

OS

DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

LEADER GUIDE


the **GOSPEL**PROJECT.

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ADULTS



FALL | 2025

GOD'S WORD FOR YOU

WE NEED THE TRUE KING

The last verse in the book of Judges—a book that chronicles the downward spiral of disobedience of those who were called to be radically different as the people of God—is one of the most depressing verses in the Bible: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did whatever seemed right to him” (Judges 21:25). Is this not a fitting definition of sin? In this one verse, we see the prideful root of self-lordship, self-exaltation, and self-determination at the core of all our rebellion. We are, in our own minds, the gods of our own universe; we choose whatever is right and wrong for ourselves, and anything that imposes some authority over us other than our own autonomous minds, hearts, and desires is a constraint that must be thrown off.

As sinners, we are like the Israelites of old, convinced of our own truth, our own ideas, and our own wisdom. Our sin has blinded us to what is truly good and right, and it's precisely because of this blindness that we need a true king.

We need a king who tells us the truth, guides us with justice, and leads us in righteousness—a king who can open our eyes to these things and more. Because we are enslaved by sin, the true king must not only be our ruler but also our rescuer.

In Jesus, we find this King—the One before whom every knee will bow and whose greatness every tongue will eventually confess. In Jesus, the true King has come. He is the King of love as well as the King of power. In Jesus, and in Him alone, will we finally find all our desires for peace, security, and wholeness met.

We must then acknowledge that every other king we seek to enthrone is only a substitute for Jesus. It is far better for us to trust in Jesus, not only as our rescuer but also as our ruler, and to acknowledge that all authority has been given to Him.

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THE EDITOR

Our lives are a series of decisions and choices we make that can result in positive or negative consequences. If we try to base these decisions on our own thoughts and morality, we will soon realize that it will lead to pitfalls in life. That's why we need God, His Word, His Spirit, and His people to help us and teach us the way toward life. But even with those things, we may choose not to listen and still choose our own prideful ways.

This is as true of us as it was of God's people of old, the Israelites. Though God sent prophets to point them toward the right path, the Israelites chose their own path many times, deciding to do evil in the Lord's sight. The few that were faithful, from kings to commoners, found joy in the Lord and His Word. But those who weren't found that they made their own destructive paths. And in the end, the split kingdom of Israel and Judah both failed to be faithful to the Lord and both became captive to their enemies.

Through it all though, God's mercy and compassion still overcame. God did not destroy them completely as they deserved, but He sent prophets to let them know a day of hope was coming, a day when a Savior would come and lead and guide them and take away their sins. God would restore and refresh His people, and they would follow Him toward life everlasting.

These prophets were pointing to Jesus, the Messiah. He is the hope that we all need. He took on our sin and made atonement, which restored our relationship with the Father. He put His Spirit in us and established a new covenant that we would have life with His presence forevermore. Praise be to God!

Y Bonesteele

Team Leader

The Gospel Project for Adults



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The Gospel Project®

Adult Leader Guide

Fall 2025

Volume 2, Number 1

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FROM LINE LEADER TO CLASS MONITOR

By Dwayne McCrary



Being the class line leader as a preschooler was a highlight for most of us. But as we got older, being line leader called for more tact especially when being line leader included monitoring the class and maintaining order. We wanted to do a good job for the teacher, but we also wanted people to play with us on the playground and still sit with us at lunch. Gaining the teacher's trust without appearing to be the class favorite was an even greater challenge. And we understood the ramifications of telling on a classmate if we rode on the same bus or walked the same path home. We had to be the eyes and ears of the teacher while also being trustworthy and learning to communicate with our classmates.

Those same characteristics are important for us in the role of a Bible study leader.

EYES AND EARS

Just like the teacher could not be in two places at once or see everything going on in the class, neither can the church staff and leaders be everywhere or see everything going on in the church. We can help them by being their eyes and ears. This begins with prayer requests.

Most prayer requests shared are an expression of a need and reveal the values of a person. Time does not permit for requests to be shared in a worship setting. Imagine what it would be like if your pastor took time this Sunday to go row by row and collect prayer requests from each person present. Whatever we had planned for lunch would now be for supper. However, individuals can share requests in a Bible study group, and we can take the time to pray for that need specifically.



We also become aware of needs that need to be addressed beyond saying a prayer. Our group may then be able to mobilize and address the need or formulate a plan for how a need may be met. We may need to bring the discovered need to the attention of a church leader, who can then connect us with other resources and people who can help as well.

One of the roles we play as the group leader is maintaining
a focus on reaching those far from God.

HONESTY AND TRUST

Certain students were relied on more than others when it came to being class monitor. Much of that depended upon whom the teacher could trust. Being class monitor required honesty with the teacher. If that honesty was broken, our turn to be class monitor again could be a distant hope. But that trust extended to the class as well. Some classmates were preferred over others not because they were lenient but because they were fair. Everyone was given the same treatment.

As Bible study leaders, our church leaders trust us, but so do our group members. Honesty and fairness are still valued just like they were for the class monitor. When we are asked by church leaders about how our group is going, we can be honest and avoid making things look better or worse than they are. If we are not fair, then decisions and plans made by the leaders may be doomed from the get-go.

Our group also trusts us to be fair to them. When they have a comment or question, they should expect us to hear them out and help them find an answer. They also expect us to value their thoughts as much as we value ours and the thoughts or others in the group. We want to place Scripture ahead of our opinions but that does not negate the reasons a person may have for believing what they believe. We can challenge beliefs in a way that fosters trust by asking questions and pointing them to Bible passages for them to consider in their formation and reformation of their personal beliefs.

CARE AND COMMUNICATION

Being the eyes and ears and maintaining trust require communication skills. The class monitor needs to be able to express what needs to be expressed to the teacher and to the class they are monitoring. As Bible study leaders, we need to develop those same kinds of skills.

When a need is expressed in the group, how we communicate to others outside the group takes some thought. For example, if a person expresses frustration with their job and some of his supervisors are also in the church but not in the group, how that request gets stated for people outside the group matters. “John is asking God to help him better represent Christ in his work” may be the best way to communicate the request without putting John in a compromised position with his supervisors if they happened to see the request.

When church leaders approach us about the potential of starting a new group so the church can more effectively reach the community, we can help the group understand the strategy and role they can play in reaching people who are not involved in a Bible study group. We become the voice for the church leader, helping them accomplish the tasks God has called them to carry.

When we had opportunities to be line leader and class monitor in our younger years, we probably did not realize how those experience and skills would help us be an effective Bible study leader. Being the eyes and ears, building trust, and finding ways to communicate were essential then and they are essential for us now.

Dwayne McCrary is the manager of the Adult Ongoing Bible Study team at Lifeway.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

The Gospel Project for Adults aspires to point to the gospel of Jesus Christ through weekly group Bible studies and additional resources that show how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. This curriculum provides theological yet practical studies that immerse your group in the STORY of the gospel, helping to develop a gospel CULTURE that leads to gospel MISSION.

GOSPEL STORY

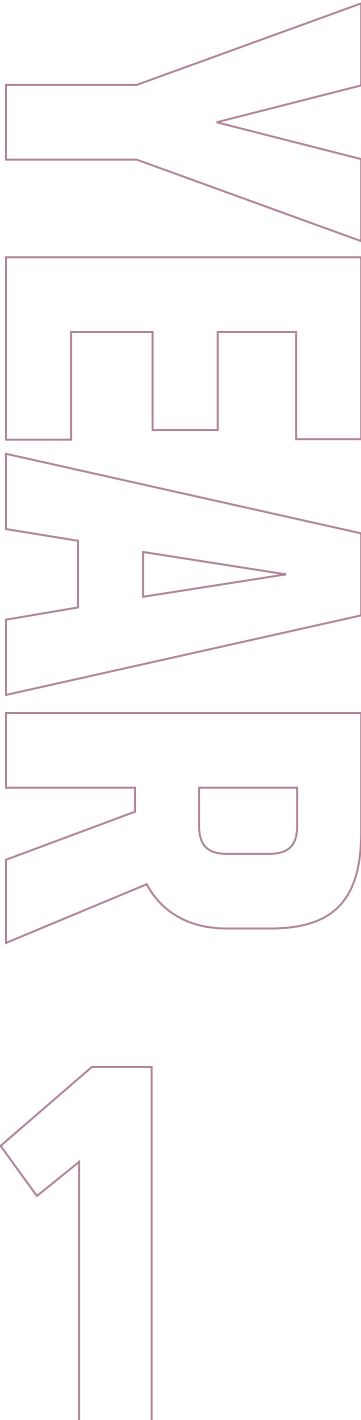
Our aim is to help people see the storyline of Scripture, the thread from the beginning to end, that weaves God's plan to rescue and redeem His creation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL CULTURE

Our hope is that the message of the gospel saturates our understanding of Christ, increasing our joy in Him, helping doubters become believers who become declarers of the gospel.

GOSPEL MISSION

Our desire is to empower believers to live on mission, declaring the good news of the gospel in word and deed for God's glory and the growth of His kingdom.



VOL 01:
CREATION AND COVENANT

(Genesis; Job)

Fall 2024

Unit 01: Foundations

Unit 02: God's Promises

Unit 03: Struggles of Faith

VOL 02:
LAW AND LIFE

(Exodus–Deuteronomy)

Winter 2024–25

Unit 04: God's Miraculous Work

Unit 05: God's Character

Unit 06: Humanity's Selfishness

VOL 03:
LAND AND LOSS

(Joshua–1 Samuel)

Spring 2025

Unit 07: God Is for His People

Unit 08: God Delivers His People

Unit 09: God Cares for His People

VOL 04:
FOOLISHNESS AND WISDOM

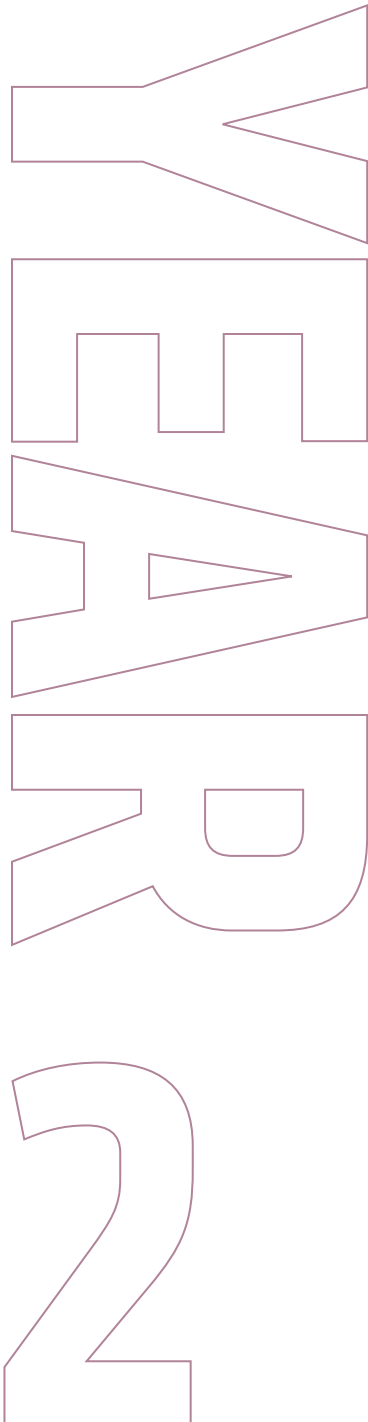
(1 Samuel–1 Kings; Wisdom Literature)

Summer 2025

Unit 10: The Foolishness of God's People

Unit 11: Everything Belongs to the Lord

Unit 12: The Need for Wisdom



VOL 05:
DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

(1 Kings–2 Chronicles; The Prophets)

Fall 2025

Unit 13: Divisions

Unit 14: Renewal

Unit 15: Decline

VOL 06:
PROPHETS AND PROVISION

(The Prophets; Ezra–Esther)

Winter 2025–26

Unit 16: God in the Exile

Unit 17: God in the Restoration

Unit 18: God in the Return

VOL 07:
THE SON HAS COME

(The Gospels)

Spring 2026

Unit 19: The Arrival

Unit 20: The Preparation

Unit 21: The Ministry

VOL 08:
THE SON HAS AUTHORITY

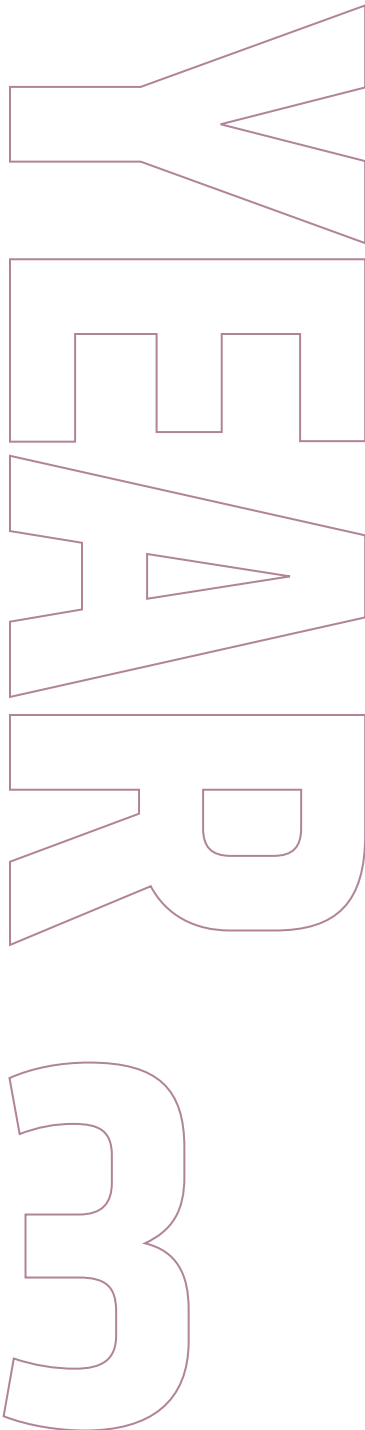
(The Gospels)

Summer 2026

Unit 22: Responses to Jesus

Unit 23: The Way of Jesus

Unit 24: The Teachings of Jesus



VOL 09:
THE SON HAS TRUTH

(The Gospels)

Fall 2026

Unit 25: The Truth of His Power

Unit 26: The Truth of His Actions

Unit 27: The Truth of His Kingdom

VOL 10:
THE SON HAS RISEN

(The Gospels; Acts)

Winter 2026–27

Unit 28: The Final Days

Unit 29: Post-Resurrection

Unit 30: The Gospel Spreads

VOL 11:
THE CHURCH HAS A MISSION

(Acts; The Epistles)

Spring 2027

Unit 31: Sharing Truths of the Mission

Unit 32: Living Out the Mission

Unit 33: Christ Focuses Our Mission

VOL 12:
THE CHURCH HAS A FUTURE

(The Epistles; Revelation)

Summer 2027

Unit 34: We Are in Christ

Unit 35: We Are Citizens of Heaven

Unit 36: Jesus

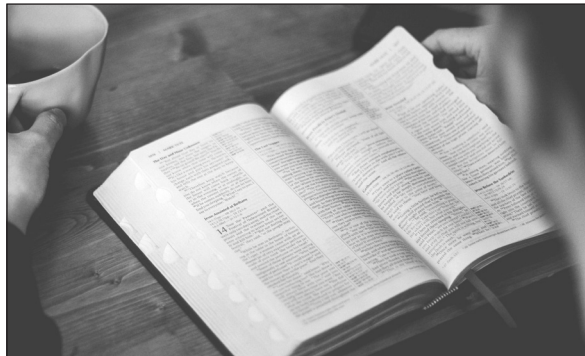
HOW TO USE THE LEADER GUIDE

The Leader Guide is an important tool in your personal and group experience with The Gospel Project for Adults. Here's how to make the most of your time with it:

1) READ THE WORD DAILY

Begin each week by reading the Scriptures according to the Daily Readings. These Bible readings will help you mentally and spiritually prepare for the group experience each week while also building healthy Bible study habits for personal growth. The daily readings will help you understand the context of the Bible story for each week's session and fill in the gaps between sessions. The weekly psalm reading will help you think worshipfully and prayerfully about the story's place in the greater redemptive narrative of the Bible. And the timeline will give you a visual perspective so you can place the Bible story in the larger context of the Bible's storyline.

- **Daily Readings**
- **Chronological Timeline**



TIMELINE

Solomon Marries Foreign Women, Turns to Idolatry, and Is Disciplined by the Lord (1 Kings 11)

SESSION STUDY: Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam Lead Their Nations in Idolatry (1 Kings 12-14)

The Prophet Elijah Confronts Ahab (1 Kings 17-21)

Rehoboam Accepts Foolish Advice; the Kingdom Is Divided (1 Kings 12)

Wicked Ahab Becomes King in Israel (1 Kings 16)

Daily Readings

<input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: 1 Kings 12:25-14:20	<input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: 2 Chronicles 11:5-14:1
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: 1 Kings 14:21-15:24	<input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: 2 Chronicles 14:2-16:14
<input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: 1 Kings 15:25-16:34	<input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 135



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

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2) STUDY FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

The Personal Preparation section contains the Scripture passages that will guide you and your group to prepare for Bible study during the week before group time begins. A Bible study prompt will help you engage with the Scripture passage, but encourage your group to do more than what's asked in the prompt. Space is provided for you and your group to add notes and questions and markings that will help you study the passage more deeply and see any nuances about the words and phrases of the Scripture provided. In addition to a brief commentary with thought-provoking questions to help you and your group dig deeper into the text, leader notes will provide you with additional nuggets for understanding the Scriptures. Use this Personal Preparation to experience what your group is experiencing as they study the week prior. Consider what questions, thoughts, or challenges they might have while engaging with the Scripture passages.

- Scripture
- Commentary
- Questions

PERSONAL PREPARATION

Notes

SELF-INTEREST SKEWS OUR WORSHIP AND LEADS TO IDOLATRY (1 KINGS 12:25-32).

Circle Jeroboam's motivations, underline the actions he took, and then draw an arrow to the result.

25 Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. From there he went out and built Peniel. 26 Jeroboam said to himself, "The kingdom might now return to the house of David. 27 If these people regularly go to offer sacrifices in the Lord's temple in Jerusalem, the heart of these people will return to their lord, King Rehoboam of Judah. They will kill me and go back to the king of Judah." 28 So the king sought advice. Then he made two golden calves, and he said to the people, "Going to Jerusalem is too difficult for you, Israel, here are your gods who brought you up from the land of Egypt." 29 He set up one in Bethel, and put the other in Dan. 30 This led to sin; the people walked in procession before one of the calves all the way to Dan. 31 Jeroboam also made shrines on the high places and made priests from the ranks of the people who were not Levites. 32 Jeroboam made a festival in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the festival in Judah. He offered sacrifices on the altar; he made this offering in Bethel to sacrifice to the calves he had made. He also stationed the priests in Bethel for the high places he had made.

Jeroboam, the newly enthroned ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, worried about losing his power, so he worked to solidify his control. First, he built up his defenses at key military points in the region. But his main concern was the worship practices of his subjects: If the people went to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, they would eventually return to the king of Judah. So Jeroboam created his own substitute religion for the worship of the Lord.

The Lord had told Jeroboam that if he would follow the Lord like David, the Lord would establish a dynasty for him as well (1 Kings 11:38). Instead of following the Lord's commandments, however, Jeroboam took a page from the Israelites' playbook in Exodus 32:4—he made two golden calves. Instead of brute force, Jeroboam appealed to people's love for convenience and set up two places of worship, with one calf on the southern border in Bethel and one in the north at Dan. He also opened the priesthood to tribes other than the Levites. Jeroboam's religion was inclusive and convenient, but his self-interest skewed Israel's worship and led the whole nation into idolatry.

LEADER NOTE: What Jeroboam introduced to Israel is called syncretism, a blending of religions. He sought to mix the worship of the Lord, with its priesthood, sacrifices, and festivals, with the trappings of pagan idol worship. Jeroboam's false worship would mar the Northern Kingdom for their whole existence as a nation.

32 Unit 13 | Session 2 | Divided Kings

Key Concept: Our sin and false worship anger God.

Notes

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

SIN AS IDOLATRY: Sin is not only a physical act of rebellion against God, such as lying or stealing, but it is also a matter of the heart (Matt. 15:10-20). In Scripture, idolatry usually refers to bowing down to a statue made of wood or gold, worshipping created things instead of the Creator. But idolatry can take on more subtle forms: a seeking of approval, security, power, pleasure, etc., where the desires of our heart have turned into idolatrous demands (Jas. 4:1-3).

What are some ways we might skew our worship of God for convenience or self-interest?

The Levites, who were supposed to make God's sacrifices and teach His law, were righteously angry about the appointment of non-Levites to lead worship. So they left and moved south to Judah (2 Chron. 11:15-17). With their departure, the spiritual shepherds of the north were gone.

These spiritual shepherds were to teach the Israelites the law so they in turn could disciple their children as they went about everyday life (Deut. 11:19). But with their departure, the tribes in the north lost all semblance of faithful worship and simply followed their king into his imposed idolatrous worship practices. They quickly forgot that whom we worship and how we worship matters greatly to God.

LEADER NOTE: The mandate for God's people to disciple their children has never ceased; rather, it has been expanded. In Matthew 28:18-20, also known as the Great Commission, Jesus commanded all His followers to make disciples throughout the nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all Jesus commanded. This discipleship process is not dependent on a class of priests because in Christ we are a kingdom of priests to lead in His praise (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

How can we be on guard against imitations of the true worship of God to which we are called?

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3) DIRECT THE GROUP EXPERIENCE

The Group Experience for each session includes an activity and interactive questions designed to be used in the group context to engage your group in active learning. The personal prep you and your group put into the days leading up to your group time will provide a richer discussion and more thoughtful theological applications to mutually encourage each other during your group time. The first page of the Group Experience will help you engage your group members as they arrive. Dialogue suggestions describe the context, transitions, and a recap of Bible readings or previous sessions to remind your group of what has already been studied or give a framework for where the lesson is heading. The second page gives a visual representation of the activity from the Personal Study Guide. A teaching outline helps guide your members through the activity and the debrief discussion.

Key Concept: Our sin and false worship anger God.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 30 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find “Cheap Imitations.” Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s finding’s as they interact with Scripture.

Cheap Imitations
 Read 1 Kings 12:25-32; 14:21-26, and identify the ways Jeroboam/Israel and Rehoboam/Judah imitated forms of worship that angered the Lord.

JEROBOAM/ISRAEL	REHOBAM/JUDAH

Notes

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 1 Kings 12:25-32.

ENGAGE: Briefly restate the obstacles Jeroboam faced. Then ask the group to identify the imitations of faithful worship that Jeroboam introduced to his kingdom, Israel. Record these on the board along with the Scripture references. Read God’s promise to Jeroboam from 1 Kings 11:38: “After that, if you obey all I command you, walk in my ways, and do what is right in my sight in order to keep my statutes and my commands as my servant David did, I will be with you. I will build you a lasting dynasty just as I built for David, and I will give you Israel.” Ask: “How does Jeroboam’s off-brand worship compare to what the Lord called him to do?” Read 1 Kings 13:34 for the judgment of the Lord against Jeroboam: “This was the sin that caused the house of Jeroboam to be cut off and obliterated from the face of the earth.”

READ: Invite a volunteer to read 1 Kings 14:21-26.

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- **Group Activity**
- **Interactive Questions**
- **Theological Applications**

4) TAKE THE NEXT STEPS

After the recap of the activity, help your group take the next steps with the day's Scripture lesson by walking them through the Head, Heart, and Hands applications. Invite volunteers to share and discuss answers to the questions for their mutual benefit. Then take prayer requests and praises as you wrap up your group time. Space is provided to jot those down in your guide for prayer during the following week. And finally, guide your group to read and pray through the designated psalm, focusing your thoughts and words once more upon God's Word as you conclude the session.

Key Concept: Our sin and false worship anger God.

We can also be blatant in our rebellion, going after anything and everything but what the Lord has given us and called us to. The temptation is strong, but our salvation in Jesus and the powerful gift of God's Holy Spirit is more than adequate help us keep our eyes on God alone.

How do you guard your heart to protect it from temptation taking root?

HANDS: As believers in Jesus Christ, we have "[tasted] and [seen] that the Lord is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!" (Ps. 34:8). While imitation forms of worship tempt us to abandon the Lord, the world is full of people already caught in the trap and consequences of false worship, and many don't even know it. God has called us to challenge the imitations that hold sway over others by proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ and His gospel.

With whom will you share the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ this week?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Read Proverbs 21:4; Romans 14:23; James 4:17; and 1 John 5:17, recording what makes something a sin. Pray for a growing desire to avoid every kind of sin.
- Take a prayer walk through your home to see if there is anything that would dishonor God. Determine to rid yourself of those items.
- Seek out a prayer and accountability partner of the same gender to help you identify and reject imitation forms of worship in your life.

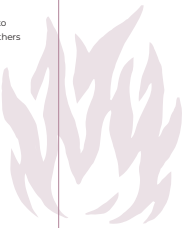
Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 31 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 135:13-21 with your group. Bless the Lord who is true and infinitely better than any imitations we might make or be tempted to follow.

Notes



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- Application Questions
- Scripture-Based Prayer
- Prayer Requests

DIVISION AND DEFIANCE

By Allyson Howell



Growing up in the land of SEC football, I saw a common yard decoration. It wasn't a gnome or a flamingo but a flag that said "House Divided" with a split down the middle. On either side would be the color and logo of a preferred team and an opposing preferred team on the other. One of the most curious divisions was that of Alabama and Auburn. This is one of the most intense rivalries in all of college football. My family's allegiance was to Auburn, and my younger self couldn't fathom a family member supporting that other team! It seemed impossible to live in the same house with an Alabama fan.

Football rivalries only matter during one game when the teams play each other. A couple can wear different colors and cheer for different accomplishments, and three-and-a-half hours later, it's over. You can boast about your team's win or pout about your team's loss, but life moves on and nothing is different. This kind of division is trivial and temporary, for most families.

But imagine all but one state in America stripped from their identity as an American state and given to an enemy ruler. This kind of conflict would evoke fear and uncertainty and would affect daily life. But even this doesn't capture the true devastation that Israel faced when the nation was divided. The split of the kingdom didn't just mean the descendants of Jacob were no longer a unified nation but that they were distanced from God. The security that came from knowing they were God's nation became fragile, whether they knew it or not. In their sin, they were divided from one another and divided from God.

DIVISION

Sin was the reason a formerly unified kingdom of Israel endured a painful and tumultuous division. Because Solomon allowed idolatry to gain a foothold in his life and Rehoboam followed in his father's foolish footsteps, the kingdom was divided.

From there on out, division was the defining reality of Israel's story. The kings of Israel and Judah were divided, often causing friction between their two nations. These rulers also led the people into idolatry, creating a division in their worship from the true God to false gods. God's people allowed the wicked practices of other nations to influence their worship and divide their hearts from full focus on the Lord. Elijah emphasized this point in 1 Kings 18:21 when he said, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" The question showed that the hearts of the people were divided—they were not in full allegiance to God or to the other idols.

This was not simply a physical or political division, it was spiritual. Not only were the nations themselves divided, but the people were divided from God's favor as they continued to pursue idols instead of God. Division from God meant removal from the safety and security He brought. It meant exposure to attacks from other nations and exposure to God's wrath and judgment.

The split of the kingdom didn't just mean the descendants of Jacob were no longer a unified nation but that they were distanced from God.

DEFIANCE

God's people allowed their own desires and idolatries to replace the relationship God offered to them in His covenant. Instead of recognizing God's faithfulness and great love for them, they chose to worship things made with human hands that were false gods and could not love them back.

As a response to this rebellion, God sent several prophets to call the people back to a right relationship with Him. Repeatedly the kings and people ignored these prophets. They were defiant in the face of God's chosen messengers, openly mocking their prophecies (2 Chron. 36:16).

Even one of God's own prophets, Jonah, acted in defiance against God and initially refused to share the message he was given (see Jonah 1–4). No one was blameless in the constant rebellion and dismissal of God's warnings. The people refused to listen, and yet, God demonstrated His continued love for the people in His patience and longsuffering.

Still, judgment was inevitable, and both Israel and Judah eventually were exiled from their homeland. Even in this, however, the story wasn't over.

While the prophets were warning of judgment and destruction to come, they were also pointing to a promise. In Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 37, we hear of God's promise to turn division and defiance into restoration and renewal. We also know that God's ultimate promise of salvation would come through a descendant from Judah in the line of David—One who sees all the ways we are defiant

and divided and takes the punishment for those sins upon Himself. Jesus would bring about the new kingdom, and He would be the perfect ruler, never leading the people to idolatry but only ever leading them to the throne room of grace.

God remains faithful. He will call His people back to Himself, and He offers forgiveness and relationship through Jesus Christ.

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THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 13

DIVISIONS



1 KINGS



MEMORY VERSE

“Then Elijah approached all the people and said,
‘How long will you waver between two opinions?
If the LORD is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow
him.’ But the people didn’t answer him a word.”

—1 Kings 18:21



A DIVIDED KINGDOM

CORE PASSAGE: 1 KINGS 12:1-8,10-17

CONTEXT

Solomon had been made the wisest man on earth by God, and his reign as king brought prosperity to Israel and glory to God as people came from all over to hear Solomon's godly wisdom. But Solomon married foreign wives who worshiped other gods that he eventually worshiped as well (1 Kings 11:4-8). Because of this evil, God told Solomon that He would tear the kingdom from him during his son Rehoboam's reign, leaving only one tribe for his son's rule. At his coronation, Rehoboam was presented with a choice of what kind of king he would be. His unwise decision fulfilled the Lord's judgment.

KEY CONCEPT

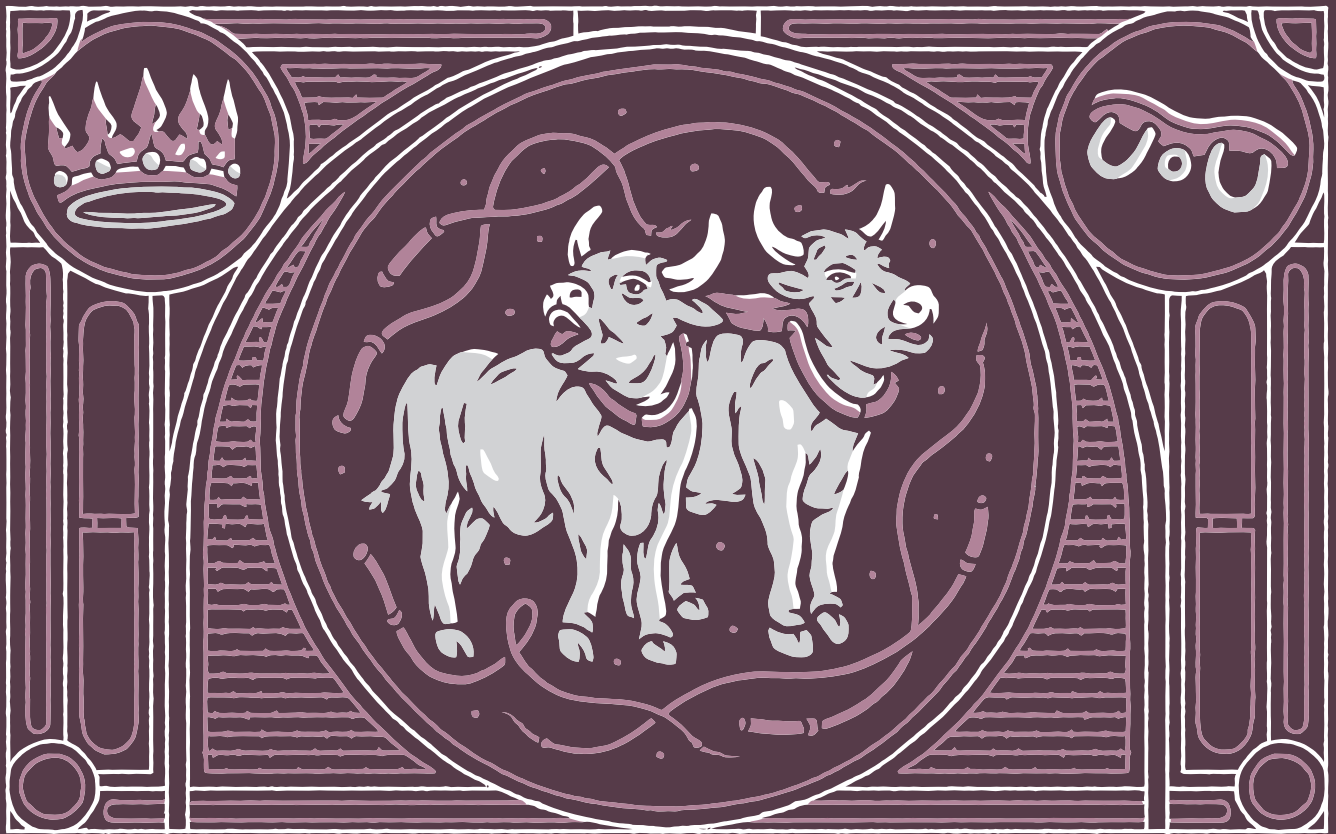
Division occurs when wisdom is ignored.

As you examine 1 Kings 12:1-8,10-17:

- Note the differences between Rehoboam's advisors and the advice they gave to their king.
- Recognize that God's sovereign will as prophesied to Solomon was being fulfilled through Rehoboam's actions.



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TIMELINE

Solomon Becomes King and God Gives Him Wisdom (1 Kings 1-3)

Solomon Marries Foreign Women, Turns to Idolatry, and Is Disciplined by the Lord (1 Kings 11)

Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam Lead Their Nations in Idolatry (1 Kings 12-14)

Solomon Builds the Temple and His Palace (1 Kings 5-9)

SESSION STUDY: Rehoboam Accepts Foolish Advice; the Kingdom Is Divided (1 Kings 12)

Daily Readings

- ☐ **Day 1:** 1 Kings 11:1-13
- ☐ **Day 2:** 1 Kings 11:14-43
- ☐ **Day 3:** 1 Kings 12:1-19

- ☐ **Day 4:** 1 Kings 12:20-24
- ☐ **Day 5:** 2 Chronicles 9:29-11:4
- ☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 72



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

REJECTING THE ADVICE OF GODLY ELDERS LEADS TO RUIN (1 KINGS 12:1-8).

Highlight the key words of the elders' advice given to Rehoboam. Underline the choice Rehoboam made.

1 Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. **2** When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard about it, he stayed in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon's presence. Jeroboam stayed in Egypt. **3** But they summoned him, and Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam: **4** "Your father made our yoke harsh. You, therefore, lighten your father's harsh service and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you." **5** Rehoboam replied, "Go away for three days and then return to me." So the people left. **6** Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon when he was alive, asking, "How do you advise me to respond to this people?" **7** They replied, "Today if you will be a servant to this people and serve them, and if you respond to them by speaking kind words to them, they will be your servants forever." **8** But he rejected the advice of the elders who had advised him and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and attended him.

Solomon had been a mighty king and brought prosperity to Israel, but his many building projects took their toll on the people. Israelites were conscripted to work up to a month at a time, followed by two months off, over the course of seven years to build the temple and another thirteen years for Solomon's palace, plus other constructions, cities, and places for his resources (1 Kings 5:13-18; 9:15-19).

When the Israelites came to the new king Rehoboam's coronation, they brought with them Jeroboam, who had once served Solomon as chief over the forced labor from his tribe but who had also rebelled against Solomon (11:26-28). No doubt the people believed Jeroboam was someone who could champion their cause with the young king. But behind the scenes some years earlier, the prophet Ahijah had told Jeroboam that he was chosen by God to be the instrument of judgment against Solomon and his lineage for the once-wise king's idolatry (vv. 29-40).

LEADER NOTE: Rehoboam's coronation at Shechem was an indication of his weakened position.¹ Shechem was where Abraham received God's covenant (Gen. 12:6-7) and where Joshua challenged the people to follow the Lord alone (Josh. 24). Yet Jerusalem was the city of David (2 Sam. 5:6-7) and God's chosen place for His temple (1 Kings 9:3). Choosing to meet the king in Shechem was like drawing a dividing line in the sand before negotiating.

Jeroboam and the Israelites presented their case to the king: If Rehoboam would reduce the hard labor Solomon had placed on the people, then they would serve the new king (12:4). Service to the king was an expectation of the people (1 Sam. 8), but the level of requirement could be misused and abused. Israel's kings were supposed to shepherd and serve for the good of their people, but sin and foolishness have derailed many from such goals.

Notes

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

CHRISTIANS AND THE SOCIAL ORDER: All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

How can believers faithfully fulfill their responsibilities to lead and to serve?

Rehoboam asked for three days to respond to the people's request. He sought advice from his father's advisors, who said he should be a kind servant leader. Following their wisdom would earn a good standing with his people, as kindness tends to do. But Rehoboam rejected their sage advice and instead would follow the unwise counsel of his peers.

LEADER NOTE: King Solomon wrote, "The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm" (Prov. 13:20). In choosing to reject the wisdom of the elders who had served his father, Rehoboam chose to be a companion of fools. Like Rehoboam, the young men had grown up in privilege and wealth in the palace and most likely did not have the experience to give sound advice.

Why is listening to wisdom and experience so important?

BEING A SELF-SERVING LEADER RATHER THAN A SERVANT LEADER BRINGS DIVISION (1 KINGS 12:10-17).

Highlight Rehoboam's response to the people. Underline the response of the people.

10 The young men who had grown up with him told him, "This is what you should say to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you, make it lighter on us!' This is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! **11** Although my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips.'" **12** So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had ordered: "Return to me on the third day." **13** Then the king answered the people harshly. He rejected the advice the elders had given him **14** and spoke to them according to the young men's advice: "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips." **15** The king did not listen to the people, because this turn of events came from the LORD to carry out his word, which the LORD had spoken through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat. **16** When all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them, the people answered him: What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. Israel, return to your tents; David, now look after your own house! So Israel went to their tents, **17** but Rehoboam reigned over the Israelites living in the cities of Judah.

Rehoboam had two options: gentleness or force. Out of pride, he followed the advice of his peers and spoke harshly to the people, not listening to their burdens, and this lack of consideration divided his kingdom. Being a self-serving leader rather than a servant leader brought division and rebellion against his crown.

LEADER NOTE: In Ecclesiastes 2:18-19, Rehoboam's father, Solomon, lamented: "I hated all my work that I labored at under the sun because I must leave it to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool?" Solomon's concern came to fruition in Rehoboam's response in his very first kingly decision.

The kind of leadership we exhibit will impact many situations in our lives. Our roles and responses in the family, workplace, neighborhood, community, and even our country can bring peace or cause division. Rehoboam should have listened to his elders and the proverbial advice of his father—"A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath" (Prov. 15:1). We would do well to heed this humbling advice as well.

LEADER NOTE: The elder's wise advice resembled the leadership Jesus modeled for His disciples (Matt. 23:11). In His incarnation, Jesus, the Son of God, took on flesh and assumed the form of a servant (Phil. 2:5-7), even washing the dirty feet of His disciples (John 13:4-20). The book of Acts tells how the disciples responded to Jesus's servant leadership. The legacy of their service has spread the gospel for generations across the map to reach even us.

What words could Rehoboam have used to respond as a servant leader?

God's sovereign judgment as prophesied to Solomon (1 Kings 11:9-13) and Jeroboam (vv. 26-40) was fulfilled through Rehoboam's foolish actions (cf. Ex. 7:3-4; 8:15). Rehoboam didn't listen to the people but responded harshly, and this whole scenario—the people's request, the king's response, and the people's rebellion—fulfilled God's word.

The discipline against Solomon was experienced and simultaneously earned by his son. Yet there was also purpose and grace in this punishment. Through the division, idolatry and pride were shown to be counterproductive. Some wise kings learned this lesson, while many foolish kings did not. Beyond this, the Lord showed His faithfulness and grace in keeping Rehoboam as king over the tribe of Judah because the Lord would not fail to fulfill His promise to David and to send us our Messiah-King—Jesus Christ.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Because of Solomon's idolatry (1 Kings 11:11-13), God would tear the nation away from him as He had with Saul. Because of His promise to David, the Lord would allow one tribe of Israel to remain under the authority of Solomon's son, Rehoboam (vv. 34-37). This nation would continue with the line of David's descendants that would eventually lead to the promised King and Savior, Jesus, the King of kings.

What are some ways you need to humble yourself to bring peace instead of division?

Notes

ARRIVAL

ENGAGE: As people arrive, form two teams, giving each team pieces of paper with the instruction “Work together to create a map or directions from here to _____’s house” (a friend/relative living in another city). Provide only one team with the address. Allow each group to share their results. Ask: “Would it be wise to follow the directions of the group who did not have the address?”

CONTEXT

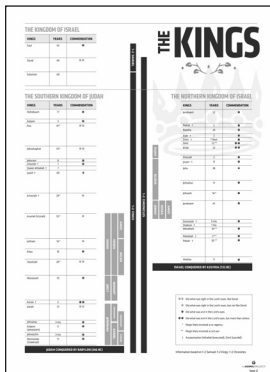
SAY: Solomon succeeded his father, David, as king of Israel. Solomon made peace with many surrounding nations, gained great wealth, and built the first temple. Yet he married many pagan women who turned his heart to pursue and worship their pagan gods. Therefore, God was angry with Solomon and told him that He would tear most of the kingdom away from his son (1 Kings 11:9-13). God also sent the prophet Ahijah to Jeroboam, a high-ranking servant for Solomon, to tell him that God was going to give him ten of the tribes of Israel to rule as a punishment to Solomon (vv. 29-39). Upon Solomon’s death, his son Rehoboam was set to become king over all Israel, but according to God’s word, that would not last. (*Display **Pack Item 2: The Kings** as a tool for the whole volume to help your group grasp the context of each session.*)

RECAP

ASK: Using information from this week’s preparation, did the nation gather to ask Rehoboam to divide them into two kingdoms? (1 Kings 12:1) What did the people want their new king to do? (v. 4)

SAY: Solomon’s many building projects had worn out his people, and they hoped for a change under Rehoboam’s rule. The elders advised Rehoboam to give the people time to take care of their own homes and families. But the new king had grown up as a prince and had friends who enjoyed the lifestyle. Rehoboam turned to his friends for advice, which was to establish himself as an even tougher taskmaster than his father. His “my way or the highway” attitude was not received well, and the people decided to reject him as their king, fulfilling what God had told Jeroboam.

TRANSITION: It would be unwise to treat the events in today’s Scripture as having historical significance but little or no value for our lives today. Let’s dig deeper as a group to see what we can glean for our decisions and actions.



Listen to session-by-session training every week on

Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, or Spotify

ministrygrid.com/gospelproject • gospelproject.com/leader-training.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 22 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find “Favoring Our Own Beliefs.” Recreate this table on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

Favoring Our Own Beliefs

Identify and record potential biases that existed for the people listed and how they influenced their decisions and actions.

REHOBOAM

REHOBOAM'S FRIENDS

THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Kings 12:1-17.

INFORM: Divide your group into three teams. Assign each team a person/group from the chart: Rehoboam, Rehoboam’s friends, and the people of Israel. Say: “We all have a tendency to favor information that supports our own existing beliefs, so we often dismiss other beliefs that don’t match with ours. As we look at the people from our passage today, let’s assess their biases.”

DISCUSS: Patiently ask the following questions as prompts for your groups to interact with the Scripture: “What biases may the person/group have had? Do you think they were aware of their biases? What factors may have led the person/group to develop the biases that came to guide the way they perceived things in their lives?” Encourage each group to share their responses.

IDENTIFY: Remind everyone of the other group—the elders who advised Solomon (vv. 6-7)—and add them to the table. Direct the group to identify potential factors that influenced the elders to give the new king the advice they did. *(They had lived a long time and had witnessed the consequences of Solomon’s demands on the people; they also had seen the good outcome of Solomon’s wisdom when acting on behalf of the people and for God.)*

Notes



ASK: “In whose interest were the elders acting?” (*the king’s and those who needed an opportunity to recover from all the work imposed by Solomon*) “In whose interest were the young men acting?” (*the king’s and their own*) “In whose interest was Rehoboam acting?” (*his own and his friends’*) “In whose interest were Jeroboam and the northern ten tribes acting? (*their own*)

CLARIFY: The elders reflected upon Solomon’s decisions and the impact his reign had upon the people of Israel. When their advice was ignored, everyone experienced the negative consequences. (*Display Pack Item 3: The Divided Kingdom to show the division between Israel and Judah and Rehoboam’s diminished kingdom.*) Point out that while his young friends are never mentioned again, Rehoboam had to live with the consequences of their advice. Sadly, Jeroboam also ruled foolishly. While the kings of Judah had their share of evil kings, virtually no king in the north followed the Lord faithfully.

DEBRIEF

How have you seen unity or division result from following someone’s advice?

(PSG p. 22) As an adult, whose advice are you listening to, and how do you assess if it is wise or foolish advice?

SUMMARIZE

Pass out copies of **Pack Item 4: Seeing Jesus in the Divided Kingdom** to help your group look for Jesus throughout this volume. Say: “Rehoboam’s foolish decision and the resulting division of the kingdom fulfilled God’s word to punish Solomon for his idolatry. But Rehoboam was responsible for his choices, just as we are responsible for our own unwise decisions. Still, we can trust the Lord to discipline faithfully (Jer. 17:9-10) and to work all things together for our good (Rom. 8:28), as He has shown us through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.”

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 23). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: The apostle James explained that worldly wisdom is marked by “bitter envy and selfish ambition,” but godly wisdom “is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense” (Jas. 3:14-17). God’s Word and Spirit help us to discern what is godly wisdom that we should follow.

What are some ways we can increase our exposure to godly wisdom?



HEART: When Rehoboam heard the people’s grievance, his heart was unmoved. Conversely in the Gospel accounts, we consistently find Jesus

is “moved with compassion” for the people following Him (Matt. 9:36; 20:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13). Jesus’s compassion moved Him to serve those in need.

How can you develop compassion for others to serve them like Jesus would?



HANDS: Rehoboam resisted wise advice that he did not like. Instead, he chose to go where he was comfortable, with his friends. Leaders inevitably have to make tough decisions as well as do uncomfortable, hard things—not the least of which is letting go of their own pride to follow good yet unpleasant advice.

How will you seek and follow wise counsel for a difficult decision in your life?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Read Proverbs 19:20; Isaiah 30:21; and Philippians 4:8. Pray that you will discern counsel that is wise from that which is self-serving.
- Recall any decision you have made recently that may not have been wise. If possible, take steps to correct that decision.
- Resolve to share wisdom with others rather than saying what they want to hear. Memorize Ephesians 4:15 to help you share that wisdom with love.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 23 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 72:1-4 with your group, thanking God for godly leaders He has placed in your life.

References

1. Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 2 Ch 10:1.

