

LESSON 3

THE KINGDOM DIVIDES

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: We Can Follow God

SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 12

GOD'S BIG STORY: Afraid Israel might split, King Rehoboam chooses his friends' advice over that of wise elders, leading to the very split he wanted to avoid. Jeroboam, leader of the northern kingdom, also listens to unwise advice, which leads to idol worship.

WORD OF WONDER: Come near to God, and he will come near to you. —James 4:8a

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

Two kings, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, were the first to lead the divided kingdom of Israel. King Solomon's son, Rehoboam—the natural-born king—would rule the southern kingdom, and Jeroboam—son of one of Solomon's officials—would rule the northern kingdom.

WHAT?

Big decisions have big consequences, so when Rehoboam neglected to listen to the wise elders, Israel's united kingdom became divided. Because he listened to his young friends, the country broke out in civil war, and 1 Kings records the history of two kings, two capitals, and two religions.

WHERE?

The *divided kingdom* refers to the southern kingdom—called *Judah*—which continued to be ruled by David's family line and included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and the northern kingdom—called *Israel*—which included the other 10 tribes of Israel.

WHEN?

The kingdom of Israel was established under King Saul, strengthened under King David, and reached the height of its glory under King Solomon (David's son). Solomon, however, turned away from God, making the division of the kingdom inevitable.

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Even when the kingdom of Israel divided, God remained faithful to His people and never stopped loving them. Sadly, the northern kingdom, Israel, had only ungodly kings. Judah in the south, however, had several kings who loved and followed God, such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

Play Stations

Greet the kids warmly and briefly explain the play stations to them. Invite them to play at any of the stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help you get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas about what we'll be learning today?

Play Station: Cars and Trucks

Set up: Set out small toy cars and trains. Use painter's tape to create four paths on the floor: a straight line, a zigzag line, a swirly line, and a triangle.

Play: Let the kids play using the cars and trains to follow the tape and pretend it's a road. Encourage them to follow the paths and choose one car or train to be the "leader" that the others follow. You can even let them make their own path with painter's tape.

Play Station: Super Shoes

Set up: Print one [Super Shoes Sheet](#) for each kid, and set out decorative stickers and coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids decorate a shoe they would want to wear as they follow God.



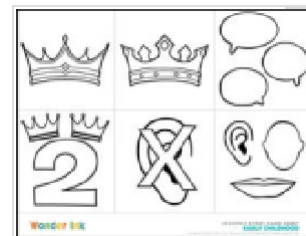
Play Station: The Kingdom Divides Coloring Sheet

Set up: Print one copy per kid of the coloring sheet and set out the coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. The kids can also turn the sheet over and draw someone they follow.

Craft: Story Cards

Ahead of time, print a Story Card Sheet on cardstock for each kid. Set out writing or coloring utensils, kid-safe scissors, glitter glue, and jewels.



We're going to make story cards to help us tell today's story. It starts with two kings. Does anyone remember their names? Allow the kids to respond. They were Jeroboam and Rehoboam. Jeroboam got some good advice and some bad advice. Which did he listen to? Allow the kids to respond. The bad advice. Then the kingdom of Israel split into two! Rehoboam didn't follow good advice either and he didn't worship God. Neither king listened to God or followed Him. We can listen to God and think, say, and do what God wants us to do. We can follow God! Let's make story cards to help us remember that!

Give each kid a Story Card Sheet and invite them to color and cut out the pictures. Then they can mix up the pictures and put them in order to tell the story. They can decorate the pictures with glitter glue and jewels (for the crowns). They can write their own good advice (we can follow God) using writing or coloring utensils in the speech bubbles.

This is what the kids will see and how it helps them tell the story:

- Crown—King Jeroboam
- Another crown—King Rehoboam
- Speech bubbles—Getting advice
- 2 with crowns—Israel split into two kingdoms
- Crossed out ear—Not listening to good advice or following God
- Ear, head, and mouth—Listening, thinking, and saying what God wants us to

Take turns using your cards to tell the story to each other. Then take them home and tell the story to someone else. Remember that we can follow God.

Identity

Closing Game: Follow the Leader

In our story today, we learned about two people who didn't follow God or listen to advice from people who followed God. God wanted the kingdom of Israel to be one nation and one group of people. God wanted both kings to lead His people closer to Him but both kings followed bad advice. They led the Israelites away from God. When we follow God, we need to be careful who we listen to. We can follow God! Let's play a game where we all get to take turns leading and following.

Have the kids form a line (or two lines, if you have a lot of kids.) The first kid will be the leader. The kids will march around the room doing whatever action or motion the leader does. To make it more challenging, the leader can say one thing (Example: "Clap your hands") and do something else (such as patting your head) and tell the kids in the line to only do what the leader does, not what the leader says. Every 20–40 seconds, switch leaders and let someone else lead the group. Every time you switch leaders, invite all the kids to say, "I can follow God!"

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish the activity, pray with them and thank God for leading us.

God, thank You for being the best leader. Help us always listen to and follow You, no matter what happens. We love You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands are open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: God loves you! He has given you the Bible, and He has put people in your life to share godly advice with you. May you listen to God's voice this week and always!