

Template 2: Main Lesson, Activity and Discussion Questions | Ages 5 to 11, Read Aloud Lesson, Scripture Centered, Apologetics Rich, Christ Centered

WEEK 30 | SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2026

God's People Turn Away, and God Still Calls Them Back

Primary Scripture: 2 Kings 17:7 to 15, Kings Overview

BIBLE TIMELINE PLACEMENT

After Solomon's reign ends, the united kingdom splits into two. This week is a wide angle overview covering roughly two centuries of history before we slow back down next week to focus closely on one of God's prophets, Elijah.

BIG IDEA

God's people repeatedly turned away from Him, but God's mercy and His promises never failed, leading all the way to Jesus.

1 OPENING BIBLE FOUNDATION

Before we begin, let's remember something wonderful. The Bible is not just one book. It is sixty six books, written by more than forty different people, across a very long time, in different places, facing different situations. And yet every single page tells one true story, God's story. Today we cover a much bigger stretch of that story than usual, roughly two hundred years, and even here, every page still points to Jesus.

2 MEMORY VERSE

Our memory verse this week comes from Lamentations 3:22 to 23, written by someone looking back over this very stretch of history.

MEMORY VERSE
Lamentations 3:22 to 23
<i>The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning.</i>

That means no matter how many times God's people turned away, God's kindness toward them never ran out and never gave up. Let's say it together. The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning. We are going to need this verse today, because the story we are covering gets hard before it gets hopeful.

3 SETTING THE SCENE

Last week Solomon asked God for wisdom and received more of it than any king before or after him. Solomon ruled for about forty years, and his kingdom grew strong and wealthy. But near the end of his life, even Solomon's heart began to wander from God. Today's lesson picks up right after Solomon dies, and it covers a much longer stretch of time than usual, following a pattern that repeats again and again across many kings and two different nations.

4 MAIN LESSON NARRATIVE

Have you ever watched the same thing happen over and over again, almost like you could predict it before it happened? Maybe a sibling keeps making the same mistake, or a friend keeps falling into the same argument, no matter how many times someone warns them. That is exactly what we are going to see today, except this pattern plays out across kings, and nations, and hundreds of years of real history, and it matters more than almost any single story we have covered so far, because it shapes everything that happens for the rest of the Old Testament.

Last week we watched young Solomon ask God for wisdom, and God gave him more wisdom than anyone before or after him. Solomon ruled for about forty years, and under his leadership Israel became strong, wealthy, and respected. But near the end of his life, even Solomon's wise heart began to wander. He married many foreign wives who worshiped other gods, and slowly, Solomon allowed some of that worship into his own kingdom. Even the wisest man who ever lived was not immune to turning away from God.

When Solomon dies, his son Rehoboam becomes king. The people come to Rehoboam and ask him to lighten the heavy workload Solomon had placed on them. Rehoboam's response is harsh and foolish, he threatens to make things even harder. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel have had enough. They rebel and form their own kingdom in the north, keeping the name Israel. Only two tribes remain loyal to David's family line in the south, forming the kingdom of Judah. The one united kingdom God's people had enjoyed under David and Solomon splits in two, and it never comes back together.

The very first king of the new northern kingdom, a man named Jeroboam, makes a decision that shapes everything that follows. He worries that if his people keep traveling south to Jerusalem to worship at God's Temple, they might eventually want to reunite with Judah and remove him from power. So Jeroboam builds two golden calves, sets one up in the north and one in the south of his kingdom, and tells the people to worship there instead. This is strikingly similar to something that happened generations earlier at Mount Sinai, when the people built a golden calf while Moses was on the mountain. Jeroboam's choice becomes so significant that the Bible describes king after king after king in the northern kingdom as walking in the sins of Jeroboam.

One king in the northern kingdom becomes remembered as one of the worst in this entire story, a man named Ahab. Ahab marries a foreign princess named Jezebel, who worships a false god called Baal, and together they lead Israel deeper into idol worship than ever before. It is against this exact king, in this exact darkness, that God sends one of His most famous prophets, a man named Elijah, whose whole story we get to hear next week. Keep that name in your mind, Ahab, because it will help next

week's lesson make even more sense.

Our memory verse this week comes from a different part of the Bible, written much later, looking back over this entire stretch of history. The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning. Let's say that together. Hold onto this verse, because you are going to need it as we walk through what comes next.

Here is the pattern that repeats, generation after generation, for roughly the next two hundred years. God's people, especially in the northern kingdom, turn to worship false gods, gods with names like Baal, gods that could not see, or hear, or save anyone. God, because He loves His people, sends prophets. Real, historical people, sent with real messages, warning the people to turn back before it is too late. Some of these prophets have names you may already know, or will get to know soon, Elijah, and Elisha, who each get their own lesson in the weeks ahead.

Sometimes, a king actually listens. A few kings in Judah tear down the idols, reopen the Temple, and lead the people back toward God for a season. One of the best examples comes from a young king in Judah named Josiah. While workers were repairing the Temple, someone discovered an old scroll tucked away and forgotten, the Book of the Law, God's own words to His people. When it was read aloud to Josiah, he was so struck by how far the nation had drifted from what God commanded that he tore his own clothes in grief, a sign of deep sorrow in that culture. Josiah then led one of the most thorough reforms in this whole story, tearing down idols across the land and renewing the people's commitment to God. For a while, Judah turned back. But the pattern almost always resumes. The next generation forgets, or a new king undoes the reforms, and the cycle of turning away begins again.

Now, someone might wonder, is this really true history, or is this just a collection of religious stories? That is a fair question to ask. Archaeologists have found records from Assyria and Babylon that mention actual kings of Israel and Judah by name, confirming events the Bible describes. This is real history, about real nations, not a made up tale.

Let's say our memory verse again, because we are about to reach the hardest part of the story. The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning. Even here, especially here, that verse is true.

Eventually, the warnings the prophets gave for so long come true. The northern kingdom, Israel, is conquered by a powerful empire called Assyria, and many of its people are carried far away from their homeland. Later, the southern kingdom, Judah, is conquered by an empire called Babylon, and many of its people are carried away too, including the beautiful Temple Solomon had built, which is destroyed. Think about what that would have felt like, losing your home, your city, and the place where your family had always worshiped God, all at once. This is a sad, heavy part of the story, and it is honest to say so. Generations of turning away from God led to real consequences, and the Bible does not hide that from us or soften it into something easier to hear.

But here is where we begin to see something absolutely beautiful, something that could only come from God. Even in the darkest chapter of this whole story, God does not let go of His promise. Do you remember what God promised David a long time ago? That David would always have a descendant on the throne, forever? Even through the split kingdom, even through generations of unfaithful kings, even

through exile in a foreign land, God quietly, faithfully preserves David's family line. Not because David's descendants earned it. Because God keeps His word, no matter what.

This is where we begin to see our need for Jesus, and it might be the most important thing we learn all year. Every single human king in this entire story, every king of Israel, and even the best kings of Judah, including faithful Josiah, eventually failed God's people in some way, or simply died and left the job to someone less faithful after him. Not one of them could lead perfectly forever. Not one of them could fix the deepest problem, which was never really about kings and kingdoms at all, it was about hearts that keep wandering away from God. No law, no reform, no good king, however sincere, could change that on its own.

Centuries later, born into that same preserved family line of David, in a little town called Bethlehem, a different kind of King arrives. Jesus never worships a false god. Jesus never leads His people astray. Jesus never fails, not even once. Where every earthly king in this story eventually let God's people down, Jesus never does, and He never will.

This whole sweeping story also helps us understand something wonderful about God Himself. God the Father kept sending prophets, generation after generation, to call His wandering people home. Jesus the Son is the King those prophets were pointing toward the whole time, the one who would finally get it right. And the Holy Spirit is the one who today helps God's people actually hear those warnings and turn back, instead of hardening their hearts the way Israel and Judah so often did.

So what does this mean for you, this week? If you are honest, you probably know what it feels like to drift away from something you know is right, a little bit at a time, without even meaning to. Maybe it started with one small choice, being unkind to a friend, ignoring your parents, being lazy about the things you know you should do, and before long that one small choice became a habit you almost do not notice anymore. That is exactly what happened to God's people across these two hundred years. It rarely started with someone deciding all at once to abandon God completely. It started small, one compromise at a time. But the same God who kept calling them back is calling you too, and His mercy for you is not used up. It is new again this morning, and it will be new again tomorrow morning too.

Let's say our memory verse one final time, because it is the whole point of everything we learned today. The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning. No matter how far you feel like you have wandered this week, that mercy is still there, waiting, new, this morning, right now.

This story could have ended in exile, in failure, in silence, with the family line of David scattered and forgotten like so many other ancient royal families in history. Instead, threaded through every page of it, God kept a promise alive until it was fulfilled perfectly in Jesus, the King who never turns away, and who calls every wandering heart to come home.

5 WHY WE CAN TRUST GOD'S WORD

The books of Kings record real history about real nations, confirmed by archaeological discoveries outside the Bible that mention actual kings of Israel and Judah by name. When the Bible describes centuries of kings, prophets, and eventual exile, we can trust that this really happened. If you ever wonder whether something in the Bible actually happened, that is a good question, and it is always welcome here.

6 WHAT THIS SHOWS US ABOUT JESUS

This long stretch of history shows us that no human king, no matter how good, could lead God's people perfectly or permanently. Every king in this story eventually failed in some way. Centuries later, born into the same family line God preserved through every collapse and exile, Jesus arrived as the King who never fails. Jesus lived a perfectly faithful life, never once turning away from God, then died on the cross to bring wandering people home, and rose again on the third day, proving He truly is the King this entire story was pointing toward.

7 GOD REVEALED AS TRINITY

This overview does not show Father, Son, and Spirit acting together in one single scene, but the whole Bible helps us see the full picture across this history. God the Father kept sending prophets to call His wandering people back. Jesus the Son is the King those prophets were pointing toward the whole time. And the Holy Spirit is the one who helps God's people today actually hear and respond to God's call, rather than hardening their hearts. God is one God in three Persons, always at work, even across centuries of human failure.

8 LIFE APPLICATION

This week, think honestly about the small ways you might be drifting from what you know is right, a little bit at a time, without even meaning to. That is exactly the pattern God's people fell into over and over. The good news is that God's mercy for you is new again this morning, and turning back to Him is never too late.

9 DEFENDING THE TRUTH

What if a friend says the Old Testament is just made up stories about kings, not real history?

Archaeologists have found actual records from Assyria and Babylon naming real kings of Israel and Judah, confirming this really happened, not just a religious story.

Scripture to remember, 2 Kings 17:13. The LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet, saying, turn from your evil ways.

How to say it kindly. You could say, historians have actually found records outside the Bible that back this up, so this is real history, not just a story someone made up.

10 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Core Questions for All Ages

Why did the kingdom split into two after Solomon died?

Solomon's son Rehoboam treated the people harshly, so ten tribes rebelled and formed their own kingdom in the north.

What was the sin of Jeroboam, and why did it matter so much?

Jeroboam set up golden calves for the people to worship instead of going to Jerusalem, and nearly every king after him continued that same sin.

What was God's pattern of response when His people turned away?

God kept sending prophets to warn the people and call them back, again and again, across generations.

What eventually happened to Israel and Judah because of generations of turning away?

Israel was conquered by Assyria, and later Judah was conquered by Babylon, and many people were carried away from their homeland.

Optional Deeper Questions

Even during the darkest parts of this story, what promise did God keep?

God preserved the family line of David, keeping His promise of an eternal King alive until it was fulfilled in Jesus.

How is Jesus different from every other king in this story?

Every human king eventually failed God's people in some way, but Jesus never turns away and never fails.

Is there a small way you have noticed your own heart drifting from God lately?

Personal reflection, no single right answer. Encourage honest sharing.

What does it mean to you that God's mercy is new every morning, even after a pattern of getting it wrong?

Personal reflection. Encourage children to express hope and relief.

11 HANDS ON ACTIVITY

Activity Name

The Pattern Chain

Purpose

Help children physically see and feel the repeating cycle of turning away and being called back, and see how God's promise thread runs through the whole story unbroken.

Supplies

Construction paper strips in two colors, for example gray for turning away and gold for God's call to return, plus one long strip of a third color to represent the unbroken promise. Tape or a stapler.

Time Needed

12 to 15 minutes.

Preparation Before Class

Cut paper strips ahead of time, enough for each child to build a short chain.

Step by Step Instructions

Give each child a handful of strips in the two cycle colors. Have children alternate linking one turn away strip, then one called back strip, repeating several times to form a chain, representing the repeated pattern in Israel's history. At the very end of everyone's chain, add the single special colored strip, representing God's unbroken promise through David's line, leading to Jesus. Hang the chains up together and talk about how the pattern repeats, but the promise thread never breaks, no matter how long the chain gets.

Scripture Connection

Lamentations 3:22 to 23, God's mercies new every morning, even after chapter after chapter of turning away.

Debrief Questions

What did it feel like to keep repeating the same two colors over and over? What was different about the final strip? How is that like God's promise running through this whole story?

How to Adapt for Younger Children

Pre cut and pre count the strips, and help younger children link them, focusing more on the visual pattern than a detailed retelling.

How to Adapt for Older Children

Have older children label each strip with a specific event or king's name from the lesson before linking them into the chain.

12 OPTIONAL REVIEW GAME

Game Name

Turn Away or Turn Back

Purpose

Reinforce the lesson's core pattern and vocabulary in a fun, low supply way.

Supplies

None needed.

How to Play

Call out short scenarios or lesson facts. Children respond by shouting turn away if it describes turning from God, or turn back if it describes returning to Him, for example worshiping golden calves is turn away, a king tearing down idols is turn back. After a few rounds, ask a quick review question before continuing.

Review Questions and Answers

What did Jeroboam set up for the people to worship? Golden calves. What did God keep sending to call His people back? Prophets. What empire conquered Israel? Assyria. What promise did God never break, even through exile? His promise to David's family line.

13 TEACHER CLOSING

Today we learned about roughly two hundred years of Israel's history, a repeating pattern of God's people turning away from Him, and God patiently, persistently calling them back through prophet after prophet. We learned that this pattern eventually led to real consequences, exile from the land God had given them. But we also learned that even in the darkest chapters of this story, God never broke His promise to David, and that promise led all the way to Jesus, the King who never turns away and never fails. Jesus loves every single child in this room, exactly as you are, right now, even on the days you feel like you have wandered far from Him. Let's say our memory verse one more time together. The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning. Let's pray. Dear Jesus, thank You for never turning away from us, even when we turn away from You. Thank You that Your mercy is new every morning. Help us come back to You quickly when we wander, and help us trust that You never give up on us. In Jesus' name, amen.

14 TAKEAWAY TRUTH

No matter how far I wander, God's mercy is new every morning, and Jesus never turns away.