

THE KINGDOM IS DIVIDED

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 1 KINGS 11 & 12



A divided heart leads to a divided life.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Solomon loved the world – Solomon took wives from among the pagan peoples of Canaan despite God's warning. These foreign women eventually led Solomon's heart away from the Lord. As a result, Solomon began serving false gods. Solomon's "heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God," (1 Kings 11:4). Solomon was afforded great privileges. The kingdom was passed on to him. He was given the honor of building a glorious temple for the Lord; and the Lord also appeared twice to Solomon. The Lord reached out to Solomon and gave him the name Jedidiah, which means "beloved of the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:25). In spite of God's obvious favor, Solomon disobeyed God by taking 700 wives and building high places for the Canaanite gods. Solomon fell tragically – from building the Temple of the Lord to building temples for false gods.

Mercy in Solomon's judgment – After listing the charges against Solomon, the Lord brought punishment against Solomon. One would expect God to instantly wipe out Solomon and perhaps even all of Israel. But instead of swift and complete judgment, God remembered the righteousness of David (Solomon's father) and extended mercy. God told a servant of Solomon that the kingdom would be torn from Solomon's children and divided. But, for the sake of David and Jerusalem, whom God has chosen, the tribe of Judah would be spared. From that time on, God allowed no peace in Solomon's kingdom and raised up adversaries against Solomon. But God did demonstrate grace by allowing Solomon to continue to lead for the sake of his father David (see 1 Kings 11:34). Solomon resisted the judgment of the Lord by trying to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam escaped to Egypt. God loves us, as he loved Solomon, so he will not allow us to prosper forever. In due time, he allows the consequences of our sin to come to us that we might repent.

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Rehoboam's foolish pride – After God said he was going to give Jeroboam ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, Jeroboam returned from Egypt and asked Rehoboam, Solomon's son, to reduce the tax burden. Rehoboam rejected the council of the older advisors. Instead he chose the council of his friends who suggested he increase the taxes. In addition, Rehoboam threatened oppression.

The ten northern tribes (Israel) broke off from Judah and Jerusalem just as the Lord had said. Rehoboam planned warfare to bring them back under the house of David, but the Lord commanded him not to go to war against his relatives, for it was the Lord's doing that the kingdom had been divided (1 Kings 12:23). Rehoboam listened to the Lord's command.

Jeroboam grew arrogant. Instead of being faithful to the Lord, he built places of worship in his land so that his people would not have to travel to Jerusalem. Worse, he built golden calves like Aaron had done years earlier after the crossing of the Red Sea. Then Jeroboam said to the people, "Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28 and Exodus 32:4). Instead of remembering their past sins and resisting a new temptation, the people were eager to follow Jeroboam and embrace pagan worship again.

Where Is Jesus?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Even though Solomon's sin of setting up idols was great, God remembered David, a man after His own heart. In the midst of the Lord's rebuke of Solomon, He says this: "I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen", see 1 Kings 11:13. In Revelation 21:2-10 we learn that Jerusalem remains the name of God's heavenly city.

Even in the judgment of Solomon, God remembered there would be another king in Jerusalem, and one day a new Jerusalem.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Malachi 3:1-3

Connecting the passage to Christ:

In this passage, Malachi prophesied the coming of John the Baptist, who would prepare the way before Christ, in this passage. There is also a hint that when Christ comes, He will judge the earth and provide an acceptable offering to bring Israel back into favor with God.

Questions for reflection:

- Where is Jesus in this passage? (Jesus is the one who is to come, before whom a prophet will prepare the way. In Matthew, Jesus identifies John the Baptist as that prophet, a second Elijah.)
- What is the offering that Jesus will provide to appease God? (Jesus comes to offer Himself. It will be through His sacrifice that any thing we have to offer will once again be acceptable to God. Now we can offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to our God. Because of Jesus our service to God is no longer tainted by our sin and compromise.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

WHICH TEAM AM I ROOTING FOR?

Supplies

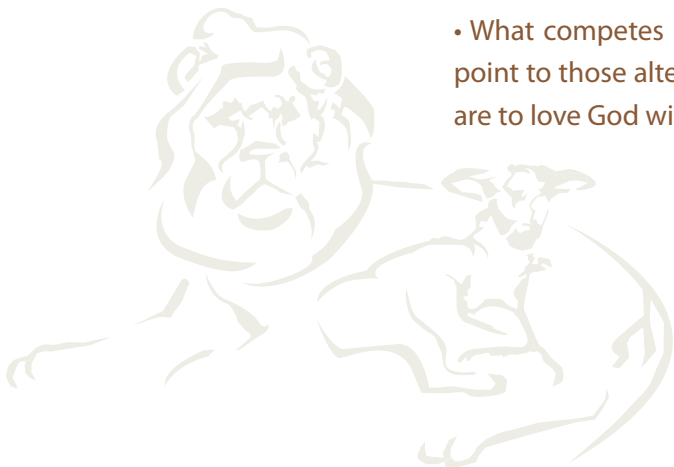
- team jersey and cap
- matching team-colored balloons and streamers

Depending on the sporting season and your local teams, pick a rival team to which the class will object. Decorate the room and wear the rival team cap and shirt.

When the children arrive, someone is likely to comment and object to the room's décor. Tell them that you decorated the room and ask them if they like it. When they say no, ask why not. They should object to the fact that it supports a rival team. Ask what team they like and go on to say how you are also a fan of that team. If others in the class mention a third team, say that their team is also your favorite. Continue this to demonstrate divided loyalties.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Who here thinks I am a good, loyal fan? (They should answer that you are not a good, loyal fan.)
- Why am I not a good loyal fan? (Your support, affections, and loyalty are divided.)
- How is my life and divided heart toward sports teams like Solomon's divided heart towards God? (Solomon tried to follow both God and false gods, but God said that we are to love Him only and have no other gods before Him.)
- What competes in your life for your affections for God? (See if the children can point to those alternate loves that capture their hearts. Point out to them that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength.)



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A DIVIDED HEART

Supplies

- glass jar
- 700 colored stones (use multi-colored decorative river stones that can be purchased through a landscaper or at a craft supply store)

This is to demonstrate the shallow nature of Solomon's love for God and his wives.

Walk around the classroom showing the jar to the children. Spark their curiosity about the rocks by asking them if they think the rocks that are attractive. Ask them if they have rock collections at home and then ask who might be interested in having one of the rocks.

Ask for three volunteers. Have them come to the front of the class. Pour a handful of rocks on a table and ask the first volunteer to pick out one rock they like best. Pour about a quarter of the rocks onto the table and ask the second volunteer to pick out the ten rocks that they like best. Finally pour the remainder of the rocks on the table and ask the final volunteer to pick out the 700 rocks they like best. Hurry them along and stop them once they have picked out about fifty.

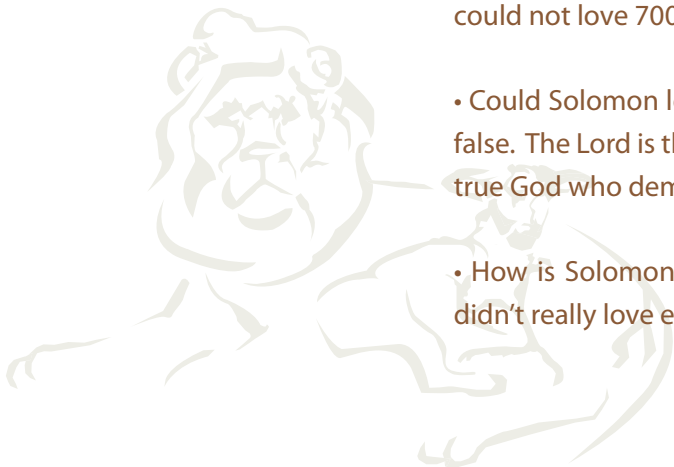
The object here is to help the children see that although you could take care in picking out one wife or husband, when you divide your attention over 700 wives, you cannot possibly care for them. You might ask the third volunteer to put 700 rocks in his or her pockets.

When you tell them that Solomon had 700 wives, it will not be hard for the children to see that this is not wise.

Also, take time to explain that these wives did not love the Lord nor did they serve the Lord. Instead they led Solomon astray and he worshipped other gods.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Did Solomon love his wives? (No, Solomon could boast about 700 wives but he could not love 700 wives. God directs us to love one spouse all our lives.)
- Could Solomon love other gods and still love the Lord? (No, the other gods were false. The Lord is the only true God. To worship other false gods is to disrespect the true God who demands all our worship.)
- How is Solomon's love for God and his love for his wives the same? (Solomon didn't really love either his wives or God. Solomon's love was divided.)



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YOUTHFUL ADVISORS

Supplies

four older, wise adults

This exercise is to demonstrate the foolishness of choosing inexperienced advisors from among our friends and rejecting the wise counsel of those older than we are.

Pick two volunteers from the class. Tell one to choose four trusted advisors from among his or her friends. Tell the second volunteer you have brought in older outside advisors as his or her counselors.

Ask both the following questions and have them seek counsel from their advisors and then report their answers to the class. The volunteers may elect to have a counselor answer the question for them if they like.

1. What is the best way for a young person to build a solid credit rating?
2. What majors in college should be avoided due to their inability to translate into solid employment opportunities?
3. What guidelines should a person follow to know whether they should rent an apartment or purchase a home?
4. What amount of life insurance should a newly married father of one carry on himself?
5. What are the pitfalls of commission-only sales jobs? When is it acceptable to take such a job?

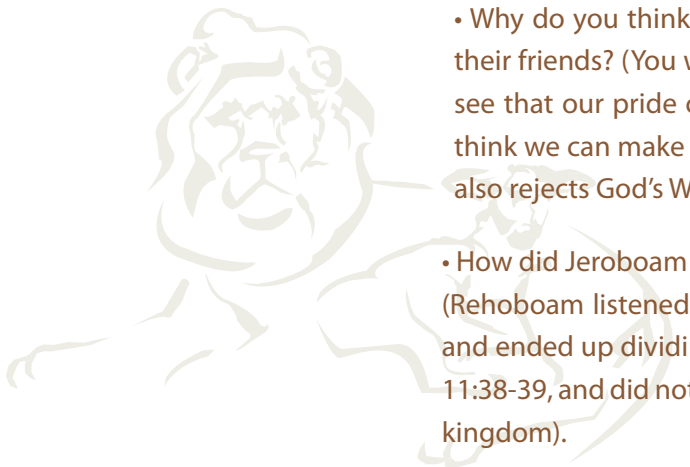
The difference in counsel should be significant.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- Which group of counselors would you rather have advising you? (Most of the class, if not all, should say the adults.)

- Why do you think young people often reject the counsel of adults and listen to their friends? (You want to point out the sin of pride here and help the children to see that our pride causes us to reject those in authority over us. Pride makes us think we can make independent decisions or take counsel from our friends. Pride also rejects God's Word.)

- How did Jeroboam and Rehoboam demonstrate pride in the decisions they made? (Rehoboam listened to his youthful friends instead of the trusted older counselors and ended up dividing the kingdom. Jeroboam rejected God's counsel, see 1 Kings 11:38-39, and did not follow the Lord, but set up alternate gods in Israel (the northern kingdom).)



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AHIJAH'S CLOAK

Supplies

- 2 yards of fabric to represent Ahijah's cloak
- Red felt to make a cross

Before class cut out an 8" red felt cross and hot glue it to ten inches of the fabric cut from the 2 yard long piece (hot glue it to the underside of the fabric at the end so that it is visible to the children when you hang the piece of fabric down.) Cut a one inch slit in the fabric so that it will be easier to tear in class during the drama below.)

Prior to class fold the cross inward to hide it until later you reveal it.

Start the class by teaching the children that in spite of Solomon's wisdom he made the mistake of thinking his wisdom was the greatest. God's wisdom is the greatest and God gave Solomon and all the kings of Israel a few simple instructions which can be found in Deuteronomy 17:16-20. Read this to the class and explain the three things the king was not to do is accumulate many horses, wives, and riches. Make it a point to also explain that the king was to read this law every day.

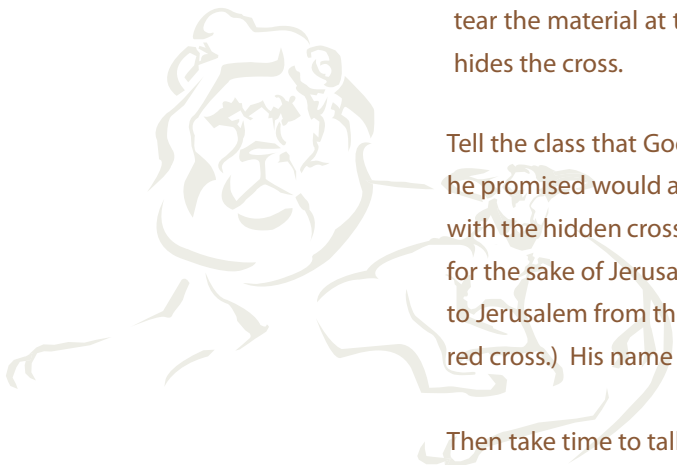
Solomon did not follow God's wisdom. Read 2 Chronicles 1:14-15 which tells us that he accumulated 12,000 horses and made silver and gold as plentiful as the stones. Also read 1 Kings 11:1-4 where it mentions that Solomon had 700 wives.

Explain to the class that God was angry with Solomon and told him that he would tear the kingdom away from his son but leave on tribe for the sake of King David and Jerusalem. The other tribes would be given to one of Solomon's servants. (See 1 Kings 11:9 and following.)

Then pick up the cloak you made and wrap it around you like a shawl. You should grasp the extra piece with the cross on it in your right hand hiding the cross from the children. Explain to the class that the person God would give the kingdom to was Jereboam. God sent the prophet Ahijah to Jereboam to let him know what was going on. Read Jereboam's prophecy from 1:kings 11:26. While you are explaining that Ahijah tore his cloak into pieces, tear the material at the cut you made and throw it to the floor along with the piece which hides the cross.

Tell the class that God spared the tribe of Judah for Solomon's son for the sake of David who he promised would always have an heir on the throne. At that point pick up the folded piece with the hidden cross and hold it up high for the class to see. Tell them that God spared Judah for the sake of Jerusalem. Then tell them that there would be another king who would come to Jerusalem from the tribe of Judah. (At this point allow the material to unfold revealing the red cross.) His name would be Jesus. God's plan for salvation was bigger than Solomon's sin.

Then take time to talk about how sparing Judah made way for the Gospel.



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw a picture of Solomon and then 700 wives' faces around him. (They will, of course, not have enough room on the page, which can help you to emphasize just how foolish Solomon was in his choices.)



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FOR OLDER GRADES

Compare 2 Corinthians 6:14 and God's command not marry unbelievers with God's command to Solomon and all the men of Israel not to take foreign women as their wives, see Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

Ask the class the following questions:

- If you marry an unbeliever, when do you think your conflicting beliefs would affect you most? (The contrast would be evident in many areas like prayer, church attendance, child-raising, etc. There is no specifically right answer.)

List all their responses on the board and talk about how foolish it is to marry unbelievers in light of all the challenges listed. Perhaps the greatest answer that the children might miss is that marrying an unbeliever may actually cause you to stop following God in order to be more like your spouse.

- How did Solomon's wives lead him to forsake God?

Have the children look over 1 Kings 11:1-8.

- How was God's mercy evident to Solomon in light of the judgment forecast in Deuteronomy 7:1-5? (God could have destroyed Solomon quickly but He did not.)

- Why didn't God destroy Solomon? (God was looking ahead to Christ, who would provide the sacrifice needed to for Israel's redemption and forgiveness. God, for the sake of His promised redemption, spared a remnant of Israel.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Ashtoreth – Ashtoreth is the Sidonians goddess of love. Not only did Solomon have many wives, but because he worshipped this goddess of love, we see into the wickedness of his heart. Solomon abandons the Lord and His command and instead seeks a god who will validate his practice of taking hundreds of foreign women as his wives.

