

RELEVANT • INSPIRED • PRACTICAL • LIFE-CHANGING

WESLEY

ADULT TEACHER

.....
June–August 2024
.....

W

WESLEY
BIBLE CURRICULUM

.....
*Calling, Character,
Conviction: Lessons
on Leadership in
the Historical Books*

WELCOME TO THIS QUARTER OF THE WESLEY BIBLE CURRICULUM!

We're pleased to offer thirteen weeks of thoughtful discernment and application of God's Word. How exciting it is to be led by God's Spirit in this weekly communion, through the words he inspired in his people thousands of years ago, though no less relevant for us today.

We at Wesleyan Publishing House believe the Bible to be the highest source of written authority for God's plan for his people; it reveals how we are to live out that plan, individually and corporately. All our beliefs, practices, and priorities are to be anchored in clear biblical teachings.

What we are about through this publication is essentially the revealing of Scripture's light into each of our life paths. This is why we desire for you the same heart commitment as that so memorably proclaimed by John Wesley: "My ground is the Bible. . . . I follow it in all things, both great and small" (*A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part I* [1745]).

The foundation for transforming lives, churches, and communities through the hope and holiness of Jesus Christ rests in God's Word. The Bible prescribes the commitment of his people to be defined as a Spirit-led, praying movement called to evangelize and make disciples of all people. So when we study the Scriptures and "correctly handle" them (2 Tim. 2:15), we show ourselves to be the God-approved disciples he has designed for us to be. And we believe the fruit of our studies should be evidenced by the equipping and developing of believers, the multiplying of his church, and our being used by God's Spirit to transform lives and communities.

What we're about to enter through this study is holy ground. Pray with us that we will do so in all wisdom—in the fear of the Lord, and the joy that can only be known by the work of God's Holy Spirit, quickening and revealing his meaning to the core of our very souls.

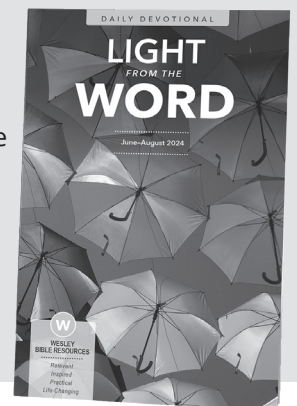
Sincerely,

Wesleyan Publishing House Editorial Staff

For more great Bible study resources visit
www.wesleyan.org/curriculum

BIBLE STUDY TIP

You will deepen your reflection on these lessons by reading *Light from the Word* each day throughout the week. This helpful, daily devotional follows the theme of each week's lesson with a relevant, practical message aimed at sharpening your spiritual life. You'll be immersed in these Scriptures and related passages every day.



HOW TO USE WESLEY BIBLE STUDIES TEACHER'S GUIDE



EVALUATE

Evaluate offers the opportunity for you to *review* the important truths from last week's lesson and discuss the most relevant applications members saw throughout the week.



ENGAGE

Engage includes suggested activities aimed at getting your class to think, discuss, react, or in some way *participate* in the lesson.



EXAMINE

Examine draws members into the study of Scripture. Here they will look closely at the scriptural content, coming to *know* what the Bible says. There may be more information than you have time to use in class, but it will be helpful for you as you prepare for the lesson.



EXPLORE

Explore guides members in *processing* the Bible content and grappling with its implications for their lives.



EXERCISE

Exercise helps you guide members to *take action* on the truth they have discovered.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

By reading for fifteen minutes each day, you can read every chapter of the Bible in one year. Begin anytime!

june

1. 2 Samuel 14–15
2. 2 Samuel 16–18
3. 2 Samuel 19–20
4. 2 Samuel 21–22
5. 2 Samuel 23–24
6. Galatians 1–3
7. Galatians 4–6
8. 1 Kings 1–2
9. 1 Kings 3–5
10. 1 Kings 6–7
11. 1 Kings 8–9
12. 1 Kings 10–12
13. 1 Kings 13–15
14. 1 Kings 16–18
15. 1 Kings 19–20
16. 1 Kings 21–22
17. Ephesians 1–3
18. Ephesians 4–6
19. 2 Kings 1–3
20. 2 Kings 4–5
21. 2 Kings 6–8
22. 2 Kings 9–11
23. 2 Kings 12–14
24. 2 Kings 15–17
25. 2 Kings 18–20
26. 2 Kings 21–23
27. 2 Kings 24–25
28. Philippians 1–4
29. 1 Chronicles 1–2
30. 1 Chronicles 3–5

july

1. 1 Chronicles 6–7
2. 1 Chronicles 8–10
3. 1 Chronicles 11–13
4. 1 Chronicles 14–16
5. 1 Chronicles 17–20
6. 1 Chronicles 21–23
7. 1 Chronicles 24–26
8. 1 Chronicles 27–29
9. Colossians 1–4
10. 2 Chronicles 1–4
11. 2 Chronicles 5–7
12. 2 Chronicles 8–11
13. 2 Chronicles 12–16
14. 2 Chronicles 17–19
15. 2 Chronicles 20–22
16. 2 Chronicles 23–25
17. 2 Chronicles 26–29
18. 2 Chronicles 30–32
19. 2 Chronicles 33–34
20. 2 Chronicles 35–36
21. 1 Thessalonians 1–5
22. Ezra 1–4
23. Ezra 5–7
24. Ezra 8–10
25. Nehemiah 1–4
26. Nehemiah 5–7
27. Nehemiah 8–10
28. Nehemiah 11–13
29. 2 Thessalonians 1–3
30. Esther 1–4
31. Esther 5–10

august

1. Job 1–4
2. Job 5–8
3. Job 9–12
4. Job 13–17
5. Job 18–21
6. Job 22–26
7. Job 27–30
8. Job 31–34
9. Job 35–38
10. Job 39–42
11. 1 Timothy 1–6
12. 2 Timothy 1–4
13. Psalms 1–7
14. Psalms 8–14
15. Psalms 15–18
16. Psalms 19–24
17. Psalms 25–30
18. Psalms 31–34
19. Psalms 35–37
20. Psalms 38–42
21. Psalms 43–48
22. Psalms 49–54
23. Psalms 55–60
24. Psalms 61–67
25. Psalms 68–71
26. Psalms 72–75
27. Psalms 76–78
28. Psalms 79–84
29. Psalms 85–89
30. Psalms 90–95
31. Psalms 96–102

KEY VERSE

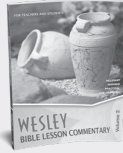
The LORD came and stood there,
calling as at the other times,
"Samuel! Samuel!"
—1 Samuel 3:10

SCRIPTURE

- 1 Samuel 3:1–18

LESSON FOCUS

God calls those whom he chooses
for leadership.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 1
Activity: How Do You Know
What God Wants?

JUNE 2

1

THE CALL TO LEAD



EVALUATE

Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



ENGAGE

Opening

To establish appeal to everyone in the class in this first lesson, discuss examples of God's call to service in Scripture (kings, prophets, Jesus' disciples, the table servers in the book of Acts, etc.). Direct the discussion to help your class realize that we are all called to leadership because we all have influence.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

God chooses people who are available for his use and calls them to leadership to accomplish his good will. His call is for those who will not only hear his voice but also listen to the message he gives. Those whom God calls to lead others must first be willing to follow him.

INTRODUCTION

examine

Have you ever heard a preacher or a missionary speak of how God called them into ministry? Have you ever looked at a person in a position of leadership and thought of that individual as being called into that vocation?

We often think the best qualification for God's call is special talents. When we see someone who is gifted in a particular area, it is easy to think that person should be called by God to do some great work. God does equip each of us for the tasks he gives, but what is our responsibility in being prepared for God's call? God chooses leaders according to his divine wisdom, but what criteria do they meet to be chosen? In our study, we'll look at Samuel and how he responded to God's call. What was Samuel's character that God would choose him to be a leader of his people? In what ways can our character be shaped so that when God calls us we will be able to fulfill his purposes in our lives? Samuel's attitude toward God reveals to us three basic criteria that we must meet to successfully answer God's call.

notes



EXAMINE

ONE: Designate someone to report on serving in the temple in Samuel's day. Have the person especially determine what Samuel could and could not do as a boy growing up in the temple. What would this tell us about Samuel's character even as a child?

3:1 *The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. We can only guess Samuel's age at that time—perhaps eight to twelve.*

3:1 *the word of the LORD was rare.* During the Old Testament era, God poured out his Spirit, not on all his people, but on chosen individuals for special tasks. During previous centuries, the judges had felt God's presence in a unique way; however, immediately preceding Samuel's ministry, God had been relatively quiet. God had never been totally silent, however, and 2:27 alludes to one man who had heard God speak to him. Through Samuel, God was about to begin speaking again.

3:2 *Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak.* These words may have a double meaning. Most straightforwardly, they tell us that Eli was aging; his physical eyes were failing. There may also be the hint that Eli was losing whatever spiritual vision he had enjoyed.

3:3 *The lamp of God had not yet gone out.* Again, these words may have a double meaning. They refer to the golden lampstand within the temple. A careless high priest might let this light go out in the wee hours of the morning, rather than tending it as he should (Ex. 30:7–8). So, in a literal sense, these words indicate that Samuel heard God's voice in the middle of the night, not minutes prior to rising time, when the temple light might have burned out. At the same time, these words may indicate that God had not completely given up on his people, although the spiritual light was growing dim.

1 God calls those who make themselves available (1 Sam. 3:1–8).

NIV

- 1 The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.
- 2 One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place.
- 3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was.
- 4 Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am."
- 5 And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.
- 6 Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." "My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."
- 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.
- 8 A third time the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy.

KJV

- 1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.
- 2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;
- 3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;
- 4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.
- 5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.
- 6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.
- 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.
- 8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

At a glance, Samuel would seem destined to serve God. His mother, Hannah, desperately pleaded with God for a son, promising to dedicate him to the Lord before he was born (1 Sam. 1). At a very young

notes

age, he was presented to Eli the priest and given over to him to be raised in the tabernacle. **The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli** (v. 1). Samuel grew up in the very center of the spiritual life of Israel and serving in the tabernacle was an everyday routine to him. Though we don't know exactly how old he was at the time of his call, Samuel's knowledge of the law and ability to serve in the worship of God increased with every year of his life. Therefore, one could assume it would be the most natural and logical step for Samuel to become a spiritual leader of God's people.

A second look reveals that, though Samuel's experience in the tabernacle would certainly benefit his future ministry, his abilities counted as nothing except that Samuel chose to conduct himself in a way that pleased God. Samuel made himself available for God's use.

There was nothing special about the spiritual atmosphere of Samuel's day that would inspire him to seek the Lord. In fact, it seems to have been a time of spiritual dryness: **In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions** (v. 1). This distancing by God may have been a direct result of the sins of Eli's two sons. It was no secret that Eli's sons were very wicked men. They abused their positions of service in the tabernacle for their own gain. Their influence during Samuel's early years could have been devastating, but Samuel obviously rejected their example. "This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt. But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod" (2:17–18). Samuel occupied his time with the tabernacle and assisting Eli. Perhaps a good picture of his character is shown in that, even when resting, he was to be found **lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was** (v. 3). Regardless of a mother's promise to dedicate him to God, Samuel still had the responsibility of choice and his was a deliberate decision to be obedient as far as he knew how.

Neither did it matter that Samuel lacked a personal experience with God. God called to him when **Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him** (v. 7). Samuel was simply available. **Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am"** (v. 4).

Samuel's choice is also ours to make today. Regardless of our abilities, even the most talented among us is rendered useless if we are unavailable for God's use. We must choose to keep ourselves available to God by walking in all the light we have, or we can choose to go our own way, effectively plugging our ears to God's call.

5

3:3 where the ark of God was. Note the contrast. Samuel slept in the presence of God. Eli rested somewhere else, in his usual place (1 Sam. 3:2). The writer has skillfully painted many word pictures that set the stage for God to speak to the boy rather than the high priest.

3:4 the LORD called Samuel. The boy was a faithful young servant. When he heard a voice call him, he responded quickly. He mistakenly assumed the voice was Eli's, but Samuel's heart was right. He did not merely roll over and go back to sleep. He heeded the call.

3:5 I did not call. In a day when the word of the LORD was rare (v. 1), Eli at first, like Samuel, didn't suspect that the voice might be God's. Eli guessed that the boy had merely experienced a dream, and sent him back to bed. Again, Samuel obeyed.

3:6 Samuel! The pattern of vv. 4–5 repeated itself.

3:7 Samuel did not yet know the LORD. Undoubtedly, Samuel had heard about God. His mother would have told him the story of God answering her prayer resulting in his conception and birth, as soon as he could understand words. Serving Eli in the temple, Samuel obviously listened as the priest explained the meaning of their priestly tasks. This verse, however, indicates that Samuel had not yet directly experienced God.

3:8 Then Eli realized. Samuel went through the pattern a third time. (Note the boy's attitude of submission.) Any of us might have assumed this voice was crying wolf a third time, but not Samuel. He must have said to himself, "Maybe I was mistaken the first two times, but this time I know I heard a voice call me. Again, I will respond." But this time, the lights went on for Eli: "God may no longer speak to me, but that does not prevent him from calling others, even this young boy."

notes



One

1. Samuel was completely open and submissive to whatever God would say to him.

2. We can become unavailable to God when we are too busy living for ourselves to acknowledge him or when there is sin in our lives.

3. Suggest members rate their availability on a scale of one to ten, with one being "never available" and ten being "always available." Ask them what they think it would take to move one number up the scale.



TWO: Ask the class: "How does God call?" Make a list of the responses and determine which ones your class members have experienced most often.

3:9 *So Eli told Samuel . . .* Eli told Samuel his latest hypothesis. "Perhaps God is speaking to you. If you hear a voice again, respond as if God is calling. See what happens then."

3:10 *Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.* Again, we see model behavior in this young man. He obeyed Eli in submitting to God's call.

3:11 *The LORD said to Samuel.* To the servant boy, God confirmed the message he had earlier delivered to Eli via "a man of God" (2:27–36). God would judge Eli's sons for their disrespect for God. God would judge Eli himself for his failure to warn his sons of the danger they faced.

3:14 *The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.* Had Eli's sons committed some sin beyond the possibility of God's forgiveness? Not likely. God's grace is limitless, but God can give grace only to those willing to receive. God sensed that Eli's sons had made an irrevocable choice.

ONE

explore

1. What was Samuel's attitude in response to God's call?
2. What are some things that can keep a person unavailable to God's call?
3. How available are you to God? What areas in your life could you change to make yourself more available?

When we are available to God, we are prepared to listen to him.

2 God calls those who will listen (1 Sam. 3:9–14).

NIV

9 So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

11 And the LORD said to Samuel: "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle.

12 At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end.

13 For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them.

14 Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, 'The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.'"

KJV

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

notes

It is very tempting, when we become aware of God's call, to rush ahead into action. What does the Lord want us to do? What does he require of us? However, God's call should be met with an attitude of listening. What is important is not what we should be doing, but what God is saying.

Unaware that it was the Lord speaking, Samuel arose three separate times to heed the call he thought was coming from Eli. He may have been mistaken as to who was calling him, but his willingness to listen was demonstrated by the fact that he did not complain or tire of getting up to attend the elderly priest.

Eli failed to keep his own sons from their evil deeds, but, as an experienced priest and spiritual mentor, he gave Samuel some valuable guidance when he finally realized God was calling the boy: **Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening"** (1 Sam. 3:9). There can be no truer response. The servant of God waits silently to hear the will of their master.

It is interesting that God's call remained the same. **The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"** (v. 10). Only Samuel's response was different. Though his intentions had been noble, he had previously been too busy attempting to "do" to receive a message from God. Now he was quietly listening, and God had his full attention. He revealed to Samuel his judgment against Eli's family—plans Eli was already aware of. **For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them** (v. 13).

God's message was not the glorious revelation one might expect to hear when God calls. He never gives us the full picture of what is to come, and, although it was clear that God was about to do a new thing, for Samuel, there was no hint of his future ministry to Israel. There was only this disturbing message against the man who was surely like a father to the boy. Samuel, however, did not protest. There is no record that he responded to God at all; he only listened.

TWO

explore

1. What did God mean when he said he was about to do something that would "make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle" (v. 11)?
2. What do you think is the difference between hearing God and listening to him?
3. Have you ever really listened to God? Describe your experience.

When we truly listen to God, we must accept what he is saying.



Two

1. Perhaps he meant that what he was about to say was important and the people should heed his words.
2. We may hear God; that is, we may realize he is speaking to us but listening requires a decision to stop and consider what God is saying.
3. Ask two or three people to share their experiences with the class.

notes



EXAMINE

THREE: Have your pastor, a missionary, or someone else who is available and in full-time Christian work give personal testimony to accepting a call from God. Emphasize submission to him and not the struggle.

3:15 *He was afraid to tell Eli the vision.* Who wouldn't be? Which of us ever enjoys confronting someone else with hard truth? God had given information to Samuel that sealed the fate of Eli and his family. Picture a doctor having to tell a patient that death is certain.

3:16 *Eli called him.* It's a wonder that Samuel did not think the voice was again God. He recognized that tone as coming from Eli. Although he feared meeting Eli, the boy again obeyed.

3:17 *May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if . . .* Eli had heard God's words once. Again, he feared the worst, so he spoke strong words. Eli called a divine curse on Samuel if the boy misrepresented what he had heard from God.

3:18 *Samuel told him everything.* Samuel obeyed yet another time; but this time he risked great punishment if he did not.

3:18 *He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes.* Eli realized that it was time for him, too, to submit. If God had spoken, there was little Eli could do. Eli yielded to the voice of God, even when it came through his young servant.

3 God calls those who accept his will (1 Sam. 3:15–18).

NIV

15 Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision,
16 but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am."
17 "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you."
18 So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes."

KJV

15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.
16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.
17 And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.
18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

The Bible is filled with many examples of persons who received a word from the Lord only to reject it. Jonah fled when God called him to preach to the people of Nineveh, resulting in his ordeal with the great fish (Jonah 1). The Israelites refused God's command to enter the promised land and were forced to wander the desert for forty years (Num. 14). God's word may not necessarily be what we want to hear. He gives us the truth and directs us by his divine wisdom, so the one who would receive God's call must accept what he says.

God's message to Samuel was a hard one to accept. Since the message was against Eli and his household, **he was afraid to tell Eli the vision** (1 Sam. 3:15). Perhaps Eli already suspected what God had told Samuel, for he urged Samuel to tell him everything. **Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you** (v. 17). Samuel did not try to spare Eli's feelings by making God's message sound less severe. He had accepted God's word, so when he was pressed, he **told him everything, hiding nothing from him** (v. 18).

Accepting God's will requires trust on our part that God, being just and holy, will always do what is best, even when it comes to

notes

disciplining those he loves. We are to submit completely to his authority, knowing he will always do right by us. Eli's response, **He is the LORD; let him do what is good in his eyes** (v. 18), acknowledged God's decision to replace his family with a new and righteous leader. In this way, Eli proves that he had learned the lesson of submitting to God's authority. If we would follow God, we too must learn this lesson of total surrender to God's will. Simply because **he is the LORD** (v. 18), we can be sure he will always do what is exactly right. We cannot know what God has in store for us and we may never know in our lifetime the full importance of what God calls us to do. Time would prove what great things Samuel, a boy called by God, would do for Israel.

THREE

explore

1. Why was Eli so quick to accept God's judgment on his family?
2. Have you ever experienced a time when it was hard to accept what God was telling you? Describe your experience.
3. What truths motivate us to accept all of God's will?

When we accept God's will and submit to his leading, we can accomplish whatever he has called us to do.

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

We may never be called to be a leader such as Samuel was. However, God does have a plan for each one of us, whether we are called to serve a select few or called to lead thousands.

If you desire to be ready for God's call in your life, ask yourself the following:

- Am I available to God in my daily walk? Do I live in such a way that he can use me?
- Do I listen when God has something to say?
- Do I truly and without reserve accept his entire will for my life, even though his leading may go against my feelings and I may not understand his direction?

Set aside a special time this week to be alone with God. Commit yourself to be available to him and whatever he would call you to. Determine to truly listen to him and accept his guidance as infinitely wise, and time will tell what great things he has done in you.



Three

1. He had spent his life serving the Lord and trusted in both God's judgment and mercy.

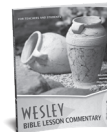
2. Ask for one or two people to share their experiences. If someone is currently struggling with accepting God's answers to prayer, gather around the person and pray that God will give his peace and strength.

3. Knowing that God is holy and just and that he will always do only what is best for us helps us to accept his will, even when we don't understand it or can see no reason for his actions. God can be trusted!



Closing

Lead your class in a time of sentence prayers acknowledging and accepting God's call upon your lives for his service. You may want to do this in small prayer groups.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "What Does God Look for in a Leader" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 2*.

notes

NOTE

Although this lesson covers the day of Pentecost, it does not fall on Pentecost Sunday in the church calendar.



EVALUATE

Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class.

Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



ENGAGE

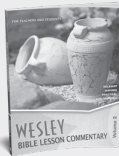
Opening

Ahead of time, choose someone to assume the role of Isaiah here in chapter 6. Choose someone gifted in drama, if available. Assist him with catching the overall tone of the passage.

2

 | JUNE 9

PREPARATION FOR LEADERSHIP



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 2
Activity: Taking the Kneeling
Posture

KEY VERSE

No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people."
—Acts 2:16–17

SCRIPTURE

• Isaiah 6:1–8; Acts 2:14–18

LESSON FOCUS

God prepares leaders through personal encounters with himself.

NOTE

Although this lesson covers the day of Pentecost, it does not fall on Pentecost Sunday in the church calendar.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

Isaiah's personal encounter with the holiness of God points to a Pentecost that's available to anyone who hungers for more of his presence and power. God's presence and power are prerequisites for anyone who would lead by example.

INTRODUCTION

examine

A lack of credibility will always undermine our ability to lead and render us powerless to impact our culture. God is calling us to an encounter with his holiness. Until we have allowed God to deal with our sinful nature in private, we have forfeited all right to lead in public. We lead more out of character than credentials. Although Isaiah was not a priest, he needed to learn about true worship before he was qualified to be a prophet. Only after having his heart cleansed and experiencing the fullness of God's Spirit could Isaiah speak for God. Those who desire to lead today must pursue a life of holiness.

10

notes

1 Leadership is born out of adversity (Isa. 6:1–4).

NIV

- 1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
- 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.
- 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.
- 4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

KJV

- 1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.
- 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.
- 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."
- 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

Our passage reveals that Isaiah's disappointments were God's appointments. Leaders are born in adversity. Evidently Isaiah's loss left him with a sense of powerlessness. It was also a time of national tragedy. It was **the year that King Uzziah died** (Isa. 6:1). Isaiah was humbled by this loss of leadership in his life. Some Bible scholars also argue this was a time of personal loss because Uzziah was Isaiah's cousin. Isaiah needed some direction in his life. Uzziah had reigned for approximately fifty-two years as a godly and powerful king until he insisted on burning incense in the temple and was struck with leprosy and remained that way until his death (2 Chron. 26:16–21). The historian Josephus confirmed the account of Uzziah's death. Uzziah was made king at sixteen and defeated his enemies, repaired the walls of Jerusalem, dug canals, and strengthened the army. However, Uzziah's success made him proud, and he forgot that it was God who enabled him. He forfeited his leadership and died in despondent grief at age sixty-eight. Our passage contrasts the death of a prideful leader with the humility required to gain an audience with another King. You will notice that Isaiah, like Uzziah, was not a priest. He approached God with a proper respect for his holiness. Isaiah also immediately noticed that the preoccupation of the seraphs was to exalt the holiness of God.

11



EXAMINE

ONE: Brainstorm with your class, listing persons in leadership, biblical and otherwise, who seemingly went through a period of brokenness before God used them as effective leaders. Refer to Isaiah 57:15 and 66:2. Emphasize how being humbled by adverse circumstances and experiences prepares us to listen to God.

6:1 *In the year that King Uzziah died.* Judah had no perfect kings, but Uzziah (also known as Azariah) had served God faithfully, leading the people in ways of righteousness. He had reigned fifty-two years and would have been the only king the majority of Judah's people could remember. When he died, the nation likely entered a period of uncertainty. Uzziah's son Jotham turned out to be a good king; nonetheless, Isaiah and all his fellow citizens might have wondered how the new king would lead the nation, particularly in facing the Assyrian threat. (For the account of Uzziah's life and death, as well as Jotham's move to the throne, see 2 Kings 15:1–7; 15:32–33.)

6:1 *I saw the Lord.* Was Isaiah's experience a literal one (that is, did he physically enter the temple and see God with his physical eyes), or, from some other location, did the prophet experience a vision of the temple with God's presence flooding it? We cannot be sure, but in either case, what Isaiah saw transformed his life and impacted the history of the nations.

6:1 *the LORD, high and exalted, seated on a throne.* All these words highlight the fact that God is the true King. Judah had lost its human king, but no earthly circumstances could cause the nation to lose its God. As long as its people trusted and followed him, they would not be shaken.

6:2 *seraphim.* This is the only time that Scripture writers used this Hebrew word to describe angelic beings. In other uses of this word, it portrays fiery flying serpents (Num. 21:6–9 KJV; Deut. 8:15 KJV; Isa. 14:29 KJV; 30:6 KJV). We often hear of seraphim (the Hebrew plural for the singular *seraph*) connected with cherubim (another angelic form, specifically mentioned in the New Testament only in Hebrews 9:5, but more frequently in the Old Testament; for example, Ezek. 1:5; 10:9, 12). Some scholars connect both with the living creatures mentioned in Revelation 4:6–8. These beings also have six wings and, in God's presence, sing the same words Isaiah heard.

6:3 *Holy, holy, holy.* The triple usage of the word emphasizes God's perfection, his uniqueness.

6:3 *the LORD Almighty.* One component of God's distinctiveness is his power. No creature rivals God in strength.

6:3 *The whole earth is full of his glory.* The word *glory* represents the fullness of God's holiness dominating all creation. Everything he has made reflects his glory. Any creature aware of God feels overwhelmed by his presence.

6:4 *The doorposts and thresholds shook.* Isaiah certainly felt overwhelmed; he experienced the glory of God as an earthquake (either literally or figuratively).



One

1. Isaiah needed to be reminded that holiness and the forgiveness of sins begins and ends with God. Isaiah's task would not be to "convert" people or bestow forgiveness. He was simply the conduit for relaying God's messages to the people.

2. This question is intended to inform or remind members that our disappointments are often God's appointments, as in the case of Isaiah. Ask for one or two members to share their experiences.

3. This question is directed at those who may be disillusioned by a personal failure in leadership or a failure in a leader whom they lost confidence in. Ask for one or two members to share their experience if they can do so without incriminating another person.



EXAMINE **TWO:** A philosopher would say, "Know thyself." Ask, "Why is it not enough just to know who we are and how we stand in the light and presence of God's holiness?" Direct the discussion to the point that only when we are willing to acknowledge our sinful condition before God can we know the purging of our sin-polluted spirits by the glowing fires of the altar of God.

6:5 *Woe to me!* How frequently have you heard someone say (or perhaps you've said to yourself), "If only I could see God!" Isaiah experienced God's visible presence, but it was not a pleasant moment. Seeing the infinitely perfect God made him harshly aware of his own imperfections. (Compare Peter's reaction when Jesus engineered the great catch of fish in Luke 5:8.)

ONE

explore

1. Why did Isaiah need to be reminded of God's holiness before God called him?
2. What adversity or disappointment has God used to show you your need to go deeper in your relationship with him?
3. Does a failure of leadership in your life or in the life of someone you have followed reveal a need to focus your eyes on the King of Kings? In what way?

Adversity often leads to a time of deep introspection and evaluation.

2 Leadership requires a personal evaluation of ourselves (Isa. 6:5–8).

NIV

5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

KJV

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

Alone and confronted with the holiness of God, Isaiah recognized that his character had been found out. He acknowledged his woeful condition and said, **I am ruined!** (Isa. 6:5). Hebrews 4:13 reminds us of an omniscient God: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight." Isaiah was not only candidly honest with his imperfection, but he desired God to radically deal with his dilemma. His confession prepared the way for his cleansing. God responded with an angelic dispatch:

12

notes

a seraph with a live coal fresh off the altar of God flew to Isaiah and touched the coal to his lips. The live coal served to both cleanse and empower Isaiah for future kingdom leadership. The seraph said, **Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for** (Isa. 6:7). Isaiah's cleansing and subsequent filling brought clarity to God's call to leadership. Notice that Isaiah's encounter with the holiness of God and his own undone-ness prepared him for an immediate response to God's call. However, God didn't define Isaiah's call until after Isaiah declared himself available. Isaiah didn't need to know the details of God's call because he knew that God is more interested in our availability than in our abilities!

A confrontation with God's holiness that leads to confession, cleansing, and empowerment will no doubt equip us to fulfill his commission more faithfully, but it will also serve to remind us that God is more concerned about character than he is convenience.

TWO

explore

1. Why did Isaiah believe he was "ruined"?
2. How open have you been to experiencing God in worship? In what ways has your level of openness affected your experience?
3. How has worship made you more submissive to God's call?

The need for cleansing is both individual and corporate.

3 Pentecost is a call to corporate leadership (Acts 2:14–18).

NIV

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

KJV

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

continued

13

6:5 *I am ruined!* Isaiah may have been terrified by a sense of his own impending death. Scripture teaches that no one can see God and live (For example, Ex. 19:21).

6:6 *one of the seraphim flew to me.* Perhaps this experience of God's holiness, power, and glory would have devastated Isaiah had it not been for this manifestation of God's love. The holy God accepted sinful Isaiah, offering him a sign of forgiveness (Isa. 6:7), the live coal from the altar fire.

6:8 *I heard the voice of the Lord.* Up to this point, Isaiah had heard the seraphim sing their hymn of glory and the voice of one who pronounced his atonement for sin. But when he heard God speak again, he heard the voice of grace. The holy God wanted a representative—"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"—but he was willing to use an imperfect messenger. Under those conditions, Isaiah, who perhaps had regained his equilibrium, willingly volunteered—"Here am I. Send me!" Tradition tells us that Isaiah died by being sawn in half. But this initial experience of seeing God enabled him to keep his eyes fixed on the One who had cleansed and called him.



EXPLORE

Two

1. Isaiah expected to die after having seen God.

2. This question is intended to help the class understand that worship should never leave us the same. Ask one or two members to share their experiences.

3. This question is intended to evaluate members' sensitivity to God's call on their lives. Ask one or two members to share their experiences.



EXAMINE

THREE: As you consider the closing of the lesson, choose some Scriptures that differentiate between *sins* (plural, acts of sinning) and *sin* (singular, the sin nature, common to all humankind, except Jesus Christ). Note how this lesson is all about the cleansing, the purifying, of our very nature, not primarily forgiveness of acts committed.

notes

2:14 *let me explain this to you.* A speaker normally needs to catch his hearers' attention. The miraculous signs of wind, fire, and languages had already set the stage for Peter's words. Everyone was already eager to listen.

2:15 *These people are not drunk.* Isn't it ironic that people gathered in God's city to worship God, when seeing people full of God (What else would you expect in God's city?) could think of no explanation for their unusual behavior other than alcohol?

2:15 *It's only nine in the morning!* Then, as now, people were more likely to drink in the evening rather than the morning. This would have been especially true on a festival day such as Pentecost.

2:16 *Spoken by the prophet Joel.* What follows is a quotation from Joel 2:28–32, the prophet's anticipation of the day when God would give his Spirit to all his people.

2:17 *in the last days.* Remember that Jesus had, in a real, although incomplete, sense, brought the kingdom of God to earth. The last days had begun.

2:17 *All people.* Prior to this, God gave his Spirit to selected people at special occasions for unusual purposes. From this point on, God's Spirit would indwell all his people.

2:17 *your sons and daughters.* Neither gender nor age ("young" and "old") would be a barrier to the filling of, and ministry through, the Spirit.

KJV continued

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

In the last chapter of Luke, we see Jesus ascending to heaven after commissioning his disciples to preach the gospel beginning in Jerusalem. Christ also commanded his disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they had been "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). After Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, we read of the impotence of his followers. Some crouched behind closed doors for fear of the religious leaders (John 20:19), and Peter had previously denied his Lord three times. Jesus knew this group of would-be leaders he was leaving behind were ill-equipped to confront their culture. He had heard them debating about who would be the greatest in the kingdom, and he had seen them posturing for position. But Pentecost would bring them a new reality of a different kingdom—a kingdom that was not political but spiritual in nature.

If the church he had left behind was to work together in building his kingdom, it would require both an individual and corporate cleansing and empowering. We celebrate Pentecost as the true birthday of the church. Had Pentecost not occurred, the church would have lacked both an individual and corporate vision to fulfill the great commission (Matt. 28:19–20). The church without Pentecost would have suffered an untimely death in its own Jerusalem. Instead, "about three thousand were added" to the church in one day as a result of Pentecost (Acts 2:41).

Our Scripture passage reveals a brazen new Peter, who explained the phenomena that occurred on Pentecost when individuals from various geographical areas had witnessed what appeared to be separated tongues of fire. The fire had descended on all and rested individually upon each of them. Pentecost was a reversal of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:9) as people miraculously heard the disciples speak in their own language (Acts 2:6). Unlike the tower of Babel, Pentecost served to unite those gathered instead of scattering them.

Peter announced that this was no alcohol-induced rant (Acts 2:13–15), but rather a fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28–32.

Pentecost Sunday reminds us that the Holy Spirit has already come, but we must ask God to cleanse our hearts and fill us with the Holy Spirit.

Peter would have to explain the need for a personal Pentecost on several occasions. Peter took part in the Gentile Pentecost at the home of Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:34, 44–46). Peter reminded them that God doesn't show favoritism (10:34–35; 15:8–9) when it comes to being filled with the Holy Spirit. Apollos was one of several Ephesus believers who were John's converts and knew the baptism of repentance, but had not experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit since they had believed (Acts 18:25; 19:1–7). Priscilla and Aquila, who hosted a church in their home (1 Cor. 16:19), had led Apollos in this "way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26, or "more perfectly," KJV). The question of Paul to the believers at Ephesus still applicable today: "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you have believed?" (Acts 19:2 KJV).

Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the entire sanctification that the baptism accomplishes are as available now as when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. First salvation frees us from sin guilt, then sanctification and the fullness of the Holy Spirit free us from the power of sin!

THREE

1. What made Peter so bold on this occasion?
2. Do you have the assurance of heart cleansing through the Holy Spirit? How did you receive this assurance?
3. If not, are you diligently seeking this grace? Why or why not?

To function corporately as a church necessitates that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit to sanctify our hearts through faith.

LIFE APPLICATION

Both the Old Testament account of Isaiah's encounter with God and the New Testament account of Pentecost reveal a need for purity or cleansing before there can be a filling, or empowerment for service. God refuses to fill a dirty vessel, and before there can be a filling, we need to be emptied of anything that would keep us from the experience of sanctification.

- What obstacles in your life prevent you from experiencing the fullness of God's Holy Spirit?
- Are you willing to trust God for your sanctification?



Three

1. Peter's boldness was certainly part of his personality. But don't forget, just a few weeks prior to Pentecost he had denied Christ completely. Undoubtedly much of this new boldness for the Lord came from the Holy Spirit's presence.

2. It is hoped that the class will be confronted with the need for heart cleansing and the need to be empowered to live a holy lifestyle. John Wesley felt that as long as the individual was seeking the second blessing it was only a matter of time before the person would witness to the experience. Members must realize the importance of seeking after and not overlooking the need for this second work of grace. Ask one or two members to share their experiences.

3. Calls for a personal response.



Closing

Hand out copies of the revival hymn "Cleanse Me" to each student. You may want to sing this simple tune as a group; then open your prayer time for personal response, providing a time for prayer for cleansing and the infilling of the Holy Spirit in response to the call to sanctification.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "A Corporate Pentecost" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 2*.



Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.

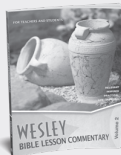


Opening

Bring in news articles from this week that show person(s) as either good or poor leaders. Why do you evaluate the individual's leadership the way you do?

3 | JUNE 16

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 3
Activity: Required of Both
Leader and Follower

KEY VERSE

"You have done a foolish thing," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time."
—1 Samuel 13:13

SCRIPTURE

• 1 Samuel 9:1–2, 19–22, 26–27; 10:1; 13:8–14

LESSON FOCUS

God's leaders must have godly character in order to succeed.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

From a humble, unassuming beginning, Saul was catapulted into the office of king over Israel. Despite his background and abilities, he failed to obey God resulting in the loss of God's presence in his life and reign. Saul's life illustrates that effective leadership for God requires total obedience.

INTRODUCTION

examine

Since the day Moses led Israel out of Egypt, God had governed Israel through his chosen spokespeople. A primary figure in God's direction was Samuel the prophet, who led Israel in its spiritual formation as a people of God. However, as he grew old, he appointed his sons to serve as judges over Israel. His sons, lacking the integrity of their father, ruled by deception, greed, and dishonesty (1 Sam. 8:1–3). As a result, the elders of Israel demanded Samuel appoint a king to rule as the other nations around them. The demand was both a political and spiritual coup. They were not just rejecting Samuel's leadership, but God's (v. 7). God, however, conceded to their wishes, explaining their responsibilities in following a king (vv. 10–17) and revealing the man for the job.

16

notes

1 God's leader is a person of good character (1 Sam. 9:1–2).

NIV

1 There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin.
2 Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else.

KJV

1 Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.
2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

Saul's résumé was exceptional. His countrymen recognized him as a man of quality, having come from good stock. In addition, he had a favorable reference from God. Three observations are made about him:

- He was an impressive young man—a **man of standing** (1 Sam. 9:1).
- He was **as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel** (1 Sam. 9:2).
- He was **a head taller than anyone else** (1 Sam. 9:2).

Since Israel had little experience choosing a king, one could understand why these three observations attracted them to Saul. But there is more to be considered when choosing a leader. (God instructed Samuel on this when he chose Saul's successor [16:7].) The unanswered question remained: Can this remarkable man lead a nation? Nothing in Israel's history answered this question, so Saul was hired because of character and eventually fired because of performance. Charisma can only take one so far. If there is no basis within for what is expressed without, any attempt to lead fails.

Saul was also God's choice (9:15–16). But whether the choice is of God or humankind, the responsibility for leadership is up to the person assuming the position. Saul's task was to follow God's directions obediently.



EXAMINE

ONE: Ask, "When it comes time to elect government officials, what do people seek in a leader?" Does that ensure we will have solid leadership in those offices? Ask the same question about choosing church leaders.

9:1 Kish. This verse begins the introduction of Saul, the one God chose as Israel's first king, by giving us his background. The writer mentions several of Saul's forebears about whom we know little or nothing. Saul's father, Kish, is identified as "a man of standing." This phrase, along with the subsequently given facts that Kish had servants and livestock, indicates Saul came from a relatively wealthy family.

9:2 Saul. The writer felt impressed by Saul's background; in that leading family, Saul himself developed well. The only specific fact we catch is that Saul was tall, several inches taller than the average. But the writer went beyond Saul's qualifications for the national basketball team by describing him as "as handsome a young man as could be found" among his peers. (Despite this introduction, the next verses do not show Saul in the best light. When Kish sent Saul out looking for a herd of lost donkeys, the animals outwitted their master. Saul could not find them [v. 4]. In discouragement, Saul gave up the hunt [v. 5]. When a servant suggested consulting Samuel, the man nationally known for possessing the Spirit of God, Saul at first rejected the idea [vv. 6–7]. When Saul finally agreed to ask Samuel for help, he did not recognize the prophet when their paths crossed [v. 18].)



One

1. He was “as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel” (1 Sam. 9:2); God chose and anointed him to be king (vv. 16–17); he was filled with the Holy Spirit (10:10).

2. The criteria for discerning leaders is whether they can live out in their actions and decisions a level of quality of character in keeping with God. Issues such as family name, friendliness, popularity, attractiveness, and length of time in a church have little to do with leadership potential.

3. To discern the will of God in a situation, present it to those involved, lead them into its expression, all in a way that maintains the level of excellence God expects of his people.



EXAMINE

TWO: Have a class member present a short report on the tribal concept of that day, specifically highlighting the tribe of Benjamin, Saul’s heritage. Help your class understand how being from the smallest tribe would increase Saul’s confusion and surprise in being honored to be king.

9:19 *I am the seer.* At this point in the chapter, both Saul and Samuel are looking for each other. Saul wanted help finding donkeys. More importantly, God had told Samuel Saul would be Israel’s first king (9:15–17).

9:19 *High place.* Later writing in the books of the Kings will portray the high places as God-rejected sites of pagan worship. At this earlier time, this particular higher spot, at least, had no apparent connection to idolatry.

9:20 *the donkeys,* which had been a key theme in the chapter to this point, were soon forgotten. Samuel finished that episode as he announced that the animals had been found. At the same time, Samuel opened the more significant story to follow as he began dropping hints that Israel’s king had also been found. “To whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you?”

Many can present themselves in favorable ways, citing family, charisma, and appearance, to imply leadership ability. Yet these cannot replace the necessity of an obedient character.

ONE

explore

1. What were Saul’s qualifications to assume leadership of Israel?
2. What criteria should be used to determine a leader’s potential?
3. What responsibilities does a leader have regarding their position?

2

God’s leader is a person who seeks God’s direction (1 Sam. 9:19–22).

NIV

19 “I am the seer,” Samuel replied. “Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will send you on your way and will tell you all that is in your heart.”

20 As for the donkeys you lost three days ago, do not worry about them; they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line?”

21 Saul answered, “But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?”

22 Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall and seated them at the head of those who were invited—about thirty in number.

KJV

19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father’s house?

21 And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons.

notes

Talk about surprise. Saul had come to town to find God's seer, hoping for help in locating his father's donkeys. But when he encountered Samuel, it became apparent the seer had other plans in mind. Before Saul could explain his presence, Samuel informed him that his donkeys were safe, that he was to be the guest of honor at the sacrificial meal, and that out of everyone in Israel, Saul and his family were the most honored—a statement Saul found hard to accept (1 Sam. 9:5–21).

Three revelations about Saul's nature are made in this encounter:

- He was a man willing to seek God's direction in his life.
- He was a genuinely humble person.
- He was obedient to those God had placed in authority over him.

To lead others in the will of God, one must first be willing to be led by God and his messengers. Too often we spend time determining what should be done and then ask God to bless our decisions. Some leaders even feel innovation is a mark of leadership. While creativity can complement leadership, it can never replace it. Unless God determines what we are doing, our activities are nothing more than human ingenuity. To be a leader for God requires more than being able to think on our feet. It requires us to seek on our knees, to be open to the counsel of others, and to be obedient to the direction of godly men and women around us. These issues would progressively challenge Saul, as we shall see.

TWO

explore

1. Why did Saul struggle with accepting Samuel's words?
2. What are some specific ways a leader could demonstrate the three behaviors above?
3. How does a person balance being a leader with recognizing the need to be led?

9:21 *but . . .* Saul may not yet have caught the full significance of Samuel's interest in him, but even so, he humbly resisted Samuel's first attempts to honor him. He demurred in words reminiscent of Gideon (Judg. 6:15). Was the tribe of Benjamin actually the smallest? Benjamin had been Jacob's youngest son. That fact in itself could have given his descendants a place of reduced honor. In addition, Judges 20:46–48 describes a battle in which this tribe lost much of its population.

9:22 *Seated them at the head.* Right from the beginning, Samuel offered Saul a place of preeminence.



Two

1. Because Saul was not from a "prestigious" tribe or clan, he assumed that disqualified him from being considered for the kingship.

2. By seeking God's direction in life through prayer and Scripture reading; by offering an open mind and willing heart to God; allowing him to mold and direct the person as he sees best; by listening to godly people around them for insights and wisdom that relate to God's direction.

3. Our culture assumes a leader is a maverick who functions without peers or other controlling influences. Seeking insight and counsel from others does not diminish one's leadership potential. It merely broadens the base by which one can come to an informed decision. Final decisions will be made by the leader, but the process in making a decision should include the insight of others.

notes



THREE: Look at Romans 5:6–8. Relate both this passage and the lesson Scripture to the truth that God’s seeing potential in all of us is at the heart of the Gospel message.

9:26 *On the roof.* Ancient homes often had flat roofs. Inhabitants could use this area as an extra room. It appears that Saul had slept on the roof. In a warm, dry climate, that would have been as comfortable as any room in the house.

9:27 *Tell the servant to go on.* Samuel was willing to publicly honor Saul, but chose to keep secret the reason for that honor until God would publicly disclose his selection of Saul as king.

10:1 *Anointed.* Pouring oil on the head of a priest had been a key component of his ordination (Ex. 30:30). From the day of this interaction between Samuel and Saul, anointing became part of a king’s coronation ritual. And, of course, the Messiah would be the Anointed One. (During a period of intervening years, Saul had been received as king of Israel. Samuel still acted as prophet, but was gradually stepping into a background role.)

3 God’s leader is a person who lives God’s vision (1 Sam. 9:26—10:1).

NIV

9:26 They rose about daybreak, and Samuel called to Saul on the roof, “Get ready, and I will send you on your way.” When Saul got ready, he and Samuel went outside together.

27 As they were going down to the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, “Tell the servant to go on ahead of us”—and the servant did so—“but you stay here for a while, so that I may give you a message from God.”

10:1 Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil and poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him, saying, “Has not the LORD anointed you ruler over his inheritance?”

KJV

9:26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

27 And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

When Samuel sent Saul on his way the next day, the last thing Saul probably expected was to be anointed king over Israel. God made Saul, the least of the least, the greatest. Who was he to receive such an honor?

God tends to see us not as we are, but for our potential. Saul’s view of his personal insignificance was turned on its head by God’s vision of a great leader. It would be Saul’s challenge to take on this new identity and live it before God. Truly humble people recognize their value as children of God and acknowledge their limits as human beings. Saul, however, appears to have had deeper self-worth issues that kept him from seeing who he was in God’s eyes. Instead, he saw only his limitations. This fact is illustrated when Saul, having been filled with the Spirit of God, chose to hide on the day Samuel was to anoint him publicly as king (1 Sam. 10:22). To accept a position of leadership for God requires us to live up to the full potential he instills within us. It requires us to become the leaders God’s sees within. Saul’s insecurity with himself and his people would become a weak link in his monarchy, as we shall see.

notes

THREE

explore

1. What significance is there in Samuel saying God had anointed Saul to lead God's "inheritance"? Why not just say "Israel"?
2. How hard is it for you to live out what God sees in you?
3. What is God's vision for you? Have you embraced it or denied it?

4 Being God's leader requires trusting God in all things (1 Sam. 13:8–14).

NIV

8 He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter.

9 So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering.

10 Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.

11 "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikmash,

12 I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

13 "You have done a foolish thing," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time.

14 But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command."

KJV

8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

continued

21



EXPLORE

Three

1. By making the distinction of inheritance, Samuel was showing that God's kingdom was more important than just any earthly kingdom.

2. Calls for a personal response.

3. Calls for a personal response.



EXAMINE

FOUR: Divide your class into

groups of three or four. Have

each group make a list of issues

that might tempt a church leader to act on human instincts instead of waiting on God.

Compile a master list for the class.

13:8 *He waited seven days.* Prior to a particular battle against the Philistines (Israel's most persistent and troublesome enemy during this period), Samuel had asked Saul to refrain from entering battle until the prophet could arrive and offer an appropriate sacrifice. Saul patiently waited through six days, and on into the seventh. Meanwhile, the Philistine army was growing as Saul's own men were deserting him. Saul thought he could wait no longer, so he chose to go ahead with the sacrifice.

13:10 *Samuel arrived.* It's almost as if Samuel was watching Saul from some hidden place. In any case, Saul had barely lit the fire of the sacrifice when Samuel arrived. Saul, feeling no guilt, "went out to greet him."

13:11 *What have you done?* Samuel was in no mood for small talk. He could not understand why Saul had assumed that spiritual authority accompanied his political and military power. More importantly, Saul had acted without faith. Had he truly trusted God, Saul would have believed God could enable victory despite the humanly calculated odds moving against Israel.

13:12 *The LORD's favor.* Was Saul speaking honestly here? Did he truly want God's help, or was he acting in desperation because God and his prophet appeared to have forgotten the coming battle?

notes

13:13 *You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you.* In any case, whether with or without sincerity, Saul had disobeyed. With these words, Samuel foreshadowed a more frequently quoted line he spoke after Saul's next big mistake: "To obey is better than sacrifice" (15:22).

13:13 *if you had . . .* It appears that Saul had blown his big chance. He and his descendants could have been king forever. However, that possibility was taken from the house of Saul and given to another: a man after God's own heart—the first biblical reference to David (13:14).



Four

1. His men were leaving even as the Philistine army was amassing. He also said, as if it had suddenly occurred to him, that he hadn't sought the Lord's favor. The explanation was inadequate because his actions were disobedient.

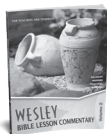
2. You could ask the people to share how they deal with God's challenges that make them feel inadequate. Some might also share how people around them, unable to trust God, have tempted them to compromise.

3. Maybe you could share some generalities of how people attempt to prevent a program or ministry from happening because it makes them insecure, or they question the likelihood of positive results.



Closing

Be sensitive to those members of your class who suffer from a low self-esteem or have experienced burnout or failure in some area of leadership. Let the other members of the class lay hands on them and pray for God to bring healing to their spirits.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "How People Respond to Leaders" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary*

Volume 2.

KJV continued

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

FOUR

explore

1. What was Saul's explanation for his disobedience? Why was it inadequate?
2. How often are you tempted to compromise God's call to satisfy the people or your own fears and insecurities?
3. How often do you challenge those in leadership over you because you lack trust in God's ability to do the impossible?

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

Having considered the early life of Saul and his leadership, how does your life compare to his? List from this lesson the attributes and nature of Saul that made his leadership possible. Circle those that you feel apply to you. Next, consider those areas of weakness that eventually compromised Saul's leadership. Circle those that apply to you. What spiritual exercise can you do to improve your leadership? What are some of the stumbling blocks you place before yourself and others that prevent God's will from being done? Prayerfully develop specific steps in your life to improve your leadership ability.

notes

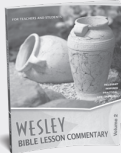
The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.
—1 Samuel 16:7

4

INNER QUALITIES OF A LEADER

- 1 Samuel 16:1, 6–13; 17:32–37; 18:14;
- 1 Chronicles 11:1–3

God's leaders must be spiritually qualified.



Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 4
Activity: Write Your Story



 Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.

EVALUATE



 ENGAGE

Opening
Discuss with your class the effect modern media has had on our choices of leaders. How has this affected the church?

Regardless of a person's looks, education, or financial or social status, leadership qualities are internal and need to be modeled after God's pattern for leadership. God's choice of a person for service is often contrary to human reason, but God looks at the heart in choosing individuals to do great things for him.

examine In today's society, we place a great deal of emphasis on externals. Advertising budgets include millions of dollars to promote a company's products that are supposed to enhance the appearance. Fashion experts dictate what people should wear to reflect the image they are trying to project. Annually, thousands of people flock to plastic surgeons to maintain a youthful appearance despite the aging process. Physical power and intellectual acumen are highly regarded. Movie, television, and music stars are elevated to celebrity status and many are regarded as leaders.

Yet, no matter how people look on the outside, the most important thing from God's standpoint is the condition of their hearts.

Is God interested in how we look? Do outward appearances accurately reflect what kind of leader a person will be? What qualities does God look for in selecting leaders? Today's lesson explores this topic.



ONE: Have a class member give a report on the anointing oil—when it was used, its symbolism, and the manifestation of God’s presence and power when it was poured on an individual. What does that communicate to us about the needs of godly leadership today?

16:1 *Fill your horn with oil.* The act of anointing with oil symbolized what crowning a monarch does today (10:1). The horn was an animal horn used as a container for liquids.

16:1 *Jesse.* Jesse is known only as the father of David. For a bit of his genealogy that traces his family line back to Ruth and Boaz, see Ruth 4:18–22.

16:7 *Do not consider his appearance or his height.* At God’s direction, Samuel had anointed Saul, one who was “a head taller than anyone else” (9:2). Samuel mistakenly thought that the next person God chose as king would be as physically impressive as Saul. Jesse’s oldest son, Eliab, fit the bill. But evidently Saul’s height had not been a primary consideration, for God reminded Samuel that other traits were more important. “Do not consider his appearance or his height. . . . The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (Compare this thought to God’s previous word to Saul through Samuel, that he would seek “a man after his own heart” [13:14]. For further evidence of Eliab’s unsuitability to serve as king, see the anger he expressed to David just before David killed Goliath [17:28]).

16:8–9 *Abinadab . . . Shammah.* These two older brothers also served in the national army in the next battle against the Philistines (17:13).

16:10 *Seven of his sons.* Picture old Samuel scratching his head, wondering where Cinderella was among all these older sisters. “Are these all the sons you have?” he asked (16:11).

1 God directs the selection of his leader (1 Sam. 16:1, 6–13).

NIV

1 The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”
6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”
7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”
8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.”
9 Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.”
10 Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”
11 So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”
12 So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”
13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

KJV

1 And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.
6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD’s anointed is before him.
7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.
8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.
9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.
10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

notes

KJV

11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. **12** And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. **13** Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

Saul, the elected leader of Israel, brought the nation to a low level. Once anointed and filled with the Spirit of God (1 Sam. 10:1, 6, 9–10), Saul began a downward spiral by compromising his values and disobeying God’s role for him. Tragically, his later life was self-willed, his character shattered with sin, and ultimately, he died by suicide.

God would pick the next king for his people by speaking through the prophet Samuel. Samuel was grieving over Saul’s downfall from leadership when the Lord spoke to him. **The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel?”** (v. 1).

The Lord gave Samuel specific directions to follow: **Fill your horn with oil and be on your way.** The horn was a container used to hold the oil necessary for anointing the next king. **I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king** (v. 1).

Samuel obeyed God and went to Bethlehem to meet with Jesse and his sons. **When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab, Jesse’s oldest son, and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD”** (v. 6). It was logical for Samuel to think that the tall, good-looking, elder son would be king-like material. **But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance but the LORD looks at the heart”** (v. 7).

One by one Jesse’s sons passed before Samuel. Each one hoped that he would be the next king. **Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either”** (v. 8). Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, **“Nor has the LORD chosen this one”** (v. 9). The Lord continued to give Samuel divine inspiration. **Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”**

16:11 *the youngest, . . . he is tending the sheep.* Jesse, too, felt puzzled. Evidently he felt proud of his grown sons. He must have felt confused when God had “not chosen these” (16:10). Jesse might not have felt as confident of his “baby’s” abilities. Was it a coincidence that God chose the one who acted as a shepherd, a role David’s greatest Son would fill?

16:12 *glowing with health . . . fine appearance . . . handsome.* God had earlier affirmed that physical appearance was irrelevant to suitability for the throne. It is thus ironic that the writer noted that David also was a handsome lad.

16:12 *this is the one.* Jesse had not even bothered to call David in to meet the prophet. Yet God chose one that others ignored. God seemingly enjoys doing that, using ordinary people for his special purposes.

16:13 *the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David.* David would not become king for years. But after this first encounter with Samuel and his God, David would never be the same again. The presence of the Spirit marked David as God’s own. This, however, was no guarantee of success. David, like Saul (who also received God’s Spirit with power; 10:10), retained his own choice to yield to, or to resist, the Spirit.

One

1. David was the youngest and therefore without status. Why bother?
2. Invite class discussion that should be contrasted and compared to the next question.
3. God does not select leaders on the basis of external appearance. He looks at the heart and motives of people.

TWO: Look up verses about *courage* in the Scriptures. With these passages, you can establish that where there is sure anointing, there is also protection and power to be courageous.

17:32 *your servant will go and fight him.* David was volunteering singlehandedly to take on the giant Goliath. How much time had passed since Samuel anointed David? Not that much. David was still a youngster running errands for his brothers, who viewed him condescendingly (vv. 17–19, 28). King Saul saw him as still “only a young man” (v. 33).

17:33 *You are not able.* Saul joined the crowd of others who saw David as an ordinary child. Like David’s father and brothers, Saul felt no confidence in David’s ability.

17:36 *Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear.* David countered Saul’s disbelief with two factors. The first involved David’s own experience and skill. The boy had previously defeated animals who were giants in comparison to his size and strength. Most likely he had stunned the beasts with a stone from his sling before killing them with his knife.

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives” (vv. 10–11). Jesse, doubting that his youngest son—whom he would not even name, and who was merely a shepherd—would be a candidate for king, obeyed the respected prophet. **So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features** (v. 12). When Samuel saw the auburn-haired youth, the Spirit of the Lord spoke to him. **Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one”** (v. 12).

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah (v. 13).

David’s preparation for leadership came when God infused him with his Spirit. It is highly probable that David wasn’t aware of what was happening to him at that moment, nor of the responsibility he would have as king. But God’s plan was being carried out through one who was considered the least important in Jesse’s household.

ONE

explore

1. Why might Jesse have been so reluctant to bring David to Samuel?
2. What criteria do you use to judge others?
3. What criteria does God put upon those whom he chooses as leaders?

2 Leaders can depend upon God’s power and protection (1 Sam. 17:32–37; 18:14).

NIV

- 17:32** David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”
- 33** Saul replied, “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.”
- 34** But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock,
- 35** I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it.
- 36** Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.

notes

37 The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you.”

18:14 In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him.

KJV

17:32 And David said to Saul, Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

18:14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.

After being anointed, David continued tending his father’s sheep until Saul summoned him to his service to be an armor-bearer and play his harp for him.

Shortly after David entered Saul’s service, the Philistines went to war against Israel. David was assigned the task of delivering food to his brothers on the front battle lines. During one of these times, David heard about the frightening situation regarding Goliath the giant. It angered him so much that he declared that the uncircumcised Philistine could not defy the armies of the living God (1 Sam. 17:17–26).

Empowered by God with boldness and full of faith in his God, David exhibited leadership in a time of doubt. **David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him”** (v. 32). Objecting to David’s youthfulness and inexperience, **Saul replied, “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth”** (v. 33).

Not one to be intimidated by his lack of military experience or his age, David reasoned with Saul: **Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its**

17:37 *The LORD who rescued me.* David then reminded Saul of an even more important factor. God stood with David. If God had helped David fend off enemies attacking sheep, then certainly he would enable him to defeat the enemy who had “defied the armies of the Living God” (v. 36). David saw no way that God would allow this giant and his armies to gain power over his own people. Jesse’s youngest son, working alone in the field, had developed traits his sheltered brothers, in the house, might never have. David had gained not only experience and skill, but unshakable faith in God.

18:14 *the LORD was with him.* No longer did anyone doubt David’s qualifications. He could do no wrong; he could not fail. Why? Because David had freely accepted the gift of God’s Spirit, uniting himself with his Lord.



Two

1. Perhaps he wasn't necessarily "reasoning." More likely, he was expressing simple, yet profound, faith in God's limitless power.

2. Allow members a few minutes to share an experience.

3. Faith is pleasing to God. Cite other Scriptures, such as John 15:5; Hebrews 11:6; or Genesis 18:14.



EXAMINE

THREE: Designate someone, possibly a senior adult in your church, to tell of a time when it was obvious that God raised up a leader (lay or pastoral) in your church for that particular situation.

11:1 Hebron. This region, located in the southern segment of Israel, gave loyalty to David even before Saul's death (2 Sam. 2:3-4).

11:2 you were the one. In twenty-first-century slang, David was "the man." The people recognized David as their leader. After all, he deserved much credit for Israel's recent military success. God, too, saw David inheriting the position Saul had lost through disobedience and death; "you will become their ruler."

11:3 he made a covenant with them. David stated, before taking the throne, the principles by which he would govern. He made himself accountable to the national leaders.

11:3 they anointed David king over Israel. Samuel had previously anointed David, but that took place before David was a nationally known figure. The national leaders repeated this ritual, bringing into reality that which the earlier anointing had merely promised.

mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God (vv. 34-36). With perfect confidence in God's protection, David assured Saul, **The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine** (v. 37). Convinced that he couldn't argue against such strong faith, **Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you"** (v. 37).

Because the Lord was with David **in everything he did he had great success** (18:14). David was a success because he had faith in the Lord and did not look at the circumstances surrounding him.

TWO

explore

1. Was David's reasoning sound when he said, "The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine" (17:37)?
2. Can you recall a time when God empowered you to do something you thought was too difficult?
3. How important is faith as it relates to confidence in accomplishing a difficult task?

3 God appoints the leader he has chosen (1 Chron. 11:1-3).

NIV

1 All Israel came together to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood.

2 In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD your God said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'"

3 When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, he made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel, as the LORD had promised through Samuel.

KJV

1 Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

2 And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel.

3 Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.

notes

God's selection of a leader resulted in unity in Israel. The people were loyal to David and had confidence in his leadership. They were also aware that he was anointed and commissioned by God to be their leader. **All Israel came together to David at Hebron and said, "We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD your God said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler'"** (1 Chron. 11:1–2).

David submitted to God's plan and presented it to the people. He made a covenant with God and the people so that all things were done as Samuel had prophesied. **When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, he made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel, as the LORD had promised through Samuel** (v. 3).

THREE

- explore
1. What three things confirmed David's leadership in the minds of the people?
 2. What characteristics do people look for in a leader?
 3. What qualities do you exhibit as a leader? How might you be lacking in leadership abilities?

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

Take a moment to write down your response to question three above, specifying your own qualities of leadership and those you might be lacking. Write them in two columns. Then below those two columns, write down every leadership opportunity you can think of that exists (not merely that is available, but that exists) in your church or other local ministry in which you could participate.

Then look through the list, prayerfully and objectively, with an eye and a heart toward what ministry God is directing you to lead. Where is God calling you to use your gifts and talents to lead in ministry? Circle the strongest ones, and ask God to show you how to take a next step in following his will.



Three

EXPLORE

1. David was their "own flesh and blood" (v. 1); he had led Israel in battle; they knew God had anointed him.

2. Some possible answers: integrity, responsibility, good communicator, strong convictions, Christlike spirit, self-confidence, well-ordered life. Invite members to add to the list.

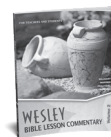
3. Members may hesitate here, thinking they would be boasting to answer. Ask them to consider the leadership qualities they exhibit at home (How does a parent lead his or her children?), at work (How does a supervisor direct an employee?), and at church (What prompted someone to ask you to lead a Bible study, greet visitors, etc.?).



EXERCISE

Closing

Have a prayer time, thanking God for capable leadership in the past and present and asking God to raise up and help the church to recognize and equip leaders from your youth and young adults. It is always in order to pray for God to "send out workers into his harvest field" (Matt. 9:38).



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Step into the Action" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 2*.



Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



Opening
Direct discussion with your class concerning the following: Temptation is not sin; yielding to temptation is sin.

5 | JUNE 30

TAKE TEMPTATION SERIOUSLY



CHECK IT OUT
Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 5
Activity: Intercessory Prayers

KEY VERSE

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."
—2 Samuel 12:13

SCRIPTURE

• 2 Samuel 11:1–11, 18–27; 12:7–14

LESSON FOCUS

Leaders must guard themselves against moral failure.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

David was a man of many talents who was chosen by God to be the leader of Israel. At the height of his popularity, he risked everything by laying aside the parameters of self-discipline and succumbing to lustful temptation with Bathsheba. His failure to obey God resulted in a series of consequences that remained with him for the rest of his life.

INTRODUCTION

examine

Temptation is a lifelong struggle. Sometimes we master the situation, and at other times it masters us. Failure to establish moral boundaries and safeguards that keep us from yielding to temptation will find us weakened when tempted. Flirting with sin ultimately leads to disaster, even for Christians.

The reality is that what happened to David could happen to us; "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:12).

30

notes

1 It is dangerous for a leader to yield to temptation (2 Sam. 11:1–5).

NIV

- 1 In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.
- 2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful,
- 3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."
- 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness.) Then she went back home.
- 5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant."

KJV

- 1 And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.
- 2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.
- 3 And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?
- 4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.
- 5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

At the age of fifty, David had been king of Israel for about twenty years when the temptation to lust after Bathsheba overpowered him. Renowned as a valiant warrior, a gifted musician, and a man of God, his popularity was at an all-time high. It was at this high point of his career when he began to let down his guard, and let others tend to his royal responsibilities. **In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah (2 Sam. 11:1).** Although it was David's responsibility to lead his troops, **David remained in Jerusalem (v. 1).**

31



EXAMINE

ONE: Lead the class to notice the number of opportunities David had to stop the yielding process before the act of adultery was completed. Point out the danger of initiating the process by entertaining the tempting thought. Once begun, it becomes increasingly difficult to resist the momentum.

11:1 *when kings go off to war.* The annual grain harvest occurred in the spring (April and May). Unless there was an astounding national emergency, would-be soldiers were needed at home to bring in the crop.

11:1 *David sent Joab.* In contrast to previous battles where David himself led his forces into action, this time David asked another man to command the troops. He seems to have retired from active duty. The Israelite army appears to have won a great victory.

11:2 *David got up from his bed.* Evidently David felt restless. Perhaps he wished he was out fighting with his men. That would have given him more satisfaction; at least he would have known what was happening in the battles.

11:2 *walked around on the roof.* Remember that many ancient houses offered flat roofs. In the dry climate, these rooftops added extra space to the house. During summer nights, the roof might have been the coolest place at the palace.

11:2 *a woman bathing.* Some homes had interior courtyards, not visible from the streets. Within the privacy of her courtyard and the darkness, Bathsheba felt secure enough to bathe. How could she have known that anyone would be prowling the palace roof during the night? The text gives no indication that Bathsheba bore any responsibility for what followed.

11:2 *The woman was very beautiful.* Remember the standards of modesty for women in this culture. When women appeared in public, all skin, even their faces, was covered. David might not have seen Bathsheba completely naked. She may have bathed partially clothed, but her body was less covered than usual.

continued

notes

11:3 *David sent someone to find out about her.* David was innocent to this point. Here, however, he yielded to temptation. Having seen her, he needed to know more: Was this woman available for a relationship?

11:3 *Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.* Interestingly, this is the only time in this account that Bathsheba is named. It seems that David treated her more as an object than as a person, with the account reflecting his attitude. An Eliam is listed in 23:34 as a member of David's bodyguard, and himself the son of Ahithophel, an advisor to David. The two verses could refer to the same man. Uriah the Hittite is also mentioned as a member of David's elite troops (23:39). The Hittites were an even more ancient people group, who had lived in what is now Turkey. Uriah's name is Hebrew, meaning "the LORD is my light." So, either Uriah's parents or Uriah himself had converted to Judaism, and he had become a part of the military inner circle.

11:4 *David sent messengers to get her.* David not only saw and wanted; he took. Legally Bathsheba might have had rights to refuse the king, but she likely feared the consequences of doing so—for herself or her husband in battle. (The text gives no indication of an ongoing affair; merely of the one encounter.)



One

1. He saw, he thought, and he took action.

2. Resolve beforehand to turn away from it. Ask God for help.

3. Avoid situations that portray immorality, that is, relationships, movies, websites, reading materials.



TWO: Read Proverbs 21:30; discuss the principle of that verse considering this passage.

11:6 *Send me Uriah the Hittite.* When Bathsheba notified David of her pregnancy, he developed a cover-up plan: Uriah would come home and sleep with his wife. No one would be able to prove David was the father of her child.

Having idle time, **David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing (v. 2).** Instead of stopping at the curiosity phase of temptation, he chose to give in. **The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (vv. 2–3).** The moment he looked at Bathsheba, even after being told she was married to the elite guard Uriah, he forgot about his devotion to God and acted on the temptation. **Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her (v. 4).** Apparently there was no hesitation about wrongdoing, and no thought about the consequences of his actions. **(Now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness, v. 4).** Bathsheba's bathing had been a ceremonial purification (Lev. 15:19–24).

The result of David's sexual immorality soon become apparent. **Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, "I am pregnant" (2 Sam. 11:4–5).**

ONE

explore

1. What was the progression that led to David's sin?
2. List ways to remove yourself from a tempting situation?
3. How can you maintain sexual purity in an immoral culture?

2 A leader can never cover up sin (2 Sam. 11:6–11, 18–22).

NIV

6 So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David.

7 When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going.

8 Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him.

9 But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house.

10 David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?"

11 Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

18 Joab sent David a full account of the battle.
19 He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle,
20 the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall?
21 Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'"
22 The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say.

KJV

6 And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.
7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.
8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.
9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.
10 And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?
11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.
18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;
19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,
20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?
21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.
22 So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.

When he heard the news of Bathsheba's pregnancy, panic seized David. Rather than confess his sin, he devised a plan to cover it up. **So David sent this word to Joab: "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent him to David** (2 Sam. 11:6). Pretending to want a report of the

11:8 *wash your feet.* At minimum, David encouraged Uriah to go home and put his feet up, to make himself comfortable. David added to the relaxation of the evening by offering a gift, likely fine food from his own table.

11:9 *Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace.* Uriah foiled David's plan by avoiding his wife altogether. Why would he do this? Did he perhaps suspect what had happened between the king and his wife? That is possible. Another factor is that sexual intercourse made a person ceremonially unclean. An unclean person was excluded from participation in battle (Lev. 15:18; Deut. 23:9–11). Uriah may have wished to remain on duty, so to speak. The next verses hint at such a motivation. (The intervening verses describe David, in effect, ordering Uriah's murder. Joab, the onsite commander, obeyed David's order to leave Uriah vulnerable in battle, so that enemy soldiers would kill him; 11:14–17.)

11:18 *Joab sent David a full account of the battle.* The next verses record that account. In obedience to David's directive, Joab had taken more risk in the battle (moving closer to the city) than he might have otherwise. He exposed Uriah and several other innocent men to the enemy. Without telling the messenger all his reasons, Joab instructed him to say that the battle strategy had led to the death of Uriah. Joab knew the king would understand.

11:21 *Abimelek.* See Judges 9 for the fuller account of the death of Abimelech, a son of Gideon.

Two

1. Loyal, courageous, righteous.
2. Avoid it, flee from it and decide in advance how to handle it when it comes.
3. Temptation can lead from a thought to actions that are displeasing to God. We will suffer the consequences of our sin.

war, when Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going (v. 7). Following his plan to bring Uriah back from the battlefield so that he could be with Bathsheba and the baby could pass for his, David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him (v. 8). Sending a gift to Uriah was just another enticement to have Uriah to remain at home.

But, as frequently happens, plans to cover up sin did not succeed. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. David was told, "Uriah did not go home." So he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?" (vv. 9–10).

Uriah, being a man of integrity and committed to serve his nation, king, and Lord, refused to enjoy the pleasures of his home and family while his fellow soldiers were exposed to danger. Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!" (v. 11).

With his plan failing, David resorted to ordering Uriah to the front lines of battle so he would be killed (vv. 12–17). When the plan was carried out, Joab reported back to David. Joab sent David a full account of the battle. He instructed the messenger: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you, 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall? Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'"

The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say (vv. 18–22). From lust to adultery to lies upon lies, and finally to murder, the temptation drew David into its devastating, destructive, downward spiral.

TWO

- explore
1. What kind of man was Uriah?
 2. What are some ways the Bible teaches us to handle temptation?
 3. Why is it important to guard against temptation?

3 When a leader repents of sin, God will forgive (2 Sam. 11:26–27; 12:7–10, 13–14).

NIV

11:26 When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.

27 After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

12:7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

9 Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.

10 Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

11 "This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight.

12 You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.

14 But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die."

KJV

11:26 And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

12:7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

continued



EXAMINE

THREE: Divide your class into two groups. Ask the first group to consider this question: What is true repentance? Ask the second group: What evidence do we have to prove that David truly repented? Take a few minutes to have them report on their discussions to the whole class.

11:27 *she became his wife.* David had committed adultery and murder. He assumed that only he knew the entire story. (Bathsheba and Joab each knew only part.) Since his strategy had "worked," he could bring Bathsheba into his house. Everyone would think the child was his. He felt sure he had gotten away with the whole scheme. Things had worked out better than he hoped. He had gained permanent, legal access to the beautiful Bathsheba. But David had forgotten that God knew the whole story. (Because God knew the story, he could tell his servant Nathan. God then sent Nathan to David to remind David that God knew what he had done and that it displeased him.)

12:7 *You are the man.* Nathan told David a story that infuriated David. A rich farmer stole a favored lamb from a poor farmer. David demanded the identity of the thief, so justice could be done. Not until too late did David understand why Nathan told this story. David himself was the thief . . . and worse!

12:8 *I gave your master's house to you.* Nathan noted all the gifts God had given David.

12:9 *Why did you . . .* Following right on, Nathan asked how David could have so selfishly violated God's commandments of righteousness.

continued

12:10 *Now, therefore . . .* God, through Nathan, finished the sequence: You, David, will bear the consequences. He who had wrongfully taken up a sword against others would himself feel the pain of the sword touching his own family.

12:13 *I have sinned.* David hid no longer. He proclaimed his guilt to Nathan and to God.

12:13 *The LORD has taken away your sin.* When David confessed, God forgave. God could have demanded full justice—David's life for Uriah's life. No, God allowed David to live. But God did not remove all the consequences; the son Bathsheba bore would not survive.



Three

1. David; because David orchestrated Uriah's death even though he didn't personally kill him.

2. It must be based on the truth, not emotion. Our words must be wise (Prov. 15:23; 25:11).

3. Admission of sin, a desire to turn away from the sin, a contrite heart, and an acknowledgment of God's forgiveness and acceptance.

KJV continued

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son (2 Sam. 11:26–27). While David kept his sin hidden from the eyes of others, God saw it all. **But the thing David had done displeased the LORD** (v. 27).

Led by God, Nathan confronted David of his double sin. **Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own'"** (12:7–10).

As the words pierced his heart, David made no attempt to cover up his sin this time, but confessed and repented to Nathan. **Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD"** (v. 13).

Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die" (vv. 13–14).

THREE

explore

1. Whom did God say killed Uriah? Why did God say that?
2. How can confronting someone's sin be done effectively?
3. What must true repentance include?

notes

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

As we have seen from this chilling account in David's life, temptation is something that must be resisted and dealt with according to God's Word. The Bible teaches that we must flee from temptation (1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Peter 2:22), and with every temptation God will make a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).

No matter what temptation you deal with God knows, understands, and is committed to helping you overcome if you seek his help and power to overcome.

Find someone you trust (of the same sex) in the body of Christ as an accountability partner. Ask that person to help keep you accountable.

If you have already fallen to temptation, confess your sin to God and claim the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.



Closing

EXERCISE

Encourage your class members to allow the Holy Spirit to search their hearts for any unconfessed or secret sins. Then lead them in a prayer of repentance.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "The Impact on God's Reputation" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 2*.

notes



EVALUATE

Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



ENGAGE

Opening

Have special prayer for the youth of your church, that they will seek God's direction in their decision-making. Pray for the church to be a positive influence in their lives, leading them to be lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

6 | JULY 7

BLINDED BY
WORLDLY VALUES

KEY VERSE

Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command.
—1 Kings 11:10

SCRIPTURE

- 1 Kings 4:29–34; 11:1–13;
- 2 Chronicles 1:7–12

LESSON FOCUS

God's leaders may be lured into unfaithfulness by earthly rewards.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 6
Activity: What Is a Blessing?

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

examine

King Solomon of Israel had every advantage a person could ever dream of. He had a father who had been an outstanding leader before him and a man after God's own heart. At the outset of his own reign as king, the Lord offered to give him whatever he wanted. Solomon, who felt overwhelmed by his responsibility, asked for wisdom and knowledge to effectively rule the people. God answered that prayer by making him the wisest and most knowledgeable man of his day, and in turn he also blessed him materially with wealth, riches, and honor. Unfortunately, the latter proved to be his undoing. Solomon's heart, which started so right, eventually became devoted to worldly values and was ultimately turned away from the Lord.

INTRODUCTION

"Vanity of vanities. All is vanity." That's what Solomon concluded toward the end of his life when he reflected on all the things that had consumed his heart and passion for most of his life. He was the golden boy who had it all, and who pursued life with gusto. But, in the end, he concluded that the worldly values of pleasure, wealth, fame, and accomplishments were meaningless. They can ultimately blind a person from the one thing that is enduring and eternal—"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind" (Eccl. 12:13).

notes

1 God tests leaders' hearts to see whether he can trust them with worldly blessings (2 Chron. 1:7–12).

NIV

7 That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

8 Solomon answered God, "You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place.

9 Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth.

10 Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

11 God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king,

12 therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have."

KJV

7 In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

8 And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.

9 Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?

11 And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:

12 Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

At the outset of his leadership as Israel's king, Solomon was a man who greatly feared the Lord. On one occasion, as he and all Israel gathered before the tabernacle in Gibeon, he offered up one thousand sacrifices to the Lord. On that occasion, the Lord appeared to him and told him, **Ask for whatever you want me to give you** (2 Chron. 1:7). This was no genie out of a bottle making this offer—this was the Lord God himself, whose resources included all of heaven and earth.

39



EXAMINE

ONE: With your class, list the accomplishments of Solomon that support the truth that God granted Solomon's desire (building of the temple, writing of Books of Wisdom—attributed to Solomon, etc.).

1:7 That night. The preceding six verses describe the events of the day. Solomon had gathered "all the leaders in Israel" (v. 2). Together the assembly had gone to worship at the Tent of Meeting. Solomon offered many sacrifices (v. 6), apparently as a thank offering to God for his assistance to King David and the nation, and to ask God's blessing upon Solomon's own reign.

1:7 God appeared to Solomon. Did God appear to Solomon in a subjective vision or in objective reality? We don't know, and the answer to that question does not impact the significance of the interaction and God's subsequent answer to Solomon's wise request.

1:7 Ask for whatever you want me to give you. God offered a blank check to Solomon. As noted above, God specially favored Solomon. The generosity of this offer demonstrates God's continued love on this young man.

1:8 You have shown great kindness. Solomon began his response with an acknowledgment of God's previous goodness to his father and to him. That, in place of a greedy grabbing for goodies, shows the wisdom Solomon already possessed.

1:9 let your promise to my father David be confirmed. For the promises to which Solomon referred, look back to 2 Samuel 7:8–16. In these verses, we read of God saying he would make David's name great. He would do this not only during David's lifetime, but also by establishing David's son as a great king after him. God would, in effect, adopt this son as his own son (v. 14). Not only would God be with the next generation, but the throne of David's descendants would be established forever (v. 13). If God kept these promises, Solomon and Israel could not lose.

1:9 a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Here Solomon notes that God kept his promise to his far more ancient ancestor, Abraham (Gen. 15:5).

continued

notes

1:10 *Give me wisdom and knowledge.* Solomon wisely sensed that he needed help to lead the “great people” God had given him. Solomon demonstrated his wisdom by asking for more. This seems like a foreshadowing of Jesus’ subsequent words, “Whoever has will be given more” (Matt. 13:12).

1:11 *You have not asked for . . .* God recognized all the other more selfish choices Solomon could have made. Because Solomon made a choice that would benefit not only himself but the entire nation, God rewarded him by promising to give him all the other good-ies—“wealth, possessions or honor”—as well (v. 12). Again, this seems to anticipate Jesus’ promise to his followers that those who sought God and his righteousness would have additional blessings as well.



One

EXPLORE

1. He passed, with flying colors. The thing he asked for was something that God really wanted to give him, but at the same time wanted him to ask.

2. Answers may include jealousy, suspicion, longing, or even gratitude.

3. Ask people to share honestly.



EXAMINE

TWO: Explain that this is not a lesson against wealth or the wealthy; rather, it is a lesson on God’s generosity and our responsibility to trust God to keep the right mind-set in management of his blessings.

4:29 *God gave Solomon wisdom.* Here we see God answering Solomon’s prayer for wisdom. God gave “understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.” The imagery of immense numbers sounds like the one Solomon had used (2 Chron. 1:9) as he described the size of the nation God had given him.

Solomon’s answer to this request pleased the Lord. As a young man, Solomon knew that he faced a huge responsibility. Before his father, David, died he had entrusted the rulership of the kingdom of Israel to his hands. Solomon knew he needed divine guidance; so he responded, **Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people** (v. 10). Many young men in his position might have been tempted to ask for wealth, power, or fame. But Solomon revealed by his answer that his heart was not on these worldly values. His heart was attuned to the Lord.

In response to Solomon’s request, the Lord gave him what he asked for—wisdom and knowledge. But in addition to this request, God also gave him more. He told Solomon, **I will also give you wealth, possessions and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have** (v. 12). Solomon passed the Lord’s initial test with flying colors, and in return, he became the recipient of great worldly blessing as well. God is not opposed to material prosperity, but he does expect those he blesses to use their resources wisely.

ONE

explore

1. How did Solomon respond to the Lord’s test?
2. How do you view those whom God has blessed materially?
3. If God were to say to you, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you,” how do you think you would respond to him?

2 There are no limits to God’s blessings (1 Kings 4:29–34).

NIV

29 God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

30 Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.

31 He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations.

32 He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five.

33 He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish.

34 From all nations people came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

notes

KJV

29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.

30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.

32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

34 And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

Whenever God determines to bless someone, he often does it "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20). So it was with Solomon. **God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore** (1 Kings 4:29). He became wiser than anyone else in the whole world, and his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations. **He spoke three thousand proverbs** and 1,005 **songs** (v. 32). His knowledge of the world around him was so great that **from all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom** (v. 34).

God's material blessing on Solomon's life was just as astounding as the wisdom and knowledge he gave him. First Kings 10 describes his wealth, which included an ornate palace, a fleet of ships, thousands of horses and chariots, and an annual influx of nearly twenty-five tons of gold. He was "greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth" (10:23). The whole world sought an audience with him to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart, and everyone who came brought a valuable gift. Verse 27 says he actually "made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones."

What God did for Solomon is a picture of what he would later declare to Israel through the prophet Malachi. They had been unfaithful to God in respect to giving the Lord their tithes, so Malachi declared, "'Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it'" (Mal. 3:10). The Maker of heaven and earth has no limits to the blessings he can pour out on someone.

41

4:30 *greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East.* Scholars of the East were renowned for their wisdom. One later biblical example from this group would be the "Magi from the east" who came to Bethlehem to worship Jesus. For another reference to the wise men of Egypt, see Acts 7:22.

4:31 *Ethan the Ezrahite.* According to its inscription, Ethan the Ezrahite wrote Psalm 89. First Chronicles 2:6 mentions three brothers named Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, although that verse lists Zerah as their father. Perhaps Zerah was their grandfather or some earlier ancestor. Ancient records sometimes list as a person's father an earlier ancestor. First Chronicles 6:33 also mentions a Heman who was a musician. Psalm 88 lists as its author Heman the Ezrahite. Could all these Hemans be the same person? We don't know for sure.

4:32 *three thousand proverbs.* Proverbs 1:1—22:16 and 25:1—29:27 give a portion of these proverbs. Of Solomon's "songs numbered a thousand and five," the biblical book known as Song of Songs is likely one example.

4:33 *plant life . . . animals and birds, reptiles and fish.* A few of the proverbs recorded in the book by that title demonstrate Solomon's knowledge of botany and zoology. See, for example, 6:6–8; 26:2–3; 27:8; and 28:1, 15.

4:34 *From all nations people came.* Interestingly, the only international visitor attracted by Solomon's wisdom whose name we know is a woman—the Queen of Sheba (10:1–9).

notes



Two

1. He gave him greater wisdom than anyone else in the world. He also gave him great wealth, secure borders, and peace with his neighbors.

2. Ask for volunteers to share various ways, both physical and spiritual. Write answers on a whiteboard or chalkboard.

3. Use the responses given in question 2 to answer.



THREE: Apply the principles of Titus 2:11–12 with this passage out of the life of Solomon.

11:1 *however*. Chapters 5–10 go on to speak of Solomon's splendor, particularly his faithfulness in building a temple in Jerusalem. The word *however* indicates a major pivot point in Solomon's life. The king who was favored by God, given wisdom by God, and who lived his early years in obedience to God, moved far from God. His weakness for beautiful and/or powerful women proved to be his downfall. He took as wives' princesses who came as part of international treaties.

11:2 *You must not intermarry*. God had frequently warned his people that intermarriage with wives from foreign nations would be dangerous (for example, Ex. 34:16). These women would bring their idols with them. Their husbands would not be able to resist the temptation to idolatry.

TWO

explore

1. Describe some of the ways in which God blessed Solomon.
2. How has God blessed you in your life?
3. How might you bless others with what God has given you?

3 Worldliness has a seductive appeal to the heart (1 Kings 11:1–6, 9–13).

NIV

- 1 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites.
- 2 They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.
- 3 He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray.
- 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.
- 5 He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites.
- 6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.
- 9 The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.
- 10 Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command.
- 11 So the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.
- 12 Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son.
- 13 Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

KJV

- 1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites:
- 2 Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

notes

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.

9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.

11 Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

12 Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.

13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

God's blessing also has some potential dangers. Over time, wealth may seduce a person's heart and keep it from being content with the blessing God gives. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 5:10, "Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income." Solomon was not content with a few ships or horses or chariots or gold shields, or anything else that came into his life. He continually craved more.

Nowhere was that more evident than in his love life. He was married to the Egyptian pharaoh's daughter, but he also "loved" many other women as well, from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and the Hittites. In all, **he had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines** (1 Kings 11:3). Each of these wives brought him a strategic alliance with some neighboring king, and together they were a worldly testimony to his power and greatness. But they also brought into his palace their foreign gods. At first, he probably just tolerated them simply because he loved his wives. But then, **as Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God** (v. 4). That's the way worldliness works. It slowly and subtly steals away one's affection for God.

The apostle John wrote, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes,

11:3 seven hundred wives of royal birth. An Egyptian princess offers a specific example of this pattern of politically based marriages (9:16). He who in the Proverbs warned against dangerous women did not heed his own wise warning.

11:4 his wives turned his heart after other gods. Solomon, in his God-given wisdom, must have foreseen this danger. How tragic to see this wise godly man turn his heart away from "the LORD his God."

11:5 Ashtoreth . . . Molech. The writer listed two specific gods to which Solomon was loyal. Ashtoreth was a female companion of the pagan fertility god Baal. See 1 Kings 14:24 and 2 Kings 23:7 for some of the dreadful practices associated with worship of Ashtoreth (also known as Asherah). Devotion to Molech often went as far as child sacrifice (2 Kings 23:10).

11:9 his heart had turned away from the LORD. Note similar words in verse 10: "Solomon did not keep the LORD's command." The promise Solomon had asked God to keep (1 Chron. 1:9) mentioned how God would respond when David's son did "wrong" (2 Sam. 7:14). Punishment would follow.

11:11 I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you. God kept his promise, even the part of the promise Solomon might have wished God had forgotten.



Three

1. He was not content with what he had, but felt like he had to pursue greater wealth. He was not content with the love of one woman, but had to have more wives than any other man of power. Then he compromised in little things, like allowing them to bring their pagan deities into his palace. Eventually he began to embrace their deities as well.

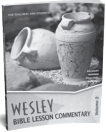
2. Homes, cars, boats and RVs (always needing one bigger and better). They each have a price tag in terms of what they demand of a person's time and resources. Also music, movies, TV, and other forms of entertainment. We allow little compromises into our homes and lives until we often leave God out altogether.

3. By refusing to allow small compromises; by focusing on God's Word; by spending time with other believers.



Closing

Lead your class in a meditation/prayer time in which they seek the help of the Holy Spirit in making wise use of God's blessings in their lives.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Wisdom's Perspective" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary*

Volume 2.

and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:15–16). In all of Solomon's wisdom, he unfortunately became blinded to that truth, and it became his downfall.

Throughout his life Solomon pursued pleasure, accomplishments, fame, wealth, and wisdom and yet found all of them to be ultimately unsatisfying. At the same time, his life of worldly indulgence carried with it a high price tag. **The Lord became angry with Solomon** (1 Kings 11:9). God vowed to tear the kingdom away from him and give it to one of his subordinates. That promise was fulfilled when Solomon's son Rehoboam, who succeeded him, alienated every tribe of Israel except for Judah so that the nation became divided into two separate kingdoms.

THREE

explore

1. How did Solomon become blinded to godly values?
2. What are some examples of worldly values that blind people today?
3. How can we maintain godly values?

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

Worldliness has a strong influence over people in the church today, just as it did over Solomon. Like Solomon, we often start out right, but over time become blinded by the allure of things that subtly pull us away from our devotion to the Lord. Jesus prayed that his disciples would be "in the world, but not of it."

What are some practical things we can do today that will help us to be "salt and light" in a fallen world, and yet not fall prey to the allure of the world's value system?

notes

KEY VERSE

You have aroused my anger and turned your back on me. Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam.

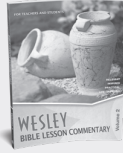
—1 Kings 14:9–10

SCRIPTURE

- 1 Kings 11:26–38; 12:26–30; 14:5–10

LESSON FOCUS

The compromise of principles will result in God's judgment upon a leader.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 7
Activity: Stemming the Slow Leak

JULY 14

7

THE DANGER OF COMPROMISE



EVALUATE

Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



ENGAGE

Opening

Have a class member lead in a time of prayer for your pastor and other church leaders to be protected from the sin of idolatry as they seek to set the direction of your church.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

Jeroboam had all the potential for the making of a fine leader for the northern kingdom (ten of the twelve tribes of Israel). Wanting to make his kingdom secure, he resorted to human means to seal his fate. His compromise of godly principles not only robbed him of the privilege of leadership in God's kingdom but ultimately affected the eternal outcome of those he led into idolatry.

INTRODUCTION

examine

Have you ever tried to secure your future without fully relying on God (F.R.O.G.)? This acronym serves to remind us that God needs to be out front! Sometimes, though, we may play leapfrog with God on matters we think are too important to let God handle. Our lesson today serves to remind us that anything that comes between us and God's leadership in our lives constitutes idolatry. Do we value position and prominence over God's providence? Some have commented that "failure is seldom a blow-out; more often it is a slow leak." Today, we will study the downward spiral of a leader who refused to let God lead.

45

notes



ONE: Consider the quotation “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Agree or disagree? If you agree, why is the statement true?

11:26 *Jeroboam . . . rebelled.* This introductory verse introduces Jeroboam and alludes to this man’s attempt to fight Solomon, an event not fully described in biblical history. We can only guess what happened. As we shall soon see, Ahijah, God’s prophet, told Jeroboam that he would eventually become king of the northern tribes, after the death of Solomon. It appears that Jeroboam impatiently tried to hurry the process. Perhaps he tried to wrest part of Solomon’s power from him while the king was still living. This would explain why Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam (11:40). The names of Jeroboam’s parents are given in 11:26; we know nothing more about either of them.

11:26 *Solomon’s officials.* The Hebrew word behind *officials* is a general term; the NIV translators interpreted the same word as *subordinates* in 11:11.

11:27 *Solomon had built the terraces.* Solomon was evidently terracing hilly land outside the small city of David, so that he could expand the city’s boundaries; 9:15 also alludes to this project of terracing and wall building.

11:28 *Jeroboam was a man of standing.* Previously both Saul and David had been described by the same Hebrew phrase. First Samuel 9:2 say Saul was “as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel,” while 16:18 pictures David as “a fine-looking man.” “Man of standing” could either refer to Jeroboam’s position within Solomon’s hierarchy, or it could offer a description of Jeroboam’s physical appearance.

11:28 *the whole labor force of the tribes of Joseph.* First Kings 9:20–23 carefully distinguishes between Solomon’s use of non-Israelite slave labor and Israelite skilled workers and soldiers. However, 5:13–14 mentions “conscripted laborers from all Israel.” These Israelite workers may not have had freedom to return home when they wished, but likely would have been paid for their work, whereas the non-Israelite slaves received nothing more than room and board. Perhaps Solomon required some of those conscripted Israelite workers to remain in Jerusalem after the temple

1 A true leader recognizes that God’s calling is not to build one’s own kingdom or portfolio (1 Kings 11:26–32, 37–38).

NIV

26 Also, Jeroboam son of Nebat rebelled against the king. He was one of Solomon’s officials, an Ephraimite from Zeredah, and his mother was a widow named Zeruah.
27 Here is the account of how he rebelled against the king: Solomon had built the terraces and had filled in the gap in the wall of the city of David his father.
28 Now Jeroboam was a man of standing, and when Solomon saw how well the young man did his work, he put him in charge of the whole labor force of the tribes of Joseph.
29 About that time Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him on the way, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone out in the country,
30 and Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces.
31 Then he said to Jeroboam, “Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon’s hand and give you ten tribes.
32 But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe.
37 However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel.
38 If you do whatever I command you and walk in obedience to me and do what is right in my eyes by obeying my decrees and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you.

KJV

26 And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon’s servant, whose mother’s name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up his hand against the king.
27 And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father.
28 And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph.
29 And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field:
30 And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces:
31 And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:

notes

32 (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)

37 And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel.

38 And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.

Solomon considered Jeroboam a man of standing (1 Kings 11:28). He was called to lead his own tribe, the Ephraimites, along with laborers from the tribe of Manasseh in forced labor. The prophet Ahijah, recognizing Jeroboam's ambition, tried and failed to organize a revolt against Solomon. Jeroboam fled to Egypt until after Solomon died (v. 40). It may seem like God approved and rewarded Jeroboam's ambition, but sometimes God used his enemies to teach Israel lessons in the past. Leadership is never without its flaws, but we need to cooperate with God and allow him to form character in our lives.

Idolatry had divided the kingdom (v. 33), and God had promised Jeroboam he would **rule over all** his **heart** desired (v. 37). God also promised him there would be no end to his kingdom: **I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David** (v. 38). Notice that God was the builder of Jeroboam's kingdom. A true leader recognizes that God's calling is not to build one's own kingdom or portfolio.

Evidently, Jeroboam was a type A personality, and in his ambition, he decided to help God along in establishing his kingdom by gathering those who were discontented with Rehoboam (12:20).

God showed David continual respect by allowing Rehoboam to keep ruling over the area dominated by Judah and the tribes of Benjamin and Simeon. God dealt with the divided kingdom in his terms and timing.

ONE

- explore
1. What was Jeroboam's first step away from the Lord?
 2. What failed leadership mistakes can you learn from?
 3. Part of the Lord's Prayer is "your kingdom come, your will be done" (Matt. 6:10). What safeguards have you put in place to make sure you're building God's kingdom, not your own?

Jeroboam, like Saul, would no longer appear small in his own eyes (1 Sam. 15:17), but instead take his eyes off the Lord.

47

was finished so they could help with other construction projects. The "tribes of Joseph" would denote these as people from the northern tribes. Jeroboam may himself have been one of those northern conscripted laborers who worked his way up through the ranks.

11:29 *Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh.* This prophet appears in this incident and in 14:1–18, but nowhere else in Scripture.

11:30 *tore it into twelve pieces.* Note the similarities between this account and the earlier torn garment that symbolized God tearing the kingdom away from Saul (1 Sam. 15:27–28). In that earlier case, God gave the entire kingdom to the new king, David. In this incident, Jeroboam received only ten of the twelve torn pieces of garment, representing the fact that he would receive only ten tribes as his kingdom (v. 31).

11:31–32 *ten tribes . . . one tribe.* The wording here may lead you to think that one tribe disappeared. No, the southern kingdom joined together the two tribes of Judah and Simeon as one unit. (The name of Joseph's son had become identified with the southern kingdom.) This division was not an arbitrary one. The ten tribes and the two tribes had first been geographically divided by land not conquered under Joshua, a strip of land that had included what became the city of Jerusalem. The southern tribes had been first to recognize David as king. For a brief time, the northern tribes had followed a son of Saul (2 Sam. 2).

11:38 *If you do.* God, through Abijah, promised to raise up Jeroboam as king over the ten northern tribes (vv. 31, 35, 37). God offered even more. If Jeroboam would follow God as David had, God would "build [Jeroboam] a dynasty as enduring as the one [he] built for David." Jeroboam's descendants would have ruled the ten tribes forever, just as David's descendants would reign over Jerusalem. If Jeroboam had obeyed God, how might the eternal rule of his descendants have changed history, particularly relating to the coming of the Messiah? We will never know, for Jeroboam turned against the God who gave him so much.

continued

**One**

1. He rebelled against God's anointed king.

2. This question serves to remind the class about the importance of learning from history.

3. The question is designed to help the class understand what they are praying if they incorporate the Lord's Prayer in their private or public worship.



TWO: Have a class member give a brief report on the historical significance of Bethel. Ask the question: Why would King Jeroboam set up one of the golden calves there?

Interlude: Time passed. Solomon died. Rehoboam, his son, became king. Because he committed himself to making life even harder for the people—this likely related to the conscripted labor still forced to live and work in Jerusalem away from home—the northern tribes broke away from the southern tribes and the rule of Rehoboam. The northern tribes acclaimed Jeroboam as their king (12:1–20).

12:26 *Jeroboam thought to himself.* Jerusalem remained the divinely appointed center of worship. But Jeroboam sensed that Jerusalem had become the capital of a foreign nation. He did not want his people to give spiritual loyalty to a foreign city. If they did, they might soon return their political allegiance to Jerusalem and the house of David (12:27).

12:28 *The king made two golden calves.* The God who had given the ten tribes to Jeroboam had promised that his descendants could rule that region forever, if only Jeroboam would remain faithful to God. Jeroboam, like Saul before him, did not trust God and his promises (1 Sam. 13:1–14). Jeroboam took matters into his own hands in a way that made God shudder. Jeroboam broke the second of the Ten Commandments. Like Aaron centuries before (Ex. 32:4), Jeroboam fashioned calves of gold and announced to the people that these calves represented their eternal, unseen God.

12:29 *Bethel . . . Dan.* These two sites were located at the geographical extremes of Jeroboam's kingdom, Bethel to the south (only twelve miles from Jerusalem) and Dan to the north.

2 Fear and jealousy can cause a leader to not trust the Lord (1 Kings 12:26–30).

NIV

26 Jeroboam thought to himself, "The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David.

27 If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam."

28 After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

29 One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other.

KJV

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.

This lesson's key verse hints at the beginning of Jeroboam's demise: "you have . . . turned your back on me" (1 Kings 14:9). Jeroboam began to fortify his kingdom (12:25–28), failing to seek the mind of God.

Jeroboam thought to himself, "The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David" (12:26). Verse 26 shows a lack of confidence in God's plan and promises. And from that first thought, Jeroboam moved to action. **After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves (v. 28).** He sought advice but not from the Lord. This ungodly advice moved him to set up two golden calves for people to worship at the northern and southern borders of his kingdom. Jeroboam didn't want his people to get anywhere close to Rehoboam's southern kingdom or even to go to Jerusalem to worship. Fear and jealousy caused Jeroboam to not trust the Lord to work in his difficulties.

48

notes

Jeroboam was fully aware that God had chosen him to lead because Solomon had led the nation of Israel into idolatry (11:33). But instead of learning from Solomon's mistakes, Jeroboam repeated them!

Jeroboam's words, **Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt** (12:28), are reminiscent of those of the Israelites at Mount Sinai (Ex. 32:4). It is interesting to note that the northern tribes not only followed Jeroboam's advice of worshiping at his manmade shrines, but **the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other** (1 Kings 12:30).

Jeroboam was responsible for leading the northern kingdom into idolatry. He also completely altered the form of worship, corrupting the priesthood by allowing anybody to be a priest and adopting feast times that were contrary to the Levitical law. The way we worship really determines our effectiveness as a leader.

TWO

explore

1. How did fear shape Jeroboam's actions?
2. What "sacred cows" (activities, attitudes, behaviors, possessions) keep you from experiencing God's plan and purpose?
3. Why is a leader's sin more serious than a non-leader's?

His total disregard for God's holiness robbed Jeroboam of the promises of God.

3 The potential for greatness is lost when a leader ignores God (1 Kings 14:5–10).

NIV

5 But the LORD had told Ahijah, "Jeroboam's wife is coming to ask you about her son, for he is ill, and you are to give her such and such an answer. When she arrives, she will pretend to be someone else."

6 So when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps at the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why this pretense? I have been sent to you with bad news.

7 Go, tell Jeroboam that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I raised you up from among the people and appointed you ruler over my people Israel.

8 I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, but you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes.

9 You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal; you have aroused my anger and turned your back on me.

continued

49

12:30 *this thing became a sin.* It certainly was sin to worship the golden calves as the image of God, but even worshipping God away from Jerusalem violated God's best plan. Jeroboam followed the example of the Canaanites in setting up sites of worship at "high places" (v. 31). Worship at such sites became a major point of conflict between God and his people.



Two

1. Fear led him to make the golden calves and abandon worship of God in favor of idolatry.

2. Calls for a private or public response. The question is designed to make the class think of church traditions or personal preferences that might hinder us individually or corporately from experiencing God.

3. A leader has the ability and responsibility to influence others.



EXAMINE

THREE: With the help of your class, make a list of leaders who could have had a great and positive legacy, "if only . . ." How many of them fit the category because they left God out?

14:5 *Jeroboam's wife is coming.* God had promised eternal faithfulness to the house of Jeroboam, if Israel's king remained faithful to God. This passage demonstrates how God's favor had passed from Jeroboam because of his sin (14:8–9). When Jeroboam's son Abijah (not to be confused with the prophet Ahijah) "became ill" (v. 1), Jeroboam sent his wife, disguised, to Ahijah to seek word of the boy's fate. God used Ahijah (the same prophet who earlier had predicted Jeroboam's rise to power and the potential of God's favor; 11:29–39) to give the royal couple the news that God's favor had passed from Jeroboam (14:10). Jeroboam's son would die (v. 12).

notes

NIV *continued*

10 Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung, until it is all gone.’”

KJV

5 And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman.

6 And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.

7 Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel,

8 And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes;

9 But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back:

10 Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.

Jeroboam lost his transparency before God and sent his wife to inquire of the prophet Ahijah the reason for his son Abijah’s illness (1 Kings 14:1–2). Jeroboam’s wife disguised herself, attempting to deceive the prophet. Of course, God knew what she was doing and told the prophet before the queen arrived. No doubt she was shocked when Ahijah greeted her thus: **Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why this pretense? I have been sent to you with bad news** (v. 6).

Jeroboam’s wife got far more information than she bargained for—not the least of which was the word that when she set foot back in her hometown her son would die (v. 12).

First, however, God had a word for Jeroboam: **You have done more evil than all who lived before you.** Not only did Jeroboam disappoint the Lord, he also **aroused his anger** by making **other gods, idols made of metal** (v. 9). Most of Jeroboam’s twenty-two years as king were disappointing. No one grieved his death!

Think of the potential for greatness that was lost because Jeroboam insisted on leading his way. Jeroboam's life is a sad commentary on the fate that awaits anyone who substitutes their own plans for God's. History records that Jeroboam's failure adversely impacted his immediate family but also affected the destiny of nations. The tribes of Ephraim and Dan would be excluded from the final twelve tribes of Israel listed in the book of Revelation (7:5–8).

What may appear as God turning his back on Jeroboam is argued against in verse 9: **you have . . . turned your back on me.** God had never left Jeroboam. Rather, Jeroboam turned his back on God and became a presumptuous, arrogant leader who got ahead of God and removed the Lord from the driver's seat of his life. Jeroboam should have been annoyed enough by his conscience to pull over and yield the driver's seat back to God!

THREE

1. How is David contrasted with Jeroboam in 1 Kings 14:8–9?
2. What can you do to maintain transparency with God?
3. What evidence is there that God is the leader of your life?

While the world encourages us to be upwardly mobile, the Bible reminds us that the pathway to greatness begins with true humility. Micah 6:8 tells us, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

LIFE APPLICATION

Divided loyalties lead to a divided kingdom. Jesus reminded us, "Every kingdom divided against itself . . . will not stand" (Matt. 12:25). We must learn from history, or future generations will be destined for failure by repeating the sins of past generations. Only we can choose the legacy we will leave, and that will be determined by our willingness to follow God's instructions. We, like Jeroboam, are people of promise and have the potential as leaders to impact our world for Christ. Let's not disappoint our King!

- How are you using your God-given leadership potential?
- What are some idols we substitute for a relationship with God?
- What safeguards can we put in place to keep us from repeating the sins of past generations?

51



Three

1. David kept God's commands, followed the Lord with all his heart, and did what was right. Jeroboam was the evilest man Israel had known to that time. He encouraged idolatry and disregarded God's commands and plans.

2. Calls for a public response. The question is designed to help the class realize that we need to be genuine as we approach God in both private and corporate worship.

3. The question is directed to those who may know Jesus as Savior but have yet to surrender the direction of their lives over to Jesus as Lord.



Closing

Refer to Revelation 3:20. Remind your class that although we use it in witnessing to the lost, it is really written to the church. Close with a prayer time that affirms that your hearts and your church are maintaining an "open door" spirit toward the Lord to do his work among you.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Exalting the God of Gods" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 2*.

notes

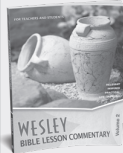


Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



Opening
Elijah made an impact for God in his day. Pray for leaders at each level of government. Pray for Christians serving in government positions. Pray they will discern God's will in making righteous decisions and judgments.

LEADERSHIP
PEAKS AND VALLEYS



CHECK IT OUT
Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 8
Activity: The Ebb and Flow of Ministry

KEY VERSE
When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!"
—1 Kings 18:39

SCRIPTURE
• 1 Kings 17:1; 18:17–21, 31–39; 19:2–8, 13–18

LESSON FOCUS
God's leader must be prepared to deal with both success and disappointment.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage | The Old Testament prophet Elijah experienced both the highs and lows of serving the Lord. He orchestrated one of the greatest contests of the Lord's superiority over the Canaanite god Baal on Mount Carmel. He also exhibited great courage and great faith in confronting King Ahab for his unfaithfulness to God's commands. But following these great victories, he also experienced burnout and depression to the point of wanting to die. Yet even in his lowest moment, God was able to renew Elijah's spirit and vision and equip him once again to continue serving him.

INTRODUCTION

examine | Elijah was one of the most colorful and enigmatic figures of the Old Testament. Scripture tells us nothing about his family and very little about where he came from. He appears to have dressed very plainly and lived much of the time in the wilderness. He shows up in the biblical text very suddenly and dramatically when he appears before King Ahab of Israel announcing a drought. He disappears just as suddenly when he is taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. His life and ministry were marked by numerous miracles: causing the rain to stop for three years, healing a woman's son and miraculously providing food, winning the contest on Mount Carmel, calling down fire upon his would-be captors, and parting the waters of the Jordan River.

notes

Elijah made a great impact in his day, but he also made an impact on future prophetic expectations. Malachi predicted his reappearance again “before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes” (Mal. 4:5). John the Baptist, who resembled Elijah in many ways, was referred to by Jesus as “Elijah who was to come” (Matt. 11:14). Elijah appeared, as a participant in the scene of the Transfiguration, when both he and Moses discussed with the Lord the “departure” Jesus was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Bystanders at Jesus’ crucifixion heard him call out to presumably Elijah (Matt. 27:46–49). Finally, the “two witnesses” of Revelation 11, by the powers ascribed to them (that is, power to shut the sky that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying), are a reference to both Moses and Elijah.

Despite this miraculous and extraordinary life, the apostle James made an interesting comment about Elijah at the close of his letter. He said, “Elijah was a human being, even as we are” (James 5:17). His humanity will be very apparent as we examine today’s texts, for in them, we will discover that not only was he a person who experienced great spiritual victories, but a person who experienced deep emotional lows as well. He was a human being just like us. And God uses ordinary men and women to accomplish extraordinary things.

1 The prayer of a righteous leader is powerful and effective (1 Kings 17:1).

NIV

1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”

KJV

1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

King Ahab of Israel was an evil ruler who perpetuated the sins of his fathers and took them to a new level. He married a woman named Jezebel, daughter of the king of the Sidonians. She brought with her the worship of Baal, and Ahab had a temple built for this false god in Samaria and set up an altar there. He also erected an Asherah pole to honor Baal’s female counterpart.



EXAMINE

ONE: Introduce this section by citing Scripture passages that address the issues that determine whether our prayers will get answered (for example, forgiving as we have been forgiven; Luke 11).

17:1 *Elijah the Tishbite.* Elijah’s name means “the LORD is my God.” Even non-Hebrew scholars can see two of God’s names in Elijah’s name: *El* (as in El-Shaddai—God our Provider, or as in Israel—the one who wrestled with God) and *Jah* (as in Yahweh—I am who I am). Elijah’s home was in Gilead, a region on the east side of the Jordan across the river in the northeast corner of Israel’s territory.

17:1 *As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve.* Elijah here was not merely pointing out his allegiance to God. He was also making a striking contrast between himself and King Ahab, who had been anointed as God’s representative, God’s king over Israel. Elijah remained faithful to his God. Ahab, early in his reign, had already shown himself as anything but God’s man. He “did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him” (16:30). Ahab actively promoted worship of Baal, and even set up an altar to Baal in a temple that had been built for worship of the true God (v. 32).

17:1 *neither dew nor rain.* Through Elijah, God was making two statements: (1) I am displeased with your idolatry; and (2) I am more powerful than Baal, the pagan Canaanite god of fertility and rain. I, the true God, not Baal, control the weather. (The next incidents record God’s care for Elijah and his faithfulness in keeping his promises—Israel saw no rain. As this drought reached its conclusion, God sent Elijah to the king.)



One

1. Ahab had married a woman who was a devoted worshiper of Baal, and he encouraged the people to worship Baal with her.

2. Ahab could easily have had Elijah killed.
3. Courage is developed through use.



TWO: With your class, make a list of the “gods” we face today in our efforts to influence society for Jesus Christ. How do we convince people that Jesus Christ is the true and living God? Lead them to a dependence on the leadership of the Holy Spirit in their efforts.

18:17 *you troubler of Israel.* Ahab fell into a common human trap here. By his own rejection of God, he had brought disaster upon Israel. But rather than accepting responsibility for his own actions, he projected blame onto another person—the one who had confronted the king and predicted the drought.

18:18 *I have not made trouble.* Elijah was not fooled by Ahab’s attack. Elijah refused to accept the blame for Israel’s trauma. He placed responsibility back where it belonged—in the hands of the king.

18:19 *Now summon.* Elijah had faith enough to take this war beyond words. He challenged Ahab to put their two Gods to a test.

18:19 *Mount Carmel.* A hill near the Mediterranean. If any part of Israel had received rain (and thus seemed to be a place controlled by Baal, not God), it would have been this land near the sea. Elijah had faith enough even to stage this battle in land the Israelites might have thought fell under Baal’s influence.

Baal was an immoral fertility god who had been worshiped by the Canaanites before the Israelites had settled in the land. He was associated with localities (Baal-Berith, Baal-Gad, etc.) and regarded as the great cosmic nature god. The people believed he was responsible for the weather and that they must make sacrifices to him so he would send the rains and bless their crops.

Into this scene entered Elijah. He was a servant of the Lord **from Tishbe in Gilead**. He announced to King Ahab, **there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word** (1 Kings 17:1). That was a bold claim! I am not aware of any meteorologist who would venture a weather forecast much more than a few weeks, let alone a few years. It certainly flew in the face of the god Baal, the one who was supposed to control the weather in the area.

The apostle James used this incident to illustrate the truth that “the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). Elijah’s faith did not move a mountain, but it did stop the heavens from sending rain on the land for three and a half years.

ONE

explore

1. Why was the Lord angry with King Ahab?
2. What kind of courage did it take for Elijah to make this declaration to him?
3. If, as James wrote, “Elijah was a human being, even as we are,” how might we develop the courage he showed?

2 There can only be one true God (1 Kings 18:17–21, 31–39).

NIV

17 When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”

18 “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals.

19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.

21 Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.

31 Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.”

notes

32 With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed.

33 He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood."

34 "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time.

35 The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command."

37 Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!"

KJV

17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

19 Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

continued

55

18:19 *Jezebel.* With a name for all time associated with evil, Jezebel had been a Canaanite princess when Ahab married her (16:31). She brought her Baal worship with her and helped sway her husband in the direction of evil. It was not enough for her to serve idols; she also viciously attacked the prophets of the Lord, putting many to death (18:4).

18:21 *If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.* In an attempt to play it safe, many people had likely been worshipping both Gods: The king wants us to worship Baal, so we will follow him; our ancestral God is Yahweh, and we dare not ignore him. Elijah said the people could not legitimately serve two masters; they needed to choose one or the other.

18:21 *But the people said nothing.* The people continued to play it safe. They would wait until the end of the contest before they made any commitments.

18:31 *Elijah took twelve stones.* Elijah had given "first serve" to Ahab and the followers of Baal. They had failed in their attempt to convince Baal to send fire on a sacrifice (18:25–29). After they gave up, Elijah prepared his altar and sacrifice. Interestingly, he took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of the united kingdom, not merely ten stones for the tribes of Israel, the northern kingdom.

18:32 *he built an altar in the name of the LORD.* From all appearances, Elijah built his altar alone. But it had been the servants of Baal who worked alone. Elijah had an unseen companion in whose name he built this twelve-stone altar.

18:33 *Pour it [water] on the offering and on the wood.* Picture a baseball coach with enough faith in his team to give the opposing team three extra turns at bat. Elijah knew his God could set the entire Mediterranean Sea on fire if he chose to do so.

continued

18:36 *Elijah stepped forward and prayed.* This was no silent prayer. Elijah undoubtedly was risking his life with this act and these words, but he knew his God would come through. Note the difference between Elijah's simple, straightforward prayer in contrast to all the antics of the prophets of Baal (18:26–29).

18:37 *So these people will know that you, O LORD, are God.* Elijah was no plastic saint. He felt some concern for himself. He demonstrated that in his plea—"let it be known today that . . . I am your servant" (18:36)—but certainly his concern reached beyond himself to God and God's people.

18:38 *the fire of the LORD fell.* God answered quickly and powerfully. The people attributed the power of rain and, thus, thunderstorms, to Baal. Baal could send no lightning. God demonstrated the fact that he and only he ruled.

18:39 *The LORD—he is God!* Elijah's greater prayer was answered. The fire was wonderful, but it was merely a means of showing everyone whose God was real.

KJV *continued*

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

After three and a half years in seclusion, where the Lord provided for Elijah's needs by sending ravens to feed him and then directing him to a widow in the town of Zarephath, Elijah went once again to King Ahab. This time, however, there was a death sentence hanging over his head. When they met, Ahab called Elijah **you troubler of Israel** (1 Kings 18:17) because of the effects of the drought Elijah had predicted. Elijah, however, pointed his finger at Ahab and accused him of being Israel's troubler because of abandoning the Lord's commands and encouraging the people to worship the Baals.

Elijah presented Ahab with a challenge. He told him to summon the people from all over Israel to meet him on Mount Carmel. Ahab was also instructed to bring along with him the **four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table** (v. 19). When they had assembled there, Elijah went before the people and asked them this question: **How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him** (v. 21). There can be only one true God. So he set forth the challenge—one that should have been no contest for a deity who is supposed to control the weather and nature. Both Elijah and the prophets of Baal were to prepare a bull for sacrifice and then call on their god to answer by fire. The prophets of Baal agreed and proceeded to prepare their sacrifice. But after calling on Baal from morning to noon, they received no response. Even after they shouted louder and cut themselves with swords and spears, Baal never answered them.

Elijah then prepared an altar to the Lord, placed the bull on the altar, and dug a trench around it. Then he instructed the people to pour water on the sacrifice and the wood three times. After they did this, he prayed, and **then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up**

56

notes

the water in the trench (v. 38). It was no contest! Baal was no match for Jehovah, and the people recognized it as **they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!"** (v. 39). When all was finally said and done, Elijah commanded the people to seize the prophets of Baal and kill them. Then he turned to King Ahab and gave him the word that rain was finally coming. For Elijah, this must have been the crowning moment of his ministry!

TWO

explore

1. What kind of odds did Elijah face when challenging the prophets of Baal?
2. What kind of overwhelming odds have you had to face in your spiritual walk or ministry?
3. Describe the high point in your spiritual life.

The Lord gave Elijah a great spiritual victory that day on Mount Carmel. But as happens so often after a great struggle and victory, Elijah also faced overwhelming depression in the days that followed.

3 God is eager to renew the soul of a faithful leader (1 Kings 19:2–8, 13–16, 18).

NIV

- 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."
- 3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,
- 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."
- 5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."
- 6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.
- 7 The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."
- 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.
- 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

continued



EXPLORE

Two

1. Elijah was all alone as he faced four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah. In addition, the king and his very powerful queen opposed him.
2. Calls for a personal response.
3. Calls for a personal response.



EXAMINE

THREE: Divide the class into three groups. Ask them to consider the following questions:

Group 1: Why does burnout happen in those serving in the church today? Group 2: How can the church help guard against burnout? Group 3: How can the church come to the aid of those experiencing burnout?

19:2 Jezebel sent a messenger. If she had been a wiser woman, Jezebel would have admitted defeat. She would have sensed that she was dealing with a power far greater than herself. But she refused to give in, threatening Elijah, whose God had won an overwhelming victory. With her words, she made an oath that she would continue to fight.

19:3 Elijah was afraid. God was invincible; his servant Elijah was not. He took off for Beersheba, a town outside the bounds of the northern kingdom. In fact, Beersheba was the southernmost town in the southern kingdom. Elijah ran as far as he could, while remaining in the lands of God's people.

19:4 broom bush. A small shrub under which Elijah could hide.

19:4 Take my life. Elijah had just participated in a stressful battle. He had won, but the conflict appears to have drained his physical and emotional energy.

19:8 *Strengthened by that food.* God again stepped in to encourage his man. Twice he sent an angel with food and a warm touch. With renewed energy, Elijah continued farther away to another safe place where he could interact with God—Horeb, another name for Mount Sinai, where God had met Moses.

19:13 *What are you doing here, Elijah?* God had already asked Elijah that question (19:9). God wanted to encourage Elijah to trust him, for Elijah to believe that he was safe, no matter what Jezebel threatened, because Elijah had God with him. God had quietly spoken to Elijah in “a gentle whisper” (v. 12). When Elijah did not yet seem ready to move, God began the conversation again.

19:14 *I have been very zealous.* Despite God’s encouragement, Elijah responded to God’s question in words identical to his previous answer (v. 10). God then spoke more directly, sending Elijah back to Israel, to anoint a new king in Syria, a new king in Israel (to replace Ahab), and Elijah’s own successor (vv. 15–16). God did not give up before the threats of Ahab and Jezebel. He looked to the future, knowing he would still be King long after Ahab was not.

19:18 *Yet I reserve seven thousand.* God gave Elijah one last word of encouragement: Not only do I go with you, but even humanly speaking, you are not alone. Seven thousand Israelites join you in remaining faithful to me.

NIV *continued*

14 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

15 The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram.

16 Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.

18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

KJV

2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.

4 But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

6 And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?

14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:

16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

18 Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

It didn't take long before Queen Jezebel heard what happened and vowed to kill Elijah. Because of this, he **was afraid and ran for his life** (1 Kings 19:3). After journeying into the desert, he finally sat down under a tree and **prayed that he might die** (v. 4). He was totally overwhelmed and "burned out" after his ordeal on Mount Carmel. The emotional fatigue and strain of an encounter like he had tends to sap every bit of spiritual strength a person has within. It clouds a person's outlook on life, particularly their faith.

There in the solitude of the desert, the Lord sent an angel to minister to Elijah. The angel touched him and fed him, and this gave him just enough strength to travel forty days farther, where he sought the Lord at Horeb, the mountain of God. There, after sending a violent wind, earthquake, and fire, the Lord appeared to him in a gentle whisper and strengthened his soul. He informed him that he was not alone, for the Lord had also reserved **seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal** (v. 18).

The Lord was not finished with Elijah. He gave him a new ministry—to anoint several new kings as well as a successor to himself. Burnout does not have to be the end of a person's ministry. Even though the person might feel like quitting, God always has another chapter that he is waiting to unfold, and he is eager to refresh the soul and point the servant of God in a new direction to be even more fruitful.

THREE

explore

1. Why did Elijah pray that he might die?
2. What did the Lord do for him in the desert?
3. Describe a time when the Lord refreshed and renewed you for continued service.

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

James said that Elijah was a human being, just like you and me. Nowhere is that more evident than in the account of his experience in the desert. We might have difficulty identifying with him on Mount Carmel, but there in the desert, in his humanness, we see ourselves. Have you been able to find the renewed vision and passion that Elijah discovered as he met with the Lord? If not, ask God to restore and strengthen you to serve him.



Three

1. He was emotionally and spiritually drained to the point where he didn't feel like he could go on any longer. He also felt overwhelmed and alone.

2. The Lord met him and renewed his vision and passion.

3. Invite one or two members to share their experiences.



Closing

Suggest that individuals in the groups share with each other any sensed need for spiritual renewal in their area of ministry involvement. Perhaps they could covenant to pray for each other throughout the next week.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "A Glimpse of God's Glory" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary*

Volume 2.



Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



Opening
Have someone pray for those with teaching responsibilities in your church, including pastors, Sunday school teachers, discipleship leaders, children's and youth workers. Pray that they may "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) and be good examples of the truth they teach.

THE POWER OF INFLUENCE



CHECK IT OUT
Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 9
Activity: To Whom Do You Listen?

KEY VERSE
Jehu the seer, the son of Hanani, went out to meet him and said to the king, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is on you."
—2 Chronicles 19:2

- SCRIPTURE**
- 1 Kings 22:2–4, 41–43;
 - 2 Kings 3:6–19;
 - 2 Chronicles 19:1–3

LESSON FOCUS
God's leaders must carefully select those who are allowed to influence them.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage | Influence, either good or bad, is a very subtle thing. It can produce an effect with no apparent exertion. A godly father and Elisha the prophet influenced Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. He was also influenced in an evil way by the kings of Israel and the alliances he made with them. This lesson teaches us to be aware of and to evaluate the people and circumstances around us. Their influence, as well as our own influence, is either positive or negative but never neutral.

INTRODUCTION

examine | People leave all kinds of tracks behind them as they journey through life. Some are visible, such as family or possessions. Others are invisible, such as encouragement and attitudes. Everywhere we go, we leave a little bit of ourselves.
Have you ever thought of the spiritual legacy you will leave behind when you die? Will those who come behind you find you faithful to Jesus Christ? Let us consider very carefully the bequest King Jehoshaphat left to his family and the land of Judah. His influence and the decisions he made forever affected his posterity.

notes

1 Godly fathers have godly influence (1 Kings 22:41–43).

NIV

41 Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

42 Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi.

43 In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.

KJV

41 And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

42 Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

43 And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.

King Jehoshaphat was the son of Asa, king of Judah. His name means "Jehovah established the right." He was well named, because **In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD** (1 Kings 22:43). Asa was not a perfect king or father, but he left Jehoshaphat a godly heritage. Asa supported the worship of God and resisted idolatry.

Jehoshaphat followed in his father's footsteps by seeking the God of his father (2 Chron. 17:3–4). He purged national worship by ridding the land of male prostitutes (1 Kings 22:46). He took God's law to the people by sending his own officials and Levites and priests from city to city, teaching the people (2 Chron. 17:7–9). Jehoshaphat also reformed the justice system in Judah. Children today ought to be able to follow in the footsteps of their parents. Boys need the godly influence of their fathers. Boys are suffering from the lack of masculine Christian role models and mentors. Fathers who spend time with their sons, love them, discipline them, and communicate godly values to them will provide positive spiritual direction. Sons need character training based on God's Word. They should see Dad as leader of the clan and a protector of the family.

61



EXAMINE

ONE: Allow for two or three to mention how their godly father had a lasting effect on their lives.

Take care to be sensitive to those who may not have had such a relationship at home. If it is delicate, expand the idea to include mentors, teachers, or other male influence figures.

22:41 *Jehoshaphat son of Asa became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.*

The writer consistently dated the kings of the one kingdom by the kings of the other kingdom. See, for example, 15:1, 9, 25, 33.

22:42 *Azubah . . . Shilhi.* We know nothing else about these persons. They are mentioned also in 2 Chronicles 20:31.

22:43 *In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa.* For a summary of Asa's faithfulness to God (15:11–15).

notes

One

1. Asa obeyed God's commands, rid the land of idols, and deposed his grandmother because of her idolatry. His "heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life" (1 Kings 15:14). In short, he left a legacy of righteousness.

2. Fathers should teach their sons love, honesty, temperance, kindness, Christian financial concepts, respect for women, and much more.

3. We are not wise enough as human beings to guide our children to adulthood without the help of our Heavenly Father.

TWO: Give each class member a sheet of paper with the heading *Compromise*. In the left column, list the ways in which compromise is good. On the right, list the ways in which compromise is bad. Apply your list to evaluate the pact of Jehoshaphat and Ahab.

22:2 in the third year Jehoshaphat . . . went down to see the king of Israel. No, there is no typo either in your quarterly or Bible. Jehoshaphat did participate in the biblical account before being formally introduced later in the chapter. As a general pattern, the writer tried to tell one king's story completely before moving to the next. But when a king of Judah interacted with a king of Israel, sometimes the writer was not able to maintain his apparent desire for neat single biographical blocks. The fact that Jehoshaphat went down to the north likewise is not a typo. Twenty-first century Westerners consider south as "down" and north as "up." In this case, however, the ancients were more correct. Jerusalem was at a higher elevation than most of the northern kingdom. In terms of altitude, Jehoshaphat did go down.

ONE

explore

1. What legacy did Asa leave for his son Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 15)?
2. What kinds of Christian values should fathers pass on to their sons?
3. Why is it important for parents to pray diligently for their children?

A godly heritage is a wonderful thing, but it will be compromised if we fail to guard our hearts.

2 Godly influence can be compromised (1 Kings 22:2–4).

NIV

2 But in the third year Jehoshaphat king of Judah went down to see the king of Israel.

3 The king of Israel had said to his officials, "Don't you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?"

4 So he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

KJV

2 And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

3 And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?

4 And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

Jehoshaphat had a soft side to his character that marred his godly reign. He had made an alliance earlier with Ahab to join him in a fight against Syria. When Ahab reminded him of his promise and asked if he was ready to fight, Jehoshaphat answered without hesitation: **I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses** (1 Kings 22:4). During the battle that ensued, Ahab lost his life and Jehoshaphat, mistaken for Ahab, nearly died. What was Jehoshaphat thinking at this time? Was he following in the footsteps of Asa, his father? Why did he need Ahab when he had God?

Unholy alliances led to disaster in Old Testament times, and they have the same effect today. We cannot compromise our Christian life by giving the devil a foothold (Eph. 4:27). We sometimes see Christian people compromise their beliefs by partnering in business with unbelievers. Many Christians have jeopardized their faith by marrying someone who does not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We are not to be “yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14). Be careful whom you allow to influence your actions and decisions.

TWO

explore

1. How might Jehoshaphat have avoided fighting with Ahab?
2. How can close association with unbelievers become a snare to the Christian?
3. What problems may result when a Christian marries a non-Christian?

Spiritual compromise calls for God’s reproof.

3 Evil influence leads to rebuke (2 Chron. 19:1–3).

NIV

- 1 When Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem,
- 2 Jehu the seer, the son of Hanani, went out to meet him and said to the king, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, the wrath of the LORD is on you.
- 3 There is, however, some good in you, for you have rid the land of the Asherah poles and have set your heart on seeking God.”

KJV

- 1 And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.
- 2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.
- 3 Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

After the battle, **Jehu**, a prophet, came out to meet Jehoshaphat and very plainly rebuked him: **Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD?** (2 Chron. 19:2). When one who is in the place of leadership is rebuked, he should respond prayerfully. Once

63

22:3 Ramoth Gilead. This town was a key center of battle between the forces of Syria (also known as Aram) and Israel. Its precise location is not known; it was likely situated roughly east of the Sea of Galilee. This area had been part of the nation’s original territory, had been lost to Syria (15:20), and then in a recent battle, been given back, at least in theory, to Israel. But it appears that Syria had never relinquished control of Ramoth Gilead as a treaty with Israel said it would (20:34).

22:4 Will you go with me . . . ? The northern and southern kingdoms had been at war most of the time since the division of the united kingdom (14:30; 15:6, 16). The two nations had evidently reached a truce, although no biblical passage describes that event. As Ahab went to war against Syria, he had much to gain by seeking an ally. Why would Judah and its king Jehoshaphat even consider the risk of war for Israel’s benefit? Perhaps Jehoshaphat, as God’s servant, hoped to bring the two kingdoms back together again. Perhaps he saw value in restoring to God’s people land that had once belonged to them.



EXPLORE

Two

1. First, Jehoshaphat could have chosen to stay away from Ahab. Then he could have simply said no when Ahab asked him to fight. Or, Jehoshaphat could have consulted the Lord before he gave Ahab an answer.

2. Subtle influence may draw the Christian away from God in priorities and a worldly mind-set.

3. Differing opinions around finances, child rearing, and church attendance.



EXAMINE

THREE: Use biblical references and resources to show how the church should administer, rebuke, or discipline. Be certain to emphasize that our goal must be to reclaim or restore, not destroy or drive away.

notes

19:1 When Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned safely to his palace. In the battle between the united forces of Israel and Judah, King Ahab was killed, as had been prophesied by a little-known prophet named Micaiah. Jehoshaphat managed to escape (1 Kings 22:28–37).

19:2 *Jehu the seer.* God sent another prophet to offer Jehoshaphat his divine report card. The news was both bad and good. Jehu condemned Jehoshaphat for uniting his forces with those of a rebellious nation. Perhaps Jehoshaphat's motives had been good, but he should have avoided battle when God's spokesman Micaiah predicted disaster. If God was not in this battle, Jehoshaphat had no business taking his army into the conflict. (Jehoshaphat had wisely sought God's word before entering battle [1 Kings 22:5], but had not heeded the prophet's message.) At the same time, Jehu praised Jehoshaphat for his overall faithfulness to God, as demonstrated in his ridding the land of idolatrous Asherah poles (worship sites for Ashtoreth, a pagan goddess of fertility). Jehoshaphat had attempted to turn his people's hearts toward seeking God. Jehu was the son of Hanani. The father had spoken for God to Jehoshaphat's father, Asa, similarly warning him against alliance with kings who did not follow God (2 Chron. 16:7–9).



Three

1. "You have rid the land of the Asherah poles and have set your heart on seeking God" (2 Chron. 19:3).
2. The results are unpredictable, and it gives the devil a foothold.
3. He gives us an opportunity to repent before it is too late.



FOUR: Have your class members paraphrase Elisha's counsel to the three kings in 2 Kings 3:16–19, relating it to either a current church situation or personal circumstance. Ask for a few to read their paraphrases for the rest of the class. Listen for and give emphasis to the preparation aspect of the counsel.

God has confirmed the validity of the rebuke, repentance is in order. This includes not only asking the Lord for forgiveness but also to "get a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek. 18:31). First John 3:21–22 also speaks to this issue. "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him." Obey him. Do what pleases him. Let the rebuke work for the glory of God.

Jehoshaphat had compromised his faith in God by becoming an accomplice to Ahab and aiding him in his battle against Syria. Ahab had nothing spiritual to offer Jehoshaphat. Ahab needed Jehoshaphat, but Jehoshaphat did not need Ahab. The writer of 1 Kings 21 sums up Ahab's character by saying in verse 25, "There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife." This association between Jehoshaphat and Ahab was further strengthened when Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. For a time, this union brought peace to Israel and Judah, but later the introduction of Baalism in Judah nearly eliminated the royal family.

THREE

explore

1. What did Jehu say was "good" in Jehoshaphat?
2. What kinds of risks are involved in making an unholy alliance?
3. In what way is God merciful when he rebukes us?

"Those who disregard discipline despise themselves, but the one who heeds correction gains understanding" (Prov. 15:32).

4

Evil influence withers in the light of godly counsel (2 Kings 3:6–19).

NIV

- 6** So at that time King Joram set out from Samaria and mobilized all Israel.
7 He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" "I will go with you," he replied. "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."
8 "By what route shall we attack?" he asked. "Through the Desert of Edom," he answered.
9 So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After a roundabout march of seven days, the army had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them.

notes

10 "What!" exclaimed the king of Israel. "Has the LORD called us three kings together only to deliver us into the hands of Moab?"

11 But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may inquire of the LORD?" An officer of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah."

12 Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

13 Elisha said to the king of Israel, "Why do you want to involve me? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother." "No," the king of Israel answered, "because it was the LORD who called us three kings together to deliver us into the hands of Moab."

14 Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not pay any attention to you.

15 But now bring me a harpist." While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came on Elisha

16 and he said, "This is what the LORD says: I will fill this valley with pools of water.

17 For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink.

18 This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also deliver Moab into your hands.

19 You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones."

KJV

6 And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

7 And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.

8 And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

9 So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! That the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

11 But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

continued

65

3:6 *King Joram.* Years passed. Ahab, king of Israel, had died and his son Joram (also known as Jehoram) inherited the throne. Jehoshaphat had been king of Judah for eighteen years (3:1).

3:7 *He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat.* In a pattern like Ahab's request for military assistance against an enemy, Joram asks Jehoshaphat for help.

3:7 *I will go with you.* The writer quoted Jehoshaphat repeating the same words he had earlier spoken to Ahab (1 Kings 22:4). But after the last disaster, Jehoshaphat should have known better. This time, he does not even seek a prophet who can speak God's counsel. Instead Jehoshaphat quickly moves into planning battle strategy (3:8; If anyone feels confused about who says what in 3:8, there is good reason for that confusion. The original Hebrew does not identify which king asks the question and which answers.)

3:9 *the king of Edom.* Edom was the territory to the southeast of Judah. At this point, Edom held little power; Judah controlled its actions (1 Kings 22:47).

3:9 *no more water.* The three armies moved off toward battle, but faced seeming defeat before the battle began. Their water supply ran out, and the land through which they traveled had none to spare.

3:11 *Jehoshaphat asked.* Only when reminded by the pagan king of Israel did Jehoshaphat suddenly remember that he should consult God.

3:11 *Elisha.* Elijah had been taken to heaven in a chariot of fire (2:11). Elisha had succeeded him as God's primary spokesperson.

3:13 *Elisha said to the king of Israel.* Elisha, like Jehu before him, recognized that a king faithful to God should not be allied with a king who rejected God's ways. Elisha sent Joram to the prophets of his father and mother (Ahab and Jezebel).

3:14 *the LORD Almighty . . . whom I serve.* Again God's prophet drew a sharp distinction between the God he served and the gods the king served (1 Kings 17:1).

3:15 *bring me a harpist.* Elisha hoped music would calm him and enable him to hear more clearly the voice of God.

3:16 *This is what the LORD says.* Through Elisha, God spoke good news. The armies would find water. More than that, they would gain control over Moab, their enemy (3:17–19).

KJV *continued*

12 And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

13 And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

14 And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

16 And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

17 For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

18 And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

19 And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

This incident from the life of Jehoshaphat reinforces the fact that evil influence in our lives is dangerous, and we need godly counsel. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab was still in force when Ahab's son Jehoram became king. Jehoram held Jehoshaphat to his promise and asked for help in quelling a rebellion in Moab. Jehoshaphat, instead of inquiring of the Lord, responded with almost the same promise he had given to Ahab. King Jehoram, King Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom set out on a roundabout route to Moab. After traveling seven days, they were out of water with no water supply in sight. Jehoram blamed God, but Jehoshaphat called upon Elisha, the prophet of God, for help. Elisha helped because of his respect for Jehoshaphat. God sent water and Jehoram's armies won the battle.

Why don't people seek God's counsel when making important decisions? We desire independence and think that seeking help is a sign of weakness. Many people make up their minds and refuse to listen to sound advice—even when circumstances clearly call for it. As Christians, we have the counsel of the Scriptures. We may not find a verse that speaks directly to a specific problem, but the underlying principle is there, and God's Word will give direction.

We can also seek the help of godly people, just as Jehoshaphat did. We are part of the body of Christ. To work together, we need each other's help. "The godly man is a good counselor because he is just and fair and knows right from wrong" (Ps. 37:30–31 TLB).

Isaiah calls God himself Wonderful Counselor." As you seek answers in the Bible and through Christian counselors, listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit.

FOUR

explore

God firmly rebuked Jehoshaphat for the evil influences and compromises that he allowed to come into his life. He will also hold us accountable for similar actions. Prayerfully consider these statements, and let God work in your heart:

- I spend time in conversation and activities with younger people that I wish to draw to Christ.
- I witness to Christ's transformation in my life, and my life reflects the love of Christ.
- I am on guard against compromising situations that might hinder me spiritually.
- I am asking God to search my life and show me evil influences.
- I will seek God's counsel first when I have a problem or a decision to make.

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

It is challenging to know how to respond to the needs of others. While there are times when we must challenge others to take responsibility for themselves, we cannot ignore opportunities that God places before us to show kindness.

Consider the needs that exist in your family, church, and community. List two or three, then state what your compassionate action will be. Finally, choose one action that you will take this week.

67



EXPLORE

Four

1. The lack of water, the fact that Elisha was available and honored Jehoshaphat in giving God's message, the miracle of water from Edom.

2. It helps us see our problem through God's point of view, keeps us from falling spiritually, and gives us truth from God's Word.

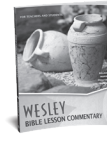
3. Ask two or three members to share their experiences.



EXERCISE

Closing

Have special prayer for your class members to be on their guard against the evil influences that Satan sends to try to get us off course spiritually. Affirm that God can and desires to fortify us against such attacks.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Evaluating Your Footprints" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary*

Volume 2.

notes



Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



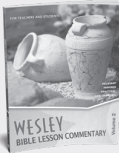
Opening
Have a time of prayer for your class members, remembering the significant impact they have on the people around them. Pray they will be instruments in discipling new believers. Pray for their witness and efforts in building relationships with nonbelievers, that all will be used to draw people to repentance.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

KEY VERSE
Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him.
—2 Kings 12:2

SCRIPTURE
• 2 Kings 11:1–4, 12–21; 12:4–5, 9–12

LESSON FOCUS
God's leaders take risks for God's cause.



CHECK IT OUT
Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 10
Activity: Risky Faith

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage
God always has a man or woman for the hour. In this segment of Judah's history, he has both in the godly husband and wife team of Jehosheba and Jehoiada. During Athaliah's massacre of the royal household, they helped further God's plan by saving an heir of David for the throne. Truly Psalm 27:5 was fulfilled: "For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock."

examine
INTRODUCTION
John Foppe was born without arms. He has faced enormous barriers in his quest for a normal life. He was fitted with artificial arms as a child and young man. The prosthesis was so cumbersome that he risked not wearing it even though it had made him appear normal. John can do with his feet almost anything anyone else can do with their hands. He continues to take risks today as he concentrates on his strengths and travels the country as a motivational speaker.
In this lesson, we'll examine the lives of two people who risked their very lives to rescue a future king.

notes

1 Sometimes we need to take risks to preserve our families (2 Kings 11:1–4).

NIV

- 1 When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family.
- 2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes, who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah; so he was not killed.
- 3 He remained hidden with his nurse at the temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.
- 4 In the seventh year Jehoiada sent for the commanders of units of a hundred, the Carites and the guards and had them brought to him at the temple of the LORD. He made a covenant with them and put them under oath at the temple of the LORD. Then he showed them the king's son.

KJV

- 1 And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.
- 2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Jehoram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.
- 3 And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.
- 4 And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son.

The tale of Joash, boy king of Judah, is one of the most intriguing stories in the Old Testament. Athaliah, mother of the slain king of Judah, Ahaziah, set out to annihilate the family of David. She murdered her own grandchildren so she could be the sole ruler of Judah. There was one thing of which Athaliah was not aware. One of Ahaziah's children had survived. Baby Joash and his nurse had been hidden by his aunt Jehosheba in a bedroom in the temple. Jehosheba's husband was the faithful priest Jehoiada. While Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, ruled the land and promoted Baal worship, Jehoiada quietly made his plans. He made a secret pact with the palace and temple guards to dethrone Athaliah. Then he showed them the young prince.

69



EXAMINE

ONE: "We never know how strong our love for anyone is until we are asked to take risks to preserve and maintain that love." Agree or disagree? Why?

11:1 Athaliah . . . proceeded to destroy the whole royal family. As the current queen mother, she likely executed, among possible others, her own sons and grandsons.

11:2 Jehosheba. You may need to draw some family trees to catch all the blood connections here. Jehosheba was another daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah (and thus possibly Athaliah's own daughter).

11:2 took Joash. Jehosheba was risking her life by preventing Athaliah from accomplishing her desire of destroying the royal family. But Jehosheba could not bear to stand by doing nothing while Athaliah murdered all Jehosheba's nephews. She rescued one, likely the youngest and easiest to smuggle out. Athaliah ruled for six years (v. 3). Joash was seven years old when he was presented to the public as rightful king (v. 21). Thus Joash was just a babe in arms at the time of his rescue.

11:3 The temple of the LORD. Perhaps this one building in Jerusalem that Athaliah, the wicked queen, was least likely to enter, was the safest place to hide her grandson.

11:4 Jehoiada. Jehoiada and Jehosheba are identified as husband and wife in 2 Chronicles 22:11. In 2 Kings 11:9, it is revealed that Jehoiada was a priest, perhaps the one who had acted as foster father to young prince Joash. (Support for this last hypothesis is indicated in 2 Kings 12:2.)

11:4 Carites. These were paid mercenary soldiers from Caria, in southwestern Asia Minor. They evidently served as royal bodyguards.

11:4 He made a covenant with them. Can you picture Jehoiada asking the soldiers if they can keep a secret? Or perhaps, he asked, "If a legal heir to the throne were still alive, would you swear your loyalty to him?" It's not likely that any of these soldiers felt any great love for Athaliah, the murderer of the royal family.

notes



One

1. Besides the obvious humanitarian reasons, perhaps they thought this was their opportunity to restore righteousness to the throne, and thus to the country.

2. By maintaining a strong marriage bond, keeping communication lines open between all family members, and loving each other.

3. Answers will vary, of course, but perhaps someone needs to “risk” tithing, even though it means tightening the family budget. Maybe a person needs to “risk” setting firmer limits on children who are disrespectful or out of control.



TWO: Have a class member read this lesson’s entire Scripture passage, while other class members listen for and write down indicators that God is always faithful to his covenants.

11:12 *a copy of the covenant.* We can’t be quite sure of the size of the scroll(s) presented to the boy king. He likely could not have borne the weight of the entire covenant. In any case, the new king, as well as a written representation of God’s faithfulness, would have carried the day. A legitimate king and a reminder of their ultimate King—for what more could the people ask? No wonder the people blew trumpets (11:14), clapped their hands and shouted, “Long live the king!”

11:14 *Athaliah tore her robes.* As you can imagine, not everyone was pleased. The wicked queen herself, seeing that her spell had been broken, did not shout “Long live the king.” No, she responded, “Treason.”

11:14 *the pillar, as the custom was.* The writer is going out of his way to present Joash as the legitimate king. This is the only biblical reference to the role of pillars in a king’s coronation. Mention is made of two special pillars in the temple in 1 Kings 7:15–22. Perhaps one of these is the one alluded to here.

God had promised David that if his children walked faithfully before him, there would always be one of his descendants on the throne of Israel. God worked in a marvelous way to accomplish this in the time of Joash. He used Jehosheba and Jehoiada to protect Joash against the wrath of Athaliah. This happened only because this courageous couple was willing to take risks. Jehosheba risked her life when she hid the baby in the temple and cared for him those six years. Jehoiada took many risks when he brought out Joash and orchestrated the downfall of Athaliah. The people were ready for a change. They were disgusted with Athaliah’s evil tyranny. She was a usurper and had no right to the throne of David.

Sometimes, like Jehosheba and Jehoiada, we need to take risks to preserve our families. Parents, the greatest responsibility you have is raising your precious children. Can you risk not having material things to give them what they need most—you? You may be an unpopular parent because your guidelines differ than others, but your children will thank you someday for taking that risk.

Another time of risk taking in family life is when you begin to let your teens go. You start by allowing them to make small decisions on their own. Then as they can make wise choices, you give them more freedom. Letting go is a risk that is best taken a little at a time.

ONE
explore

1. Why did Jehosheba and Jehoiada risk it all to save Joash?
2. What can we do to preserve our families?
3. What risk will you take for your family?

God moves from family to covenant to preserve his people.

2 God is always faithful to keep his covenant (2 Kings 11:12–18, 21).

NIV

12 Jehoiada brought out the king’s son and put the crown on him; he presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and shouted, “Long live the king!”

13 When Athaliah heard the noise made by the guards and the people, she went to the people at the temple of the LORD.

14 She looked and there was the king, standing by the pillar, as the custom was. The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her robes and called out, “Treason! Treason!”

15 Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders of units of a hundred, who were in charge of the troops: "Bring her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows her." For the priest had said, "She must not be put to death in the temple of the LORD."

16 So they seized her as she reached the place where the horses enter the palace grounds, and there she was put to death.

17 Jehoiada then made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they would be the LORD's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people.

18 All the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. Then Jehoiada the priest posted guards at the temple of the LORD.

21 Joash was seven years old when he began to reign.

KJV

12 And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

13 And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD.

14 And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, Treason.

15 But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD.

16 And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.

17 And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people; between the king also and the people.

18 And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

21 Seven years old was Jehoash when he began to reign.

11:16 *put to death.* Athaliah had every right to be horrified. Not only her days, but her minutes, were numbered. As soon as she could be moved out of the sacred temple area, she met her deserved doom.

11:17 *they would be the LORD's people.* Athaliah lost big time; but everyone else won. Joash became king. The actions of Jehosheba and Jehoiada were vindicated. The people were freed from a wicked ruler. The entire nation, at least all who were present that day, vowed new loyalty to God and his covenant.

11:18 *killed Mattan the priest of Baal.* Oh yes, there were a few other losers: those who frequented the temple of Baal lost their place of worship. The people lost no time in destroying it. Mattan, their priest, joined Athaliah in death.

God faithfully preserved his covenant with David and Judah in the crowning of King Joash. At this time, Jehoiada reconfirmed the covenant that had been broken during Athaliah's reign. Judah would have a descendant of David on the throne, and the one whose kingdom would be established forever (Jesus) would come through David's line

Two

1. It reminds us of our duty to God and binds us to that duty.

2. God's part in salvation is the planning, preparation, and conviction of seekers. Our part is to confess, repent, believe, and receive Christ.

3. Ask two or three class members to share scriptural promises.

THREE: Have a class member read this lesson's entire Scripture passage, while other class

members listen for and write down ways in which those faithful to God were careful to obediently maintain their covenant relationship with him.

12:5 *repair whatever damage is found in the temple.* Joash followed the way of righteousness, as he had been instructed by Jehoiada. In particular, he ordered the temple remodeled and restored to a condition of purity and beauty. During the thirteen preceding years, during the reigns of his grandfather, father, and grandmother, the monarchs had not honored God. The temple had perhaps been neglected, if not abused. Perhaps the temple had not seen extensive repair since the day of Solomon, a hundred years prior.

12:9 *Jehoiada the priest took a chest.* Verses 6–8 describe an inexplicable delay in work on the temple. The people had given money, but the priests had banked it instead of using it for its intended purpose. But after Jehoiada set a new procedure in place (to be monitored by the royal secretary; 12:10), the people began to give again. This time the work proceeded as originally ordered by the king.

(2 Sam. 7:12–13). **The people clapped their hands and shouted, “Long live the king!”** (2 Kings 11:12) at Joash's crowning.

Queen **Athaliah** heard the noise (v. 13) and rushed alone from the palace to the temple. Jehoiada was ready for her and the temple guards seized her. She was slain outside the temple. This act energized the people and they tore down the temple of Baal.

God's faithfulness and the preservation of his Word are still evident today in the lives of his people. Brother Andrew, “God's smuggler,” is an example of God's incredible care. He spent his entire life taking Bibles into countries where God's Word is banned and unavailable. Time after time, God kept him from arrest and prison. On one occasion several years ago, Andrew and his friend Hans stopped for a customs inspection as they crossed from Poland into Russia. Their car was loaded with Bibles, then illegal in both countries. The guard asked Andrew to open some suitcases, barely looked inside, and then turned his attention to the car engine. He asked a few questions about the engine, stamped their papers, and waved them on. God had blinded the eyes of the inspectors and saved Andrew's precious cargo.

Later, after *perestroika*, Andrew received access to classified documents in East Germany. These documents revealed that the Russian secret police had kept a detailed record of his activities. Why wasn't he stopped? Because “the angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Ps. 34:7 KJV).

TWO

explore

1. What is the importance of a covenant between God and his people?
2. God has given us a covenant of salvation in the New Testament. What is God's part in that covenant and what is our part?
3. Which of God's promises has been most meaningful to you?

Obedience to God's covenant leads us into his presence.

3 We must be careful managers of the LORD's money and property (2 Kings 12:4–5, 9–12).

NIV

4 Joash said to the priests, “Collect all the money that is brought as sacred offerings to the temple of the LORD—the money collected in the census, the money received from personal vows and the money brought voluntarily to the temple.

5 Let every priest receive the money from one of the treasurers, then use it to repair whatever damage is found in the temple.”

9 Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in its lid. He placed it beside the altar, on the right side as one enters the temple of the LORD. The priests who guarded the entrance put into the chest all the money that was brought to the temple of the LORD.

10 Whenever they saw that there was a large amount of money in the chest, the royal secretary and the high priest came, counted the money that had been brought into the temple of the LORD and put it into bags.

11 When the amount had been determined, they gave the money to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. With it they paid those who worked on the temple of the LORD—the carpenters and builders,

12 the masons and stonecutters. They purchased timber and blocks of dressed stone for the repair of the temple of the LORD, and met all the other expenses of restoring the temple.

KJV

4 And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD,

5 Let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found.

9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD.

10 And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the LORD.

11 And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the LORD,

12 And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it.

The temple had fallen into ruin under Athaliah's reign. She worshiped Baal. Her sons had broken into the temple and used things dedicated to the Lord for Baal worship.

Joash set out to restore and repair the temple. His first plan was to ask the priests to use the regular gifts of temple money to repair the structure. Twenty-three years into his reign the work still was not done. Joash took charge of the situation and removed the priests from



Three

1. Because of the influence of Jehoiada, to continue the revival, and because the temple had been a place of shelter for him.

2. Because everything belongs to God. We're not managing *our* resources; we're managing his.

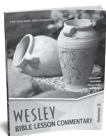
3. By first giving ourselves to God (2 Cor. 8:5).



EXERCISE

Closing

Have your class members consider areas of their covenant relationship with God that need to be strengthened. Have them partner and establish a level of accountability. Encourage them to establish a course of action for the week that will strengthen their covenant with the Lord.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "As God Promised" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 2*.

this service. Then he instituted another plan. A chest was made and placed on the right side of the altar. All money brought to the temple was placed in the chest through a hole in the lid. Later these funds were given directly to the workmen. This method proved successful, and the repairs were made.

We don't know why the first plan failed. The priests might have embezzled the funds, diverted them from their original purpose, or been poor managers. Maybe the money just didn't come in.

There are some stewardship lessons to be learned here. We should be careful managers of the Lord's money. It must be properly accounted for and used wisely. Both the royal secretary and the high priest counted, bagged, and gave the money to those supervising the work on the temple. Church offerings should never be counted by only one person. Two or more tellers are a safeguard not only for the church but for those who are counting.

The funds to repair the temple came in when the method of collection was changed. When the money was placed in the "Joash Chest," worshipers knew it was going directly for the repair of the temple and not to the priests. People are more willing to give if the need is specific. The chest itself drew attention to the problem. The people became glad givers (2 Chron. 24:10).

THREE

1. Why do you think Joash was so intent on repairing the temple?
2. Why is it vital to carefully manage God's resources? (Ps. 24:1.)
3. How do we become glad givers?

LIFE APPLICATION

Think about your spiritual life with these examples of God's faithfulness in mind. Are you where you would like to be? Would you be willing to leave your comfort zone and take some risks for God? He may have pointed out some needs in your life. Identify one of those needs and determine in your heart that with God's help you're going to be obedient to him. It may be as small as a reluctance to speak to someone about Jesus Christ or as big as a job change. Perhaps God is asking you to cut your work hours or be a stay-at-home parent. He may be speaking to you about a place of service in your church. Be willing, with God's help, to take a risk and do whatever he asks.

notes

KEY VERSE

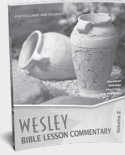
Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.
—2 Kings 18:5

SCRIPTURE

- 2 Kings 18:1–7; 2 Chronicles 29:3–7, 18–19, 27–30; 30:1, 13, 25–27

LESSON FOCUS

When leaders do right and call others to follow, revival results.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 11
Activity: Spiritual Discipline of Meditation

AUGUST 11

11

LEADING FOR LIFE CHANGE



EVALUATE

Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



ENGAGE

Opening

Start with the hymn "Revive Us Again." Sing it together, play a good recording of it, or read the words to the class. Follow the song by reading Isaiah 35 as you set the tone for today's lesson.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

Hezekiah was a one-of-a-kind king of Judah. He was a man of character who held steadfastly to the Lord, obeying what God commanded. And he wasn't afraid to call others to do the same. He exposed the sinfulness of the preceding generations and demanded obedience to the Lord from those serving under him in positions of leadership. Once the leaders took active steps of obedience and put their faith into action, it sparked a revival among all Israel and Judah. The result was great joy and blessing, with the prayers of the leaders reaching heaven.

INTRODUCTION

examine

The church today needs help. Christians everywhere are becoming lax in their faith, seldom reading their Bibles or even attending church. Many who call themselves Christians have been taken captive by the philosophy of the world and are involved in astrology, the lottery, addictive habits, and less-than-pure thoughts. Evangelism in many churches is little more than an attendance-building strategy, and Christ is merely given lip service. The church needs revival. But could it be that the church at large is indicative of our leadership? We've had presidents who have gloated over their sinful lifestyles, all the while claiming to be Christians. Every week another article appears in the newspaper revealing the sexual sins or other discretions of some member of the clergy. It's no wonder the church is in such a crisis—we have a leadership problem.

75

notes



EXAMINE

ONE: Have your class respond to this statement: "It is not just true that 'being determines doing,' but also that 'doing determines being.'" Agree or disagree? Why? Stress that character must find true expression whether we feel like it or not. We need to act *with* good character as well as act *from* good character.

18:1 *Hoshea*. Although Assyria had defeated Israel, the Assyrians allowed Hoshea to remain on his nation's throne, but he was largely a puppet king, with Assyria pulling the strings.

18:2 *Abijah . . . Zechariah*. We know nothing more about these individuals. This Zechariah is not to be confused with Zechariah the prophet, who lived roughly two hundred years later.

18:4 *removed the high places*. Many of Judah's kings generally followed God and his ways but failed to remove the high places, the nonprescribed places of worship away from Jerusalem (see, for example, the records relating to Hezekiah's grandfather, Jotham; 2 Kings 15:35).

18:4 *sacred stones and . . . Asherah poles*. These were idolatrous symbols. Even the bronze snake that God had used to bring healing to his people (Num. 21:9) had become a sacred object, distracting people from their worship of the true God.

Can revival take place without a godly leader? Aren't most revivals grassroots movements that begin among the laity? Would revival efforts be more effective if they started with the leaders in the church?

In today's lesson, we'll catch a glimpse of revival as it happened during the reign of Hezekiah and learn some principles that can help spark revival in the church today.

1 God's leader should be a person of character (2 Kings 18:1-7).

NIV

- 1 In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.
2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah.
3 He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.
4 He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)
5 Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him.
6 He held fast to the LORD and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses.
7 And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

KJV

- 1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.
2 Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.
3 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.
4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.
5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.
6 For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.
7 And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

notes

After King Solomon's death, Israel was divided into two kingdoms: Israel in the north with ten tribes, and Judah in the south with two tribes. The northern kingdom had one bad king after another, each one doing more evil than the one before. God finally got to the point where he had had enough. In 722 BC, God sent Israel off into exile at the hands of the Assyrians (2 Kings 17). It was a great tragedy for his people. They were completely defeated because of their debased sinfulness in following other gods.

But Judah wasn't far behind. The people living in the south were just as tempted as those in the north. They had the same predisposition to worship the gods of their neighbors. They built altars to the gods and offered sacrifices to them. However, unlike the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom did have a few good kings. No doubt these godly men kept judgment from coming upon Judah as quickly as it came upon Israel. One of those godly men was Hezekiah.

Hezekiah **did what was right in the eyes of the LORD** (2 Kings 18:3). In Hezekiah's day, just like today, most people tend to do what is right in their own eyes. They make up their own standard of right and wrong and adapt it to any given situation. If it seems okay to them, it's right. In 2 Corinthians 10:12, Paul warns, "We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise." Hezekiah didn't seek to do right in his own eyes. And he didn't seek to do what was right in the eyes of the people. God was his standard. He sought to please the only One who really counted.

Hezekiah was a man of character. He did what was right even though it was unpopular. The people wanted to worship at the **high places** and **Asherah poles**. They wanted to burn incense to the **bronze snake** (v. 4). But Hezekiah, risking popularity and favor with the people, chose instead to destroy every vestige of idolatry in the land. You see, he wasn't trusting people for his welfare. Verse 5 tells us that he **trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel**. He was unlike any other in his devotion to the Lord. He wasn't faithful one minute and floundering the next minute. **He held fast to the LORD and did not stop following him** (v. 6). Hezekiah was rock solid in his commitment to God and his way. And what were the results? **The LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook** (v. 7).

18:5 *Hezekiah trusted in the LORD.* As noted in 18:4, Hezekiah was a rare king in eliminating the alternate sources of worship. Hezekiah was renowned not only in what he did *for* God, but in his faith *in* God. "There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah." There had been other good kings, but no one was more like David than Hezekiah. The words describing him, noted in verse 6, surpass those given to any other king.

18:7 *The LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook.* The biblical writer applied these words only to David and Hezekiah (1 Sam. 16:18; 18:14).



One

1. He did what was right in God's eyes, he trusted the Lord, he followed God unceasingly.

2. Answers might include charisma, talent, confidence, good looks, height, eloquence, authority. In the church, we should be more focused on righteousness and the quality of one's relationship with God. Obedience to God should be at the top of our list.

3. Many pastors and other church leaders have been voted out of their positions because they made unpopular decisions. Instead of focusing on the leader's level of obedience to God, we tend to measure them by worldly standards.



TWO: Remind your class that we are all leaders, because we all have influence. As leaders, it is our responsibility to challenge others to the discipleship lifestyle. Lead your class in understanding this truth as you discuss this point in the lesson.

29:3 *he opened the doors of the temple.*

Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, had shut the doors of the temple, urging the people to worship in other locations (28:24).

29:4 *priests and the Levites.* The priests were the primary ministers to God in the temple. The Levites were their assistants.

29:5 *Consecrate yourselves.* Because Ahaz had shut down the temple and its worship, the priests and Levites had been unable to keep up their usual standards. They needed to purify themselves before they could purify the temple and be ready to reestablish proper worship there.

29:5 *consecrate the temple.* After years of neglect, the temple and all its sacred objects needed to be purified and rededicated to God.

ONE

explore

1. What three major actions on Hezekiah's part kept him faithful to the Lord (vv. 3, 5–6)?
2. What are some of the characteristics people outside the church look for in a leader? Do you think the same traits should be our focus in the church?
3. Do we ever penalize pastors or leaders in the church for being obedient to the Word of God? (In other words, was there ever a time when a leader's decision upset the majority and their position was at stake because the people wanted what was right in their own eyes?) Why or why not?

2 God's leader should call other leaders to righteousness (2 Chron. 29:3–7, 18–19).

NIV

3 In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the LORD and repaired them.

4 He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side

5 and said: "Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the LORD, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary.

6 Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the LORD our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the LORD's dwelling place and turned their backs on him.

7 They also shut the doors of the portico and put out the lamps. They did not burn incense or present any burnt offerings at the sanctuary to the God of Israel.

18 Then they went in to King Hezekiah and reported: "We have purified the entire temple of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table for setting out the consecrated bread, with all its articles.

19 We have prepared and consecrated all the articles that King Ahaz removed in his unfaithfulness while he was king. They are now in front of the LORD's altar."

KJV

3 He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

4 And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,

5 And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.

notes

6 For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs.

7 Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel.

18 Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table, with all the vessels thereof.

19 Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.

These events took place in the first month of the first year of Hezekiah's reign—he wasted no time in letting his expectations be known. Hezekiah summoned all **the priests and the Levites** and entreated them to **consecrate** themselves and to **consecrate the temple of the LORD** (2 Chron. 29:4–5). Consecration is setting yourself completely apart to serve the Lord, yielding all of your will to his. Hezekiah knew that right actions would require a right heart. At this point, Hezekiah was not afraid to call sin “sin.” He minced no words as he revealed the sinfulness of preceding generations, including his own. **Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the LORD our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the LORD's dwelling place and turned their backs on him** (v. 6). They were evil because they did what was wrong, but they were also considered evil for simply turning their backs on God, ignoring the right things he expected them to do. What they didn't do was as much an affront to God as what they did do.

The priests and Levites were inspired by Hezekiah's words. They went out and did exactly as he had commanded, purifying the temple and all the articles in it and preparing it for worship once again. It had been a long time since the sacrifices had been offered according to God's command in the law. But now, thanks to the obedience of Hezekiah and his leaders, the temple was ready for sacrifices again.

29:6 *They turned their faces away from the LORD's dwelling place.* This is another reference to the fact that Ahaz promoted worship of other gods in a variety of places (28:24–25).

29:7 *shut the doors of the portico.* In shutting the doors, putting out the lamps, and not burning incense, Ahaz had disrupted temple patterns that went back to Solomon's day (2:4; 4:20). Hezekiah wanted all these practices reinstated.

29:18 *We have purified.* The priests and Levites were undoubtedly more than pleased to set the temple back in appropriate form. They completed the work and proudly reported their accomplishments to the king.

29:19 *The articles that King Ahaz removed.* Here, again, we see the fact that Hezekiah wanted to reverse all the sacrilege of his father. In 28:24, we read of Ahaz moving furnishings out of the temple.

Two

1. "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD" (v. 2), and he repaired the temple (treated the things of God with reverence).

2. The list could include swearing, lying, gossiping, backbiting, slander, envying, coveting. Sins of omission might include not witnessing, failing to read the Bible, not doing the good we know we ought to do, and not meeting the needs of others when we can do so.

3. Ignoring God is more detrimental because it is so innocuous. No one even thinks about it. Before you know it, God has nothing at all to do with your life. When we encounter outright defiance, we know immediately that we're in for a fight and we get our defenses up. Generally when we are defiant ourselves, we *know* we're doing something wrong.

THREE: On a sheet of paper, have your class members complete the following sentence: "When revival comes to our church, I will . . ." Give opportunity for some to share their responses.

29:27 *Hezekiah gave the order.* A quick review of verses 25–26 shows the precedents Hezekiah was following. He sought to reinstate the Jerusalem worship practices that went back to King David. And those practices had been instituted not merely on the authority of the revered king, for the Lord himself had commanded them through his prophets, especially Nathan.

29:27 *Singing to the LORD.* First Chronicles 25:1–7 describes how David had first established musicians in temple worship, noting the connection between music and prophecy.

TWO

1. What example did Hezekiah set before he spoke with the Levites and priests?
2. Make a list of some sins Christians sometimes commit. Then make a list of sins of omission (sins of not doing something that should be done). Which do you think are worse?
3. Why do you think ignoring God can sometimes be more detrimental to the cause of Christ than outright defiance?

3 The righteousness of God's leaders can spark revival among God's people (2 Chron. 29:27–30; 30:1, 13, 25–27).

NIV

29:27 Hezekiah gave the order to sacrifice the burnt offering on the altar. As the offering began, singing to the LORD began also, accompanied by trumpets and the instruments of David king of Israel.

28 The whole assembly bowed in worship, while the musicians played and the trumpets sounded. All this continued until the sacrifice of the burnt offering was completed.

29 When the offerings were finished, the king and everyone present with him knelt down and worshiped.

30 King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to praise the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness and bowed down and worshiped.

30:1 Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel.

13 A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month.

25 The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced, along with the priests and Levites and all who had assembled from Israel, including the foreigners who had come from Israel and also those who resided in Judah.

26 There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

27 The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his holy dwelling place.

KJV

29:27 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel.

28 And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.

29 And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.

30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

30:1 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel.

13 And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

25 And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced.

26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.

The burnt offering was an offering of dedication or devotion to God. In this voluntary sacrifice, the entire animal was burned, signifying a total dedication and complete surrender to God. **As the offering began, singing to the LORD began also, accompanied by trumpets and the instruments of David king of Israel** (2 Chron. 29:27). Can you imagine the scene? After all these years, a sacrifice was being offered—a sacrifice that expressed the hearts of those who came to worship: They wanted to surrender themselves to God’s way in their lives. As they began, the priests and Levites erupted in spontaneous song, joined by the temple orchestra. **They sang praises with gladness** (v. 30). The whole assembly bowed in worship. True worship came when they were obedient to God’s commands.

In further obedience to God’s law, Hezekiah invited all of Israel and Judah to come to the temple to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was to be a reminder of God’s faithfulness in delivering his people from bondage in Egypt. The Jews were commanded to observe it every year. It was also a reminder to them that God was faithful to deliver them from the bondage of sin. God had called his people out of Egypt to be separate and holy, a lesson the people of Hezekiah’s day needed to relearn. **A very large crowd** (30:13) gathered. Their obedience was the first step toward revival. This was the greatest Passover celebration since the days of Solomon. **The entire assembly of Judah rejoiced** (v. 25) and **there was great joy in Jerusalem** (v. 26). Most people mistakenly believe that joy comes from fulfilling their every desire. But in

81

29:28 *The whole assembly bowed in worship.* Hezekiah’s restoration of the temple provoked a great movement of revival among his people. The ceremony here sounds much like the first dedication of the temple under King Solomon (2 Chron. 7:4–6).

29:30 *Asaph the seer.* Asaph was a significant leader of music during David’s reign (1 Chron. 16:5, 7). Several psalms are attributed to him (for example, Ps. 50; 73; 76; 78). This verse is the only one that calls him a seer, a prophet.

30:1 *all Israel and Judah.* Since Israel (the northern kingdom) no longer existed as an independent nation, Hezekiah felt free to invite all God’s people to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, the anniversary of God’s freeing their ancestors from slavery in Egypt. In 30:25, it is noted that some from Israel did attend the feast.

30:13 *the second month.* The customary date for the celebrating the Passover was in the middle (the time of the full moon) of the first month. Because Hezekiah was so pleased to have the temple rituals up and running, evidently he did not want to wait eleven months for the set date, so he went ahead and ordered the celebration of Passover one month late (30:2–3 for more details).

30:26 *great joy in Jerusalem.* The party evoked such joy that it lasted twice as long as it normally would. Not since Solomon, more than two hundred years before, had Jerusalem seen such a celebration.

30:27 *God heard them.* God always hears the sincere prayers of his people, but on this occasion, the Chronicler wanted to underline that God himself joined in the great Jerusalem celebration.

notes



Three

1. Answers might include weeping, open confession, joyous singing, all night prayer meetings, forgiveness.

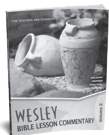
2. Many religious groups try to “manufacture” revival through music and professional worshippers.

3. People can get very emotionally involved and have a wonderful experience, but not be changed on the inside. If it doesn’t translate into obedience in everyday life, it’s not really revival. Follow up and discipling is required after revival.



Closing

Have your class complete this sentence prayerfully: “To help my church experience renewal, I need to . . .” Leave these anonymous. Collect them, lay hands on them, and pray for each one.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week’s study in the Word—try the activity “Remembering God’s Faithfulness” from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary* Volume 2.

Commentary Volume 2.

reality, joy is a byproduct of obedience. God meets his people when they are obedient to him, and his very presence fills them with his joy.

Verse 27 is one of the most exciting in this entire story. Because of their obedience, **the priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven.** Have you ever felt powerless in prayer, as though your prayers never went any higher than the ceiling? Obedience brings revival, and one characteristic of revival is vibrant prayer that reaches the very throne of God.

THREE

explore

1. Based on today’s text, what do you think revival looks like in the church? Make a list.
2. Are there some things we might be expecting that don’t really signal revival?
3. Is it possible to have all the outward signs of revival but for the hearts of people to still be sinful? How might we deal with that situation?

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

Whether or not you are a leader in the church, you are a leader for someone. There is some young man or woman, some boy or girl who is watching you and catching your enthusiasm (or lack of it) for the Lord. You don’t have to be a king or priest to be used by God to spark revival. Take a few minutes to examine your life. Is there an area where you need to be more obedient?

Are you not doing something you should be doing? Have you ignored God in some area of your life? Ask God to open your eyes to see what you can do to be an instrument of revival in your church or community. Write down at least one thing that you will trust God to help you with this week. Then, commit yourself to obeying God no matter what the consequence, trusting him to give you the strength to do it.

notes

KEY VERSE

The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

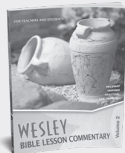
—2 Kings 23:3

SCRIPTURE

- 2 Kings 22:1–4, 8–20; 23:1–5, 25

LESSON FOCUS

God's leaders are guided by his Word.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 12
Activity: God's Word in Your Life

AUGUST 18

12

GUIDED BY THE WORD



EVALUATE

Review the main points of last week's lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



ENGAGE

Opening

Have your class share testimonies of their efforts to make restitution for their past wrongs toward others.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

The nation of Israel had not been faithful in following the ways of the Lord, but had repeatedly worshiped Baal and a host of other pagan deities. When the young man Josiah became king over Judah, he set out to repair the temple of the Lord, and upon doing so, the workers discovered a copy of the Law. When it was read to Josiah, he repented before the Lord for the sins of his people over the years. He then had it read publicly for all the people to hear. Finally, he cleansed the temple of the Lord of all the articles associated with the worship of other gods.

INTRODUCTION

examine

North America is a land that was founded on principles contained in the Bible. Its first white settlers were Catholic missionaries, Pilgrims, and Puritans. For several hundred years, the Bible shaped both the culture and the laws of the United States and Canada. Its stories were widely known. People named their children after their favorite Bible characters. Schools even used the Bible as a text for teaching people how to read. But over time, something tragic happened. People lost their Bibles—not literally; they just quit reading them. A great many people today are ignorant of the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and even the meanings of Christmas and Easter. We are fast becoming a people who are biblically illiterate.

83

notes



EXAMINE

ONE: Name some leaders that have been extremely influential—either in a good way or bad—despite being young.

22:1 *he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years.* The officials that named Josiah king believed that they would be able to control Israel with a “boy king.” However, God was already working through Josiah to turn his people back to him.

22:2 *He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD.* Neither 2 Kings nor 2 Chronicles contains any negative comments about Josiah’s reign. He consistently followed the Lord throughout his reign.

22:3 *King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan . . . to the temple of the LORD.* Josiah used the practice initiated by Joash in collecting offerings for temple upkeep (12:1–16). Now it was time to use those funds for repairs, and the secretary Shaphan was sent to begin dispersing the money that was on hand.

1 Neglecting the Word of God leads to a tragic spiritual situation (2 Kings 22:1–4).

NIV

- 1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother’s name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath.
- 2 He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed completely the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.
- 3 In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the LORD. He said:
- 4 “Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people.

KJV

- 1 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath.
- 2 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.
- 3 And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying,
- 4 Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people:

It is a situation not at all unlike that faced by ancient Israel. Neglecting the Word of God inevitably leads to spiritual tragedy. The spiritual condition of the nation of Israel was deplorable. For centuries they had tolerated, and even encouraged, idolatry and various forms of immorality associated with Baal worship. Nearly every high place throughout the land had altars where people regularly sacrificed to the pagan fertility god Baal and his female consort Asherah. Josiah’s father and grandfather, kings Manasseh and Amon, had for fifty-seven years encouraged the people in their idolatry. Worship of Jehovah was at an all-time low. Priests still went through the motions of their duties at the temple in Jerusalem, but few people made pilgrimages there to offer any sacrifices or make any vows.

Josiah began his reign as king over Judah when he was only **eight years old** (2 Kings 22:1). His father, Ammon, had been assassinated by some of his officials after only two years on the throne. They thought

notes

that perhaps they could better control the direction of the kingdom through a “boy king.” What they didn’t count on, though, was the fact that Josiah, while only a teenager, **did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed completely the ways of his father David** (v. 2). He instituted a number of radical reforms that had not been seen for hundreds of years. According to 2 Chronicles 34, he had the various altars to Baal and the sacred poles of Asherah throughout the land torn down in the twelfth year of his reign. He destroyed all the carved idols and cast images, and he ground into powder the incense altars that were above them. He even had the bones of the priests who served these gods burned on their own altars. When he finished all this, **in the eighteenth year of his reign** (22:3), he directed his attention to the neglected temple in Jerusalem. He collected money from all over Israel and set about giving the entire temple a face lift—repairing the stone and beams, cleaning out the closets, and polishing up the instruments.

ONE

explore

1. How does the Word of God become neglected, as it was in Judah?
2. What happened to King Josiah when he heard the Word of the Lord?
3. Which verse or passage of Scripture has changed your thinking or behavior most dramatically?

2 The correct response to hearing God’s Word is repentance (2 Kings 22:8–20).

NIV

8 Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD.” He gave it to Shaphan, who read it.
9 Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: “Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at the temple.”

10 Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

11 When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes.

12 He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king’s attendant:

continued



EXPLORE

One

1. People become busy. They don’t set time aside in their daily schedule to read it.
2. Josiah became greatly convicted in his spirit and repented. He tore his robes as a sign of contrition before God and the people.
3. Calls for a personal response.



EXAMINE

TWO: Refer to 2 Chronicles 19:3 (Jehoshaphat’s cleansing of the land) and 2 Chronicles 29:15 (Hezekiah’s purifying of the temple). Point out that spiritual change must begin with God’s people before it reaches the unbelieving world.

23:2 *all the people from the least to the greatest.* Josiah wanted everyone to hear from God’s book.

23:3 *The king stood by the pillar.* As in 11:14, we cannot be sure of the pillar spoken of here. Likely it was one of the two most prominent temple pillars built by Solomon (1 Kings 7:16).

23:3 *all the people.* Motivated by the king’s example, the entire crowd stated its loyalty to God and his book.

23:4 *the articles made for Baal and Asherah.* Manasseh, Josiah’s grandfather, had cleaned all idols out of the temple (2 Chron. 33:15). Perhaps Amon, Josiah’s father, had placed them in the temple once again, or possibly someone else had done so while Josiah was still a boy king. The Kidron Valley was located adjacent to Jerusalem, between the city and what became known as the Mount of Olives. Bethel was located just over the border into what had been the northern kingdom. Perhaps Josiah wished to desecrate this place where Jeroboam had established worship of a golden calf (1 Kings 12:28–29).

notes

23:25 *a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did. Only of Hezekiah did the writer offer a similar statement of praise (2 Kings 18:5).*

NIV *continued*

13 “Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD’s anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.”

14 Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter.

15 She said to them, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me,

16 ‘This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read.

17 Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.’

18 Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard:

19 Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.

20 Therefore I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.’” So they took her answer back to the king.

KJV

8 And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

9 And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD.

10 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

12 And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king’s, saying,

13 Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

14 So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

15 And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

16 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

17 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;

19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.

20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

While they were in the process of making repairs to the temple, one of the priests made a wonderful discovery. He found the **Book of the law** (v. 8) of the Lord that had been given through Moses. It had been neglected and lost over time. When he showed it to the king's secretary, he read it. Then he took it to the king and read it to him.

When Shaphan read the Scriptures to Josiah, it was like a knife going through the king's soul. The writer of Hebrews said, "The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). When King Josiah heard the word of the Lord, he **tore his robes** (2 Kings 22:11). This was a sign of great contrition. He recognized that his fathers had led the nation to sin greatly against the Lord for many years. Consequently, he knew that the Lord must have been very angry against Judah.

After hearing God's Word, Josiah decided to inquire of the Lord what he should do next. So, he sent a group of his advisors to speak with the prophet Huldah. She advised them that the Lord was intent on bringing judgment against Judah, **according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read** (v. 16). However, because the king himself had been responsive and had humbled himself before the

Two

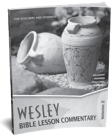
1. They would never have heard the Word if he had not initiated the cleanup of the temple, and then if he had not read it to them. His example of pledging his allegiance to the covenant caused them to follow him.

2. They got rid of their idols to Baal and Asherah. Second Kings 23:6–24 lists many different reforms that were initiated because of the renewal of the covenant.

3. The Word of God has the power to change lives and even change churches, and ultimately to change nations.

Closing

Encourage short prayers for renewed faithfulness to the Word of God—individually, as a class, and in your church.



Help your members connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Let the Word Speak for Itself" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary Volume 2*.

Lord when he heard the Word, the Lord would stay his hand of judgment until after Josiah's reign was over and he was buried in peace.

The Word of God had such a profound effect on King Josiah that he decided to call together all of the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple, where everyone had gathered—**the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the prophets. . . . He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant** (2 Kings 23:2). They were strange words to their ears—old words, yet new words to them, since the book had been neglected for such a long period of time.

After he finished reading, **the king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD** (v. 3). He pledged himself to **follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul**, just as Moses had set forth in the book so many years before. And, following his example, **all the people pledged themselves to the covenant** as well (v. 3).

It is one thing to make a promise to God at an altar after being convicted by his Word, and it is another thing altogether to follow through with that promise. Josiah and the people of Judah followed through. The first thing they did was to get rid of all the vestiges of Baal worship that remained in the temple. Then he and the people did a thorough house cleaning throughout the land, getting rid of all the pagan priests, destroying their shrines and altars, even the quarters of the temple prostitutes. There was, for a brief period while Josiah was the king, a genuine revival of morality and worship in the land.

TWO

explore

1. What difference did the king's leadership make in the response of the people?
2. What evidence was there that the Word of God made a difference in the land?
3. Why is the public reading of God's Word important today?

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

Just as in Josiah's day, there is a tremendous neglect of the Word of God today, even within our churches. We haven't lost our Bibles, but we don't read them like we should. What are some things you can do to recover the importance of the Word to your life? What are some things you can do to encourage the influence of the Word of God in your home, your church, and your workplace?

notes

KEY VERSE

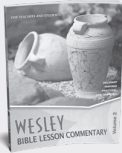
In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. —2 Chronicles 33:12

SCRIPTURE

- 2 Chronicles 33:1–25

LESSON FOCUS

God restores those who repent, but a leader’s failure may have lasting consequences.



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 2 • Unit 4 • Lesson 13
Activity: Find, Face, Flee

AUGUST 25 | 13
THE ROAD TO
RESTORATION



EVALUATE

Review the main points of last week’s lesson with your class. Encourage class members to share words of truth they received from the study.



ENGAGE

Opening
Bring a board, nails, and hammer to class with you. Tell your variation of the story of the little boy who, as punishment for lying all the time, was made to drive a nail into the board every time he lied. After several lies, he was able to take a nail out every time he told the truth. Note that the holes remain. Consequences do last.

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage Unlike his father Hezekiah, Manasseh did evil in the eyes of the Lord and led Judah and the people of Jerusalem to do the same. It took being captured by an enemy nation to humble Manasseh’s heart. Although God was gracious to forgive and restore him to his throne, Manasseh had lost his influence among the people. His sins could not be easily forgotten; the lifestyle he had taught could not be untaught. Not only did the people continue to forsake the Lord, but his own son, who succeeded him on the throne, did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Though Manasseh had learned the error of his ways, his son did not. Manasseh’s negative influence continued long after his death; his positive influence after he humbled himself was of little effect.

INTRODUCTION

examine There is a story of a rabbi who had been maligned by one of the members of his synagogue. The erring congregant came to the rabbi one day, apologizing for his behavior and begging forgiveness. The rabbi calmly told the young man to take a feather pillow, cut up the case, and scatter the feathers to the wind. The man left and did exactly as the rabbi had instructed, then returned to ask forgiveness again. The rabbi informed him, “I will forgive you when you gather every last feather and return it to the pillow.” Though the rabbi might not have understood the nature

notes



EXAMINE

ONE: Use a copy of Philip Keller's book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*.

Have a class member report on the characteristics of sheep that the author points out. These also are images of how human beings are followers by nature.

33:1 *fifty-five years*. This reign was longer than any other king of either Judah or Israel.

33:2 *He did evil in the eyes of the LORD*. After Hezekiah's twenty-nine-year godly reign, Manasseh turned Judah back in the other direction. Had Hezekiah not given appropriate attention to his heir, or did Manasseh make his own choice despite his father's best efforts? We cannot be sure.

33:3 *He rebuilt the high places*. Hezekiah, going further than any other of the good kings before him, had destroyed the high places, the alternative sites for worship. When Manasseh reestablished these worship locations, he was encouraging pagan worship, or, at best, worship of the true God in forms that were more pagan than biblical. The erection of Asherah poles and altars to the Baals led the people further astray into idolatry.

33:4 *He built altars in the temple of the LORD*. Manasseh was born too late to remember the glorious celebrations when his father rededicated the temple (2 Chron. 30). Where Hezekiah had brought Jerusalem revival the city had not seen for centuries, his son Manasseh took Judah further into pagan practices than the land had seen since God's people first entered it. These practices included worship of the stars and other pagan gods in the Jerusalem temple (33:7), and equally evil, sacrifice of his own sons to those gods (33:6).

of forgiveness, he did teach the young man an important truth: The effects of some sins can't be easily undone; they are far-reaching and pervasive. The rabbi's reputation had been ruined, and saying "I'm sorry" wouldn't change that.

Even though we're forgiven of our sins, what consequences might remain? Does God hold leaders more accountable for their example than other people? Why are people more apt to remember the negative things a leader has done than the positive? Today's lesson on Manasseh is a gripping reminder on the far-reaching and unchangeable effects of a leader's sin.

1 A leader's influence can lead others astray (2 Chron. 33:1–9).

NIV

- 1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years.
- 2 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.
- 3 He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he also erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them.
- 4 He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever."
- 5 In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts.
- 6 He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced divination and witchcraft, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger.
- 7 He took the image he had made and put it in God's temple, of which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever.
- 8 I will not again make the feet of the Israelites leave the land I assigned to your ancestors, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them concerning all the laws, decrees and regulations given through Moses."
- 9 But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.

KJV

- 1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem:
- 2 But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

4 Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

8 Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.

9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

God had already begun to teach his people the lesson that sin leads to judgment. He had been teaching it all along throughout Israel's history, but even more pointedly through the exile of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. The southern kingdom teetered perilously, awaiting the same fate. Under King Hezekiah, revival came to the land, and the idolatry that was so prevalent among the people was almost wiped out. Then came Manasseh, Hezekiah's son. Unlike his father, Manasseh **did evil in the eyes of the LORD** (2 Chron. 33:2). He followed the debased and **detestable practices** (v. 2) of the neighboring nations. He desecrated the **temple** of God by erecting **altars** there to **all the starry hosts** (v. 5). **He sacrificed his children in the fire . . . and practiced divination and witchcraft** (v. 6). As we read through the list of sins in 2 Chronicles 33, it is no wonder he provoked the Lord to **anger**. Long before Israel or Judah had ever had a king, God had stipulated what kind of person he should be: "When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does

91

33:4 *My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever.* God had originally spoken these words in response to Solomon's prayer during the dedication of the temple (7:16). God's Name, of course, represented his own presence in the building, with his people. Note the repetition of these words (for emphasis) in verse 7.

33:6 *sacrificed his children.* Deuteronomy 18:10 prohibits nearly all the pagan practices listed in verse 6. Manasseh's grandson Josiah so desecrated the place of child sacrifice (called Topheth) in the Valley of Ben Hinnom as to make it unusable (2 Kings 23:10). (For other references to this place, see Isa. 30:33; Jer. 7:31; 19:5–6.)

33:8 *I will not again make the feet of the Israelites leave the land.* This verse continues the quotation that began in verse 7. The original quotation (in 7:16–20) states the promise of verse 8 only in the negative, that God would "uproot" his people from the land if they turned away from him and his ways. The promises of God's covenant certainly support the positive promise that God would give the land to his people and enable them to live in it if they followed him.

33:9 *more evil than the nations.* What a dreadful indictment! God had called his people to be a holy people, distinct from the surrounding nations. But under Manasseh's leadership, they fell short not only of that goal, but even of the poor standard upheld by the pagans.

notes

One

1. A leader is held responsible for leading others astray. Leaders are judged more strictly because of their influence.

2. They followed Manasseh because it was what they already knew. It was easier to follow the nations around them than to follow God, especially when no one else was doing it. No doubt many followed Manasseh because it was politically expedient.

3. Our standard for evaluation must always be God's Word. It would be right to oppose a leader in the church when he or she blatantly disregards the Bible.

TWO: Have someone in your church either give personal testimony to dramatic conversion or have someone role play a biblical or historical figure who had a dynamic conversion.

33:10 *they paid no attention.* Were they so far from God that they could no longer hear his voice? God likely spoke through his spokespeople, the prophets (v. 18), but Manasseh and his followers ignored their words.

33:11 *the king of Assyria.* The most powerful nation in the broader region, whose leaders, if they chose, held virtual control of Judah. Assyria had already taken the northern kingdom into exile.

33:11 *hook in his nose.* An ancient statue shows an Assyrian king holding ropes with which he leads four defeated enemies. The four ropes are each connected to a prisoner by a hook in his nose.

these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you" (Deut. 18:9–12). It appears that Manasseh did exactly what God had commanded his people *not* to do.

The biggest problem when a leader falls into sin is that they don't usually fall alone. Manasseh's sin affected an entire nation. The people followed his wretched example. **But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites** (2 Chron. 33:9).

ONE

explore

1. Read Matthew 18:6 and James 3:1. What do these reveal about the responsibility of a leader?
2. Why did the people of Judah and Jerusalem follow such a wicked ruler? What would make them so easily turn away from the Lord?
3. By what standard do you evaluate your leaders? When might it be right to oppose a leader?

2 God can restore a fallen leader (2 Chron. 33:10–13, 15–16).

NIV

10 The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.

11 So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

12 In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors.

13 And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.

15 He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the LORD, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. **16** Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.

KJV

10 And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.

11 Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13 And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.

15 And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.

16 And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

Even though God was angry with Manasseh and his people, he was faithful to continue to speak to them, to call them to repentance. But verse 10 says, **they paid no attention**. Perhaps God had spoken to them through his written word or through the prophets, through circumstances or through the voice of conscience. First Timothy 4:1–2 speaks of those whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. The more we ignore God's voice, the harder it is to hear him. Once our consciences have been seared, there is little hope for repentance. But God chose to shout one last time at Manasseh. This time he paid attention. God brought an army against him, and Manasseh was taken prisoner, with a **hook in his nose and bound . . . with bronze shackles**, to **Babylon** (2 Chron. 33:11). There's nothing quite like a desperate situation to bring a leader to his knees! When Jonah wound up in the belly of a great fish, he also had a change of heart and cried out to the Lord. Manasseh, too, prayed and **sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors** (v. 12). And he was sincere. God heard his prayer and brought him back to Judah. **Manasseh knew** from what had happened that **the LORD is God** (v. 13).

Read Hebrews 12:7–11 to see how God uses discipline to draw people back to himself. Manasseh didn't just pay lip service to God to get out of a sticky situation. He returned to Judah a changed man. He did everything he could to undo the sins of his past. Second Chronicles 33:15–16 tells us he removed the foreign gods, images,

33:11 *took him to Babylon.* At about this time, Babylon tried to escape Assyrian control. Perhaps Manasseh had allied himself with Babylon in that attempt. If so, then the Assyrians would have felt he deserved cruel punishment.

33:12 *he sought the favor of the LORD.* Perhaps this is the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament conversion of Saul. God can bring even his worst enemies unto himself.

33:13 *the LORD was moved by his entreaty.* In accord with 7:14, when God's people humble themselves and pray, God hears their prayer and removes their sin.

33:15 *He got rid of the foreign gods.* Verses 15 and 16 show Manasseh's sincere attempt to reverse all the pagan influence he had exerted on his people. One by one, he removed the idols and restored the appropriate God-appointed worship site in the temple.



Two

1. Some others with miraculous conversions include the apostle Paul, Saint Augustine, D. L. Moody, Charles Finney, Billy Sunday. Try to find testimonies within your own group of a father or mother or group member who had a miraculous conversion experience.

2. Maybe it's just a matter of personality. Some people always seem to learn the hard way. Some might not be accustomed to hearing God's voice and they ignore it because they don't recognize it.

3. Invite two or three class members to share their experiences.



EXAMINE

THREE: Bring out the board you used to open the lesson. Use it as a visual image as you discuss the influences left from Manasseh's sin.

33:17 *The people . . . continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.* Despite Manasseh's best efforts, the people came only halfway back to God. They turned from idols to God, but continued to worship at the shrines of their own choice. Likely, they continued to use pagan worship practices, even as they worshiped the true God.

and altars he had set up in God's temple. He restored everything to its original place and offered sacrifices. He even **told Judah to serve the LORD** (2 Chron. 33:16).

TWO

explore

1. Manasseh's story is one of a miraculous conversion. Can you think of others (either from Scripture or from modern times) who had similar miraculous changes in their lives? What caused their change?
2. Why do you think some people respond quickly to God's still small voice, while others need to be shouted at through adversity to obey God?
3. What method has God used most successfully in your life?

3 The effects of sin cannot always be reversed (2 Chron. 33:17–23).

NIV

17 The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

18 The other events of Manasseh's reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel.

19 His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself—all these are written in the records of the seers.

20 Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

21 Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years.

22 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon worshiped and offered sacrifices to all the idols Manasseh had made.

23 But unlike his father Manasseh, he did not humble himself before the LORD; Amon increased his guilt.

KJV

17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel.

notes

19 His prayer also, and how God was intreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.

20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

21 Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem.

22 But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them;

23 And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

Even though Manasseh was a changed man and desired to serve the Lord, he had lost his influence among the people. He told the people to serve the Lord (and he was the king). **The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places** (2 Chron. 33:17). His influence was limited because of his past. He had already set the precedent of disobedience, and it was almost impossible to stem the tide.

Everything that Manasseh did was **written in the annals of the kings of Israel** (v. 18), including his prayer to God. His prayer and God's answer, along with all his sins and unfaithfulness and the locations of every idol he set up before he humbled himself were all **written in the records of the seers** (v. 19). Even though he had been forgiven, there was a record kept that couldn't be erased. No matter how righteous Manasseh tried to be, he could not undo the sins of the past. He couldn't erase his entire past and start over. He had influenced an entire generation to sin.

It's bad enough that Manasseh lost influence with his people, but worse yet he lost influence with his own son. After Manasseh's death, his son Amon succeeded him as king. **He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done** (v. 22). **But unlike his father Manasseh, he did not humble himself before the LORD; Amon increased his guilt** (v. 23). His son followed in his footsteps. The influence of Manasseh's former life was more pervasive than his influence after he turned back to the Lord. And the consequences were disastrous. Manasseh himself might have been saved, but his kingdom and his family were destroyed.

33:18 *the annals of the kings of Israel*. The Chronicler evidently reviewed written official histories as he compiled his own account. The earlier documents have never been found.

33:19 *His prayer . . . his sins*. In his summary, the Chronicler reversed the chronological sequence of Manasseh's life. Writers usually place words or events they wish to emphasize last. Manasseh did repent, but perhaps the effects of his sin overwhelmed the results of his repentance.



Three

1. He followed in his father's footsteps and taught his son to do the same. He worried more about pleasing God than pleasing himself or others.

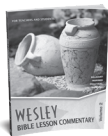
2. He never promised to reverse everything. That is one of the hard lessons of life.

3. When we come to faith in Christ we often gain a deeper understanding of the effects of our past actions. We would like to be able to "fix" all our past mistakes, but it's not always possible for us to "do" something to rectify the past. We must simply place it in the Lord's hands.



Closing

Prayerfully raise the issue of restitution for wrongs we have done to others. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal and enable the people in your class to make restitution where it is needed. Have them share their experiences of making restitution with the class next week.



Help your class connect with the truth from this week's study in the Word—try the activity "Ever Since the First Consequence" from *Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary*

Volume 2.

THREE

explore

1. What do you think Manasseh might have done differently if he had known the ultimate outcome of his actions beforehand?
2. If God erases all our sins when we come to Jesus, why doesn't he erase the negative influence we had on other people?
3. What can we do about the past? Why is the past often so difficult to release?

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

Most of us who gave our hearts to Christ at a later age live with regrets. Some of us pay the consequences of previous sinful behavior through poor health, poverty, estranged relationships, etc. There is nothing we can do about our pasts, but there is much we can do about our futures! We can listen to God when he speaks softly and obey him instantly, instead of having to wait for God to shout at us through adversity. Can you think of something God has been speaking to your heart about? Have you been ignoring him? Decide today that you will listen now. Determine in your heart that you will not be an ungodly influence in anyone else's life, that you will live your life from now on in such a way that will draw others to Christ instead of away from him. Remember that God will be gracious to you if you follow him in obedience.

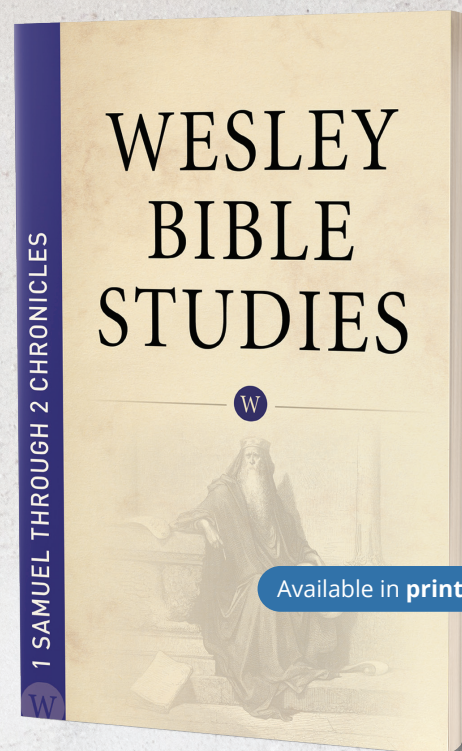
notes

Thoughtful. Powerful. Wesley.

This Wesley Bible Studies resource combines accessible commentary from contemporary teachers, with relevant quotes from the writings and life experiences of John Wesley, along with the poetry and hymns of his brother Charles.

ISBN: 978 0 89827 866 8

E-ISBN: 978 0 89827 867 5



Available in **print & e-book!**

Order online at **wphstore.com** for a special discount.



wphstore.com
1.800.493.7539



ISBN: 978-1-63257-558-6



9 781632 575586