning	King Uzziah (later). A great king whose pride led him to try to burn incense in the temple, which was a job for priests.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “When there is a big change at school or home, how do you react? Some people panic. Some stay steady.”
5–10	Set the scene	Show the rising power of Assyria on the map. Write the names of the five coup kings of Israel on the board, and note that this took about 20 years.
10–25	Teach the story	Contrast Jotham and Ahaz. Tell Oded's rescue as the high point. Read 2 Chronicles 28:9–15 aloud if time allows.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Show how Isaiah's promise of Immanuel was fulfilled in Jesus, and how Oded's mercy echoes the Good Samaritan.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz and pray for people who are stressed or afraid.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. What does it mean to be steady like Jotham? What makes someone steady in hard times?

Sample answer: Staying close to God, learning from past mistakes and not copying the crowd.

2. Why do you think Ahaz trusted Assyria rather than trust God?

Sample answer: Fear. Assyria was visible and powerful. Trusting God felt risky. Ask students what “Assyria” looks like in their life.

3. What did Oded and the men of Ephraim do for their enemies, and what did it cost them?

Sample answer: They risked being unpopular with their own army. Mercy often means standing against the crowd.

4. Uzziah was a great king who stumbled because of pride. How can success make us forget God?

Sample answer: We start to think we did it ourselves. Humility is remembering we depend on God.

5. The name Immanuel means “God with us.” What does it mean for you that God is with you?

Sample answer: He is never absent, never distant. He is a real presence in fear and in joy.

Jesus in the Story

God gave Ahaz a sign: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). Ahaz had no interest, but God kept His promise. Centuries later, Matthew wrote that the promise came true in the birth of Jesus: “‘They shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23). And when Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up” in the year Uzziah died, John tells us that Isaiah “saw His glory and spoke of Him”, speaking of Jesus (John 12:41). Oded's mercy toward wounded strangers also echoes the story Jesus told of the Good Samaritan, who bound up a beaten man's wounds and took care of him.

*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. **Isaiah 7:14***

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

Israel's last 30 years were a revolving door. Between 753 BC (Jeroboam II's death) and 722 BC (the fall of Samaria), six kings ruled, four of whom took the throne by assassination. Meanwhile Assyria, under Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BC; “Pul” in 15:19), began conquering the region and deporting entire populations. Assyrian records mention Menahem's tribute.

Uzziah (Azariah) was one of Judah's most successful kings: he built up the army, fortified Jerusalem, developed agriculture and defeated the Philistines (2 Chronicles 26). Archaeologists found his burial plaque, which reads, in Aramaic, “Here were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah. Do not open.” The prophets Isaiah, Hosea, Amos and Micah all began ministering in these years.

The Syro-Ephraimite War (about 735 BC) is the backdrop for Ahaz's story. Syria's king Rezin and Israel's king Pekah wanted Judah to join an alliance against Assyria, and when Ahaz refused, they attacked him. Isaiah 7 gives the prophetic side of the story: Isaiah told Ahaz to trust God and promised the Immanuel sign. “Make his son pass through the fire” refers to child sacrifice (to Molech), which God hated (Leviticus 18:21). Be gentle in how you describe this to students.

TEACHER TIP

Students are in an age of social pressure. Ahaz is a great picture: copying the culture around him instead of trusting God. Let them talk about the pressure to fit in and to look strong, and then offer Jotham and Oded as heroes to follow.

Handout Answer Key

1. **pride (mistake)**
2. **Immanuel**
3. **Oded**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: Why do you think Ahaz trusted Assyria instead of God? What do people trust today instead of God?

FEEL: Is there a situation that makes you want to panic or copy what everyone else is doing? What would it feel like to have God with you in it?

DO: Think of one person who is struggling or has been treated unfairly. What is one merciful thing you could do for them this week?

Companion podcast: Session 8, “Steady Kings, Shaky Kingdoms” (about 4 minutes).

Session 9: The Kingdom Falls

2 Kings 17 | 722 BC

BIG IDEA

God is patient, and He warns again and again, but a nation or a person who keeps turning from Him will finally face the result of sin. Half-hearted worship, a mix of God and idols, is not worship at all.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.” 2 Kings 17:13

The Story to Teach

Second Kings 17 is the sad center of the whole book. Hoshea, the last king of Israel, did evil in the sight of the LORD, though “not as the kings of Israel who were before him.” Assyria’s king Shalmaneser demanded tribute, and when Hoshea secretly sent messengers to Egypt for help and stopped paying, Assyria besieged the capital city of Samaria for three years. In 722 BC Samaria fell. Thousands of Israelites were carried off to Assyria and scattered among other nations. The northern kingdom, which had lasted over 200 years, was finished.

Why did it happen? The writer wants us to know that it was no accident. He says, “For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt.” They feared other gods. They built high places on every hill. They set up wooden poles and stone pillars for idols. They even sacrificed their own sons and daughters. The LORD sent prophets again and again: “Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments.” But they “would not hear, but stiffened their necks.” They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.

Notice what went wrong first. They did not suddenly become evil. They started by secretly doing things that were not right, then built idols, then forgot the God who had rescued them. When they were warned they hardened their hearts. It happened one small step at a time. The writer also reminds us that Judah was not much better, because Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD either.

The story does not end with the deportation. Assyria brought foreigners from Babylon, Cuthah, Hamath and other places to live in the empty cities of Samaria. When lions began attacking them, they believed it was because they didn’t know the “god of the land.” The king sent back one of the exiled priests to teach them how to fear the LORD. The result was a mix: “They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods.” Their descendants became known as Samaritans, and the mixed worship continued for centuries.

Even in this dark chapter there are reasons for hope. A few years later, King Hezekiah of Judah sent letters to the people left in the north inviting them to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Many laughed, but the Bible says, “Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem.” Those who humbled themselves found God ready to receive them.

Love in Action

God’s love shows up in His patience. Israel was warned for 200 years. Hosea 11:8 shows His heart: “How can I give you up, Ephraim?” And there is something very honest about the remnant who humbled themselves and came back. It is never too late to turn to God.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	The prophets and seers. Hosea, Amos, Oded and others kept warning Israel year after year, at great personal cost.
Admired	God Himself. Slow to anger. He sent warning after warning before the judgment came.
Admired	The remnant who humbled themselves. When Hezekiah invited northern families to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, some “humbled themselves and came.”
Warning	King Hoshea. The last king of Israel. He did evil, though not as badly as the kings before him, and he looked to Egypt for help instead of God.
Warning	The people of Israel. They stiffened their necks, followed worthless idols and mixed the worship of the LORD with the gods of their neighbors.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “Have you ever ignored a warning and then had a problem? What happened?”
5–10	Set the scene	Show Assyria, Samaria and the places where the Israelites were taken (Halah, Habor, Gozan, the cities of the Medes) on the map.
10–25	Teach the story	Teach the fall as a story of warnings. Use the list of reasons in 17:7–18 (two or three highlights). Tell the Samaritan mix at the end. Read 2 Kings 17:13–14 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Introduce the woman at the well in John 4 and Jesus' love for Samaritans. Emphasize that God provides a way back.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz. Close with a time of quiet confession and thanks for forgiveness.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. Why do you think Israel ignored God's warnings for so long?

Sample answer: Sin is gradual. They got used to it, enjoyed it and assumed they would not face consequences.

2. What is dangerous about mixing God with other gods, like the people in verse 33?

Sample answer: Half-hearted worship says God is one of many options. God wants to be first and not just on the list.

3. What do you see in these verses about God's patience and love?

Sample answer: He sent prophet after prophet. He warned before the judgment.

4. The people from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun “humbled themselves.” Why does humility make a difference?

Sample answer: It opens the door to God's grace. James 4:6: God gives grace to the humble.

5. Is there a “small step” in our lives that could lead to bigger drifting from God?

Sample answer: Skipping Bible reading, secret habits, friends that pull us away. Encourage honest talk.

Jesus in the Story

The Samaritans were the mixed descendants of the people living in Samaria after the fall, and Jews looked down on them. But Jesus walked right into a Samaritan town, sat at a well and spoke with a Samaritan woman. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Jesus did not want a mix of the LORD and idols. He wanted whole-hearted worship. The woman went and told her town, and many Samaritans believed. Jesus is also the One who calls the lost and wandering to “Return.” Hosea 14:1 begged Israel, “O Israel, return to the LORD your God.” In Jesus, God Himself came to bring us back.

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. John 4:24

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

Samaria fell to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V, who died during the siege, and his successor Sargon II completed the conquest in 722–721 BC. Sargon boasts in his own records of taking 27,290 people from Samaria. Assyria had a policy of mass deportation: they moved conquered peoples around the empire so that they would lose their national identity and could not rebel. The ten northern tribes were scattered and, from the Bible's point of view, no longer a nation.

The reasons in 17:7–23 are a theological summary. They echo Deuteronomy 28–29, where Moses had warned that disobedience would lead to exile. This is why Kings is called “the Deuteronomistic History.” The text says the people “walked in the statutes of the nations,” that they served idols “though the LORD had said to them, ‘You shall not do this thing,’” and that Judah too had failed. The writer hopes that his readers, who are exiles in Babylon, will learn from this.

The Samaritans: Assyria resettled people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim in the land. They brought their own gods, but also asked for a priest of the LORD. By the time of Jesus the Samaritans held only the first five books of Moses as Scripture and worshiped on Mount Gerizim. Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies (John 4:9). Jesus' kindness to Samaritans was shocking to His disciples.

TEACHER TIP

This is a heavy lesson. Do not rush to a happy ending, but make sure students leave with hope. Verse 13 is the center: God warned because He loves. Offer a time of prayer and quiet for students who want to return to God.

Handout Answer Key

1. **Samaria**
2. **prophets**
3. **feared**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: How did a little bit of sin grow into the fall of a whole nation? What does that teach you about small choices?

FEEL: Is there anything God has been warning you about that you have been ignoring? What do you feel when you think about it?

DO: Humble yourself this week: pray, confess to God what you need to change, and take one concrete step to “turn back.” What will you do?

Companion podcast: Session 9, “The Kingdom Falls” (about 4 minutes).

Session 10: Trust in the LORD

2 Kings 18–19 | about 715–701 BC

BIG IDEA

When the biggest army in the world is at the gate, God's people can spread their problem out before the LORD in prayer. Leaders who trust God protect the courage of their people, and God answers.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

*He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. **2 Kings 18:5–6***

The Story to Teach

Hezekiah became king of Judah at twenty-five after the disastrous reign of his father Ahaz. Second Kings 18:3 says, “He did what was right in the sight of the LORD.” He removed the high places, broke the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden image. He even broke the bronze serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness, because the people had been burning incense to it, and he called it “Nehushtan,” a piece of bronze. Verses 5 and 6 say that “He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah.”

In 701 BC Sennacherib, king of Assyria, captured the fortified cities of Judah. Hezekiah first tried to pay him off with silver and gold, even stripping the gold from the temple doors, but Sennacherib sent a huge army anyway. A spokesman called the Rabshakeh stood outside Jerusalem and shouted in Hebrew so that the people on the wall could hear. He mocked Hezekiah, “On whom do you trust?” He said the LORD could not save them, just as the gods of other nations had not saved them. Hezekiah's officials begged him to speak in Aramaic so the people would not understand, but he deliberately shouted louder in Hebrew. But “the people held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, ‘Do not answer him.’”

Hezekiah tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD. He sent word to Isaiah, who answered, “Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.” Then Sennacherib sent a letter, again mocking the LORD. Hezekiah took the letter, went up to the temple and spread it before the LORD. He prayed, “O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.” He asked God to save them “that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone.”

God answered through Isaiah. Sennacherib would not shoot an arrow into the city. That night the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. When people got up in the morning, there were the dead bodies. Sennacherib went home to Nineveh. Later, as he was worshiping in the temple of his god, his own sons killed him, a sad end for a man who said no god could stop him.

Love in Action

Hezekiah's officials asked the enemy commander to speak in a language the people on the wall could not understand. They were protecting the people's hearts from fear. Then Isaiah's words, “Do not be afraid,” were a gift of encouragement. Godly leaders guard and comfort the people they lead.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	King Hezekiah. He tore down the idols, even the bronze serpent that people had turned into an idol, and when the crisis came he took the threatening letter to the temple and spread it out before the LORD.
Admired	The prophet Isaiah. He encouraged the frightened king: “Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard.”
Admired	The people on the wall. They obeyed the king and stayed calm instead of answering the enemy's taunts. Sometimes silence is courage.
Warning	Sennacherib and the Rabshakeh. Proud Assyrians who mocked the living God, spread fear and lies, and compared the LORD to the idols of the nations.
Warning	Hezekiah's moment of weakness. At first, Hezekiah tried to buy the Assyrians off with silver and gold stripped from the temple doors. Fear can drive even good leaders to bad choices.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “When you get scary news, what do you do first?” Pass around an unsealed envelope to represent the letter.
5–10	Set the scene	Show Assyria, Lachish and Jerusalem on the map. Explain how big and cruel the Assyrian army was.
10–25	Teach the story	Tell it in four scenes: the reforms, the Rabshakeh at the wall, the letter spread before the LORD, the angel. Read 2 Kings 19:14–19 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Explain the bronze serpent and John 3:14–15. Ask what it means to “look” to Jesus.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students write one worry on a sticky note, “spread it out before the LORD,” and pray. Complete the quiz.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. Why did Hezekiah break the bronze serpent, even though God had told Moses to make it?

Sample answer: People were worshiping the object and not God. Good things can become idols if we trust them more than God.

2. What did the people on the wall do when the Rabshakeh shouted at them? Why was that wise?

Sample answer: They stayed silent. Not every insult needs an answer. Obedience to the king kept them calm.

3. Hezekiah “spread the letter before the LORD.” What does that look like when we pray about a big worry?

Sample answer: Be honest and specific: tell God the whole problem. Prayer is not pretending.

4. What do you learn about God from the prayer in 19:15–19?

Sample answer: He is the one true God, Creator and Savior, who is able to rescue. His glory is the goal.

5. Who is a person who has encouraged you to trust God when you were afraid? How can you do that for someone else?

Sample answer: Encourage students to write a thank-you note or to text a friend.

Jesus in the Story

The bronze serpent was a sign that pointed to the cross. When the Israelites were bitten by snakes in the wilderness, anyone who looked at the bronze serpent on the pole lived (Numbers 21). Jesus told Nicodemus, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14–15). Hezekiah destroyed the idol, but the true meaning remains: look to Jesus and live. And just as the angel of the LORD saved Jerusalem in a night, Jesus has defeated our greatest enemies, sin and death.

*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **John 3:14–15***

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

Sennacherib's own record, the Taylor Prism (now in the British Museum), says he shut Hezekiah up in Jerusalem “like a bird in a cage.” It lists the cities he captured and the tribute Hezekiah paid, and it never claims to have captured Jerusalem. The Lachish reliefs from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh show the siege of Lachish in detail. These confirm the Bible's account of the campaign.

Hezekiah prepared for the siege. He dug a 1,750-foot tunnel through solid rock, bringing water from the Gihon spring inside the city walls (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:30). The Siloam Inscription, found in the tunnel in 1880, describes the moment when the two teams of diggers broke through to meet each other. Isaiah's ministry was at its height in these years, and Micah also prophesied (Micah 5:2 names Bethlehem).

The Rabshakeh (an Assyrian title meaning chief cupbearer or field commander) used classic psychological warfare: appeals to fear, lies about the LORD (he suggests Hezekiah's reforms had insulted God), promises of a better life in exile and a comparison of the LORD to the idols of other nations. It is a good tool for teaching students how to recognize lies and fear tactics. Notice that the text gives no total number of the dead from natural causes. 185,000 is stated in 19:35. Herodotus also records a legend of Sennacherib's army being struck by a plague of mice at the Egyptian border.

TEACHER TIP

Make the prayer of Hezekiah concrete. Give students time to write their worries and pray. Many middle schoolers carry hidden fears (family, friends, grades, future). Let this be a practical session in prayer.

Handout Answer Key

1. **serpent (snake)**
2. **spread**
3. **185,000**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: What is the “bronze serpent” (a good thing that has become too important) in our lives today?

FEEL: What worry feels as big to you as the Assyrian army did to Jerusalem? What do you feel when you picture spreading it out before God?

DO: Spend five minutes this week telling God your biggest worry, out loud or in writing. When will you do it?

Companion podcast: Session 10, “Trust in the LORD” (about 4 minutes).

Session 11: A Prayer, a Proud Moment and a Boy Named Manasseh

2 Kings 20–21 | about 701–640 BC

BIG IDEA

God hears the honest prayers of His people, but pride and selfishness can undo a good life. A leader's choices shape the next generation, for good or for harm. And no one is too far gone for God's mercy when he humbles himself.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you." 2 Kings 20:5

The Story to Teach

Hezekiah became deathly ill. The prophet Isaiah came to him with a message: "Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live." Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed, "Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight." And he wept bitterly. Before Isaiah left the middle courtyard, the LORD told him to go back: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you." God added fifteen years to his life. As a sign, God made the shadow on the stairway go back ten steps.

But the story does not stay happy. Envoys came from Babylon, with letters and a gift, to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery. Instead of giving God the glory, Hezekiah showed them everything: the silver, the gold, the spices, the armory and all his treasures. Isaiah arrived with a hard question: "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?" Then he said, "Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house ... shall be carried to Babylon." Even some of Hezekiah's own sons would be taken. Hezekiah answered, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!" For he said, "Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?" He did not care about the future, as long as he was comfortable.

That short-sighted attitude cost the next generation. Hezekiah's son Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years, the longest in Judah's history. He rebuilt everything his father had destroyed. He put altars to Baal and the stars inside the temple of the LORD. He consulted mediums and sorcerers. He sacrificed his own son in fire. The Bible says Manasseh "seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed," and that he "shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." God warned him through prophets, but he would not listen.

Manasseh's son Amon was no better. He reigned two years, and then his servants killed him. The people of the land struck down the conspirators and made Amon's eight-year-old son Josiah the king. It was a dark time. But God had one more surprising chapter. The Chronicles tell us that the Assyrians captured Manasseh with hooks and bronze fetters and took him to Babylon. "Now when he was in affliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem to his kingdom." Manasseh removed the foreign gods and repaired the altar of the LORD. The worst king of Judah found mercy.

Love in Action

Hezekiah's tears move God. Isaiah's honesty is also love: he told the king the truth. And the people who protected little Josiah are an example of defending the vulnerable: they stood up for a child king. At the end, God's mercy to

Manasseh in prison is the greatest example of all: love for the worst of sinners.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	Hezekiah (in his prayer). When he heard he was going to die, he did not argue or hide. He turned his face to the wall, wept, and talked to God.
Admired	The prophet Isaiah. He spoke hard truth to a king, both the news of death and the warning about Babylon, and he also brought healing.
Admired	The people of the land. When Amon was killed, they punished the murderers and put his eight-year-old son Josiah on the throne to protect the line of David.
Warning	Hezekiah (after his healing). He showed Babylon's envoys all his treasures, which was pride, and then he only cared that there would be peace in his own lifetime.
Warning	King Manasseh. Became king at twelve and ruled fifty-five years. He rebuilt the idol altars, practiced sorcery, sacrificed his son and shed so much innocent blood that it “filled Jerusalem.”
Warning	King Amon. He followed his father's evil and never humbled himself.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Ask: “What is the worst thing you can imagine a person doing, and do you think God could forgive them?” Let students discuss briefly.
5–10	Set the scene	Draw a three-generation family tree: Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah. Note ages: Manasseh 12, Josiah 8.
10–25	Teach the story	Teach the prayer first, then the pride, then Manasseh. Keep the sorcery and sacrifice details to a few honest sentences. Read 2 Kings 20:1–6 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Teach that God's mercy to Manasseh points to Jesus, who came to save sinners. Read 1 Timothy 1:15.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz. Pray for anyone who feels too far gone.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. Hezekiah wept and prayed honestly. Is it okay to tell God how we really feel? Why?

Sample answer: Yes. The Psalms are full of honest prayer. God does not ask us to hide our feelings.

2. Hezekiah showed the Babylonians all his treasures. What was wrong with that?

Sample answer: Pride. He wanted to impress them, and he trusted his wealth and alliances more than God.

3. What do you think about Hezekiah's response in 20:19, “Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?”

Sample answer: He was selfish and shortsighted. Our choices affect people after us.

4. Manasseh became king at twelve. How might his age and his father's weakness have shaped him? Does that excuse him?

Sample answer: Allow honest discussion. Influence matters, but we are still responsible for our own choices.

5. What does Manasseh's story teach us about God's forgiveness?

Sample answer: No sin is too big for God. It is never too late to humble yourself and call on Him.

Jesus in the Story

Hezekiah was given fifteen more years, but Jesus gives eternal life. Manasseh's story shows the shape of the gospel: a man who deserved judgment, sitting in chains, calls out to God, and God receives him. Paul says the

same: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15). And Jesus told of a father who ran to meet a son who had wasted everything and come home (Luke 15). Even the worst sinner can be forgiven through Jesus.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 1 Timothy 1:15

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

Hezekiah's illness probably happened around 703 BC, just before Sennacherib's invasion (note that the fifteen added years take him to about 686 BC). The Babylonian envoys came from Merodach-Baladan, a Chaldean prince who rebelled against Assyria and was looking for allies. This is the first biblical mention of Babylon as a significant player, and Isaiah's prophecy that Judah's treasures would go to Babylon was fulfilled over a century later.

Manasseh's reign (697–642 BC, including a co-regency with Hezekiah) was the longest in Judah. Assyrian records from the time of Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal list Manasseh among the vassal kings who paid tribute to Assyria, which fits the biblical account. The “Prayer of Manasseh” is an apocryphal text, not part of the Bible, but it shows how Jews remembered his repentance. Some traditions say he had Isaiah killed. This is not in the Bible, so be careful about teaching it as fact.

Manasseh's practices (21:3–6) include worship of “all the host of heaven” (astral worship), the use of mediums and spiritists, and making his son “pass through the fire.” Child sacrifice (to Molech) was strictly forbidden (Leviticus 18:21). For middle schoolers, name it briefly and honestly, and focus on the fact that he hurt the weak and the innocent. The people of the land who put Josiah on the throne (21:24) were acting to defend a vulnerable child and to preserve David's line.

TEACHER TIP

Some students may carry guilt over something they have done. This lesson gives a clear gospel moment. Do not skip Manasseh's repentance in 2 Chronicles 33. Offer to talk privately with any student who wants to know how to ask for God's forgiveness.

Handout Answer Key

1. **tears**
2. **twelve (12)**
3. **humbled**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: Why do you think it was so serious for Hezekiah to say, “At least there will be peace in my days”?

FEEL: Do you ever feel like something you did is too bad for God to forgive? How does Manasseh's story speak to that feeling?

DO: Talk to God honestly this week about something you need to say, whether it is a worry, a sin or a hope. When and where will you do it?

Companion podcast: Session 11, “A Prayer, a Proud Moment and a Boy Named Manasseh” (about 4 minutes).

Session 12: A Tender Heart and a Lost Book Found

2 Kings 22–23 | about 640–609 BC

BIG IDEA

God honors a tender heart that responds to His Word. When Josiah heard the Book of the Law, he humbled himself and led the whole nation back to God, and a woman prophet gave him courage and truth. Revival begins when God's Word is heard and obeyed.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him. 2 Kings 23:25

The Story to Teach

Josiah was eight years old when he became king. Second Kings 22:2 says, “And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” Chronicles adds that in his eighth year he began to seek the God of his father David, while he was still young, and in his twelfth year he began to clean the land of its idols. When he was twenty-six, he sent his scribe Shaphan to repair the temple that his father and grandfather had abused.

While workers were repairing the house of the LORD, the high priest Hilkiah said, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.” After years of idol worship, the Word of God had been lost in the place where it belonged. Shaphan read it to the king. When Josiah heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes. He realized how far Judah had drifted from God. He sent a delegation to ask the LORD what to do.

The delegation went to Huldah the prophetess, who lived in Jerusalem. She did not soften God's message. Judah would be judged because they had forsaken the LORD. But to Josiah she said, “because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke ... I also have heard you,” says the LORD. Josiah would be taken in peace before the disaster fell. A woman gave the king both a hard truth and a comforting promise.

Josiah gathered all the people, from the least to the greatest, to the house of the LORD. He read them the whole Book of the Covenant, and then, standing by the pillar, he made a covenant before the LORD to follow Him with all his heart and soul. The people took a stand for the covenant. Then Josiah got to work. He removed the idols and the vessels for Baal from the temple. He burned the wooden Asherah pole. He destroyed the high places, even the ones Solomon had built. He defiled Topheth, the valley where children were sacrificed, “that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire.” At Bethel, he destroyed the altar built by Jeroboam, exactly as an unnamed prophet had foretold three hundred years before (1 Kings 13:2).

Then Josiah ordered the people to keep the Passover, and the Bible says that no Passover like it had been kept since the days of the judges. Verse 25 sums up his life: “Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might.” But the sin of Manasseh had gone too deep to be undone, and God's judgment was only delayed. When Josiah died, in a battle against Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo, his sons Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim quickly returned to evil. Jehoiakim even taxed the poor people of the land to pay tribute to Egypt.

Love in Action

Josiah did not just clean up the temple. He cleaned up the place where children were sacrificed (Topheth) so that nobody could pass their son or daughter through the fire. That is protecting the weak. And Huldah is a picture of a woman of God who speaks truth and comfort to the powerful.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	King Josiah. He began to seek God as a teenager. When he heard God's Word he tore his clothes in sorrow, and then he acted: he cleaned house, renewed the covenant and kept the Passover.
Admired	Huldah the prophetess. A woman who spoke God's message plainly, even to the king's officials: judgment was coming, but Josiah's tender heart would be honored.
Admired	Hilkiah and Shaphan. The priest who found the book and the scribe who read it aloud. They did not hide God's Word.
Warning	The idol priests and rulers before Josiah. They had let God's Law be lost in His own house.
Warning	Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim. After Josiah died, his sons went right back to evil, and Jehoiakim heavily taxed the people of the land to pay Egypt.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Hold up a dusty Bible. Ask: “What would happen if every Bible in our church disappeared? What would you miss?”
5–10	Set the scene	Recap the previous session (Manasseh, Amon, an eight-year-old king). Give a quick picture of Judah's condition: the temple full of idols and the Bible lost.
10–25	Teach the story	Tell it in three parts: the book found, Huldah's message, the reforms. Read 2 Kings 22:8–13 aloud.
25–33	Discussion	Use questions 1–4 below.
33–40	Jesus in the story	Josiah's Passover points to Christ our Passover. Josiah's tender heart points to the gentle heart of Jesus. The Word found points to the living Word.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the quiz. Offer each student a small Scripture card with a verse to read this week.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. How could the Book of the Law be lost in the temple? What does that teach us about how easy it is to neglect God's Word?

Sample answer: It was neglected for years. We can have Bibles at home and never open them.

2. When Josiah heard the Word, he tore his clothes. What does his reaction show about his heart?

Sample answer: He took it seriously. A tender heart feels sorrow over sin and wants to change.

3. Why do you think God chose a woman prophet, Huldah, for this important message?

Sample answer: God uses whoever is faithful. Huldah was respected and courageous. Both men and women are instruments of God's truth.

4. What was the difference between Josiah just feeling sorry and what Josiah actually did?

Sample answer: He repented with action: he removed idols, renewed the covenant, kept the Passover.

5. Josiah began seeking God at sixteen. What is one way a student your age can begin to seek God more?

Sample answer: Daily Bible reading, prayer, a Bible study, serving at church.

Jesus in the Story

Josiah kept a great Passover, and every Passover pointed forward to the Lamb of God. “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Book that was lost and found points to the living Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). And Josiah's tender heart, humbled by God's Word, reminds us of Jesus, who said, “I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Josiah was the best king Judah had, but even he could not save his nation. Only Jesus can.

*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. **Matthew 11:29***

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

Josiah's reforms probably began about 628 BC, when he was about twenty (2 Chronicles 34:3), and intensified in 622 BC, when the book was found. Many scholars think the book was Deuteronomy or part of it, since Josiah's reforms (centralizing worship, destroying high places, Passover) match Deuteronomy 12–16. In Josiah's day Assyria was weakening and Babylon was rising, which gave Judah room to breathe.

Huldah was a respected prophetess whose husband worked in the royal wardrobe. She lived in “the Second Quarter” of Jerusalem. The king's officials went to her rather than to Jeremiah or Zephaniah, who were also active at the time, which suggests her standing. “Topheth” (23:10) was in the Valley of Hinnom, and the Hebrew name “Gehenna” later became a picture of judgment. Josiah's reform of Bethel (23:15–18) fulfills 1 Kings 13:2 by naming a king named Josiah three centuries earlier.

Josiah died in 609 BC at Megiddo, trying to stop Pharaoh Necho's army from marching to help Assyria. According to 2 Chronicles 35:20–24, Necho warned him that God had told him to hurry and not to interfere, and Josiah “did not heed the words of Necho from the mouth of God.” Even a great king can make a mistake if he stops listening. Jeremiah mourned for him (2 Chronicles 35:25).

TEACHER TIP

This is a good session to put the Bible in students' hands. If you can, have them read a short passage aloud together, such as Psalm 119:9–11. Do not just talk about Josiah's love for God's Word. Let them taste it.

Handout Answer Key

1. **Law**
2. **tender**
3. **Passover**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: Why do you think the Book of the Law was lost in the temple, and how could the same thing happen in our lives?

FEEL: What do you feel when you hear God's Word? What would a tender heart feel like?

DO: Pick a time and a place this week when you will read your Bible for at least five minutes. What will you read and when?

Companion podcast: Session 12, “A Tender Heart and a Lost Book Found” (about 4 minutes).

Session 13: The Lamp That Would Not Go Out

2 Kings 24–25 | about 609–561 BC

BIG IDEA

Sin has real consequences, and even God's chosen city fell. Yet God keeps His promise to David. Even in a Babylonian prison, a flicker of hope remained, and that hope came to its fullness in Jesus, the King who will never fail.

KEY VERSE (NKJV)

*Now it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon. **2 Kings 25:27–28***

The Story to Teach

Josiah's sons were not like their father. Jehoiakim ruled in Judah as a servant first to Egypt and then to Babylon. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar came, and Jehoiakim served him for three years before he rebelled. The Bible says it came “at the commandment of the LORD,” because of the sins of Manasseh, “for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.” Jehoiakim also burned Jeremiah's scroll in the fire. Then came his son Jehoiachin, who was only eighteen and reigned just three months before he surrendered.

In 597 BC Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin, his mother, officials, soldiers, craftsmen and about ten thousand captives to Babylon, along with the treasures of the temple. Only the poorest people were left. Among those taken was a young priest named Ezekiel, and earlier, in 605 BC, Daniel and his friends were taken. Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, king and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah did evil, ignored Jeremiah's warnings and rebelled against Babylon.

Babylon came and surrounded Jerusalem for about eighteen months. The famine became so bad that there was no bread for the people. In 586 BC the walls were broken. Zedekiah tried to escape at night but was caught near Jericho and taken in chains. The Babylonian commander, Nebuzaradan, burned the temple, the king's house and all the large houses of Jerusalem, and tore down the walls. The bronze pillars, the sea and the articles of the temple were taken away. “So Judah was carried away captive from its own land.” Nebuzaradan left some of the poorest people to be farmers and vinedressers.

Babylon appointed Gedaliah as governor over the people left behind. He told the frightened survivors, “Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.” But a man named Ishmael killed him, and the remaining people fled to Egypt, even though Jeremiah had told them not to go. It looked like the end of David's line, the temple and the promise.

But the last four verses of 2 Kings are a small flame in the dark. Thirty-seven years after Jehoiachin was taken captive, the new king of Babylon, Evil-Merodach, released him from prison. “He spoke kindly to him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who were with him in Babylon.” Jehoiachin changed from his prison clothes and ate at the king's table for the rest of his life. David's line was still alive. God had promised David “a lamp” forever (2 Kings 8:19), and the lamp had not gone out.

Love in Action

Jeremiah wrote to the exiles, “Seek the peace of the city,” which means pray for, and work for, the good of the people around you even when you are far from home. A pagan king, Evil-Merodach, showed kindness to a prisoner, and God used it to keep David's family line alive. Encouragement and kindness matter even in the dark.

People God Admires and Warnings

Admired	The prophet Jeremiah. The weeping prophet told the truth for forty years, was thrown in a cistern and a prison, and still wrote letters of hope to the exiles.
Admired	Gedaliah the governor. He tried to calm the frightened survivors: “Do not be afraid ... dwell in the land ... and it shall be well with you.” He was killed for it.
Admired	Daniel and his friends. Taken as teenagers to Babylon, they stayed faithful to God in a foreign land.
Warning	Jehoiakim. He cut up Jeremiah's scroll and burned it in the fire, trying to silence God's Word.
Warning	Zedekiah. The last king. He did evil, would not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah and rebelled against Babylon.
Warning	The leaders and priests. They polluted the temple and mocked God's messengers, until, as 2 Chronicles says, there was no remedy.

Session Flow (45 minutes)

Min.	Segment	What to do
0–5	Welcome and hook	Light a small candle (or use a battery candle). Ask: “What does a tiny light mean in a very dark room?”
5–10	Set the scene	Show Babylon, Jerusalem and the route of the exiles on the map. Draw the three stages of the fall: 605, 597, 586 BC.
10–25	Teach the story	Tell the fall in plain terms, then slow down for Jehoiachin's release. Read 2 Kings 25:27–30 aloud.
25–35	Review the whole book	Use the “Heroes and Warnings” chart to recall the qualities God admires and the ones He warns against.
35–40	Jesus in the story	Show how Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) is in Jesus' genealogy and how Jesus is the King the whole book has been pointing to.
40–45	Think / Feel / Do	Students complete the final quiz. Light the candle again and close in prayer.

Discussion Questions (with sample answers)

1. Why did God allow Jerusalem and the temple to be destroyed? What does 24:3–4 and 17:7 say?

Sample answer: Because of long-term, unrepentant sin and the shedding of innocent blood. God warned for centuries.

2. Jeremiah wrote to the exiles, “Seek the peace of the city.” What does it mean to be faithful when you are somewhere you did not choose?

Sample answer: Be a good neighbor, pray and work for the good of the people around you. God is with us in hard places.

3. Why do you think the writer of 2 Kings ended the book with Jehoiachin's release?

Sample answer: To show that God's promise to David was alive. It is a quiet, hopeful ending.

4. What qualities did you notice in the people God admired through 2 Kings? Which one do you want to grow in?

Sample answer: Hunger for God, loyalty, humility, generosity, mercy to enemies, courage, honesty, integrity, a tender heart.

5. What is the biggest thing you learned about Jesus from 2 Kings?

Sample answer: He is the King all other kings pointed to, the whole-hearted, merciful, faithful King who will reign forever.

Jesus in the Story

The very last verses of 2 Kings show us a descendant of David, alive and eating at a king's table. Matthew's genealogy says, "Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel" (Matthew 1:11–12). The line continued, through Zerubbabel, all the way to Jesus. No king in 2 Kings was perfect, not even Hezekiah or Josiah. Jesus is the King who never fails. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32–33). He is the Light of the world, the lamp that never goes out.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

Luke 1:32–33

Teacher Background: History, Culture and Society

The fall of Judah came in three stages: 605 BC (Daniel and others taken after the Battle of Carchemish), 597 BC (Jehoiachin and about 10,000 exiles), and 586 BC (the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple). The Babylonian Chronicle records the capture of Jerusalem in 597 BC, and ration tablets found in Babylon list "Yaukin, king of the land of Yahud" and his five sons receiving oil and barley, an astonishing confirmation of 2 Kings 25:29–30.

Jeremiah's "letter to the exiles" (Jeremiah 29) told them to build houses, plant gardens, marry, have children and "seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it." Verse 11 is about the promise of a future, to give them "a future and a hope." Jeremiah also predicted a seventy-year exile (Jeremiah 29:10), and the return came in 538 BC under Cyrus (Ezra 1). That return will be covered in the Ezra and Nehemiah sessions of the Old Testament Overview.

Be sensitive when you teach the end of Zedekiah, who saw his sons killed before he was blinded and taken to Babylon (25:7). For middle school, you can say simply, "He was captured and taken to Babylon in chains." Ezekiel, another prophet among the exiles, also gives encouragement. Don't forget to review the whole book. Have students use their handouts to name three people they admired and three leaders they would avoid copying.

TEACHER TIP

This final session carries the emotional weight of the entire course. Leave plenty of time for the review chart. End with hope, not with the destruction. The candle (or lamp) is a powerful symbol, so be sure to leave students with a clear sense of Jesus as the King who fulfills every promise.

Handout Answer Key

1. **Nebuchadnezzar**
2. **Jehoiachin**
3. **lamp**

Think / Feel / Do Quiz (post-session)

THINK: What is the most important lesson about God's character that you learned from the book of 2 Kings?

FEEL: How does it feel to know that God kept His promise to David even when everything looked lost?

DO: Choose one quality from the people God admired in 2 Kings (such as courage, mercy, honesty or a tender heart) that you want to grow in. What is one thing you will do this month?

Companion podcast: Session 13, "The Lamp That Would Not Go Out" (about 4 minutes).

About This Course

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