

A KINGDOM TORN IN TWO

Bible Basis: 1 Kings 11:4–6; 12:1–33; 14:22–23, 26–28; 15:11–14, 16–24

Key Verse: Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. —1 Kings 15:11 NIV

Bible Point: God uses bad things to teach his people. I can learn from mistakes.

Resource: *The Story for Children*: Chapter 14: “A Kingdom Torn in Two”

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Stuff You Need: item and tools to safely smash the item (see below)

Bring in something that you can safely smash and a “smasher.” Some ideas include crackers and a rolling pin, or sugar cubes and a meat mallet. Set up the crackers or cubes in some sort of structure, then make a production of smashing them down. You might like to have a volunteer do the smashing. For easy clean up, do this activity outside or over a plastic tablecloth.

Talk about:

- Can we put those back together?
- Tell me about something that got destroyed and you couldn't put it back together.

Say, **Our Bible story today is about something that got torn apart and God's people didn't know if it could ever be put back together.**

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of *The Story for Children*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 14*, copies of Divided Kingdom Activity Sheet, safety scissors

Optional: something to make a breaking sound

Give each child an activity sheet. Tell the story from *The Story for Children*, Chapter 14. You can also have children find 1 Kings 14 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

The Kingdom Divides

As you tell the story, you'll pause as indicated and children will cut their maps into pieces. If your group is too large to have everyone cutting, you can simply cut one map as you tell the story. As you do this, hand the pieces to a few of the children. At the end of the story, these children can see if they can put the kingdom back together.

Optional: have an assistant use something to make a breaking sound as a signal for children to cut. This may be as simple as snapping a pretzel rod in half or playing a downloaded sound of glass breaking.

The first king of Israel was Saul. He was tall and handsome and popular, but he turned out not to be a very good leader. Next came David. David was a great king! Sure, he made some mistakes, but he was sorry for them and wanted to show his love for God more and more. Then came David's son Solomon. Solomon started out as a great king who followed God's ways. But as the years went by, he started making a lot of mistakes. By the end, he had really messed up and he wasn't really sorry. He had stopped worshiping God and no longer led the people in following God. When Solomon died, the kingdom where God's people lived started breaking apart.

When Solomon's son Rehoboam became king, the first thing he did was make the people mad at him. Obviously, he didn't get his dad's wisdom. So most of the people decided to start a new country, and God let them make a man named Jeroboam their king. Jeroboam wasn't very smart either. He let the people in the new country worship idols—things that were not the one true God. That was a mistake! *Pause to make the first cut in your map. You can cut the page roughly in half between Israel and Judah.*

The country Rehoboam ruled was called Judah, and the kingdom Jeroboam ruled was called Israel. *Show the two parts of the cut map. Set the Judah portion aside for a moment. For the most part, the kings and people of Israel and Judah were very sinful. They worshiped all the wrong things, like sacred stones and Asherah poles. These idols were not the one true God! Read 1 Kings 14:22–23. The people made mistake after mistake. God would have to show them he was more powerful than their idols. He used bad things to teach his people that they should be following him. Kings from other countries attacked God's people and carried away their treasures. Pause and cut some more. Make deep slices into the Israel portion of the map.*

But still the people didn't learn their lessons. Everything in Judah and Israel was falling apart. In addition to fighting the kings around them, Jeroboam and Rehoboam were fighting each other, too. And when they died, their evil sons took the thrones and kept up the fighting. That was a mistake!

For the most part, Israel was a big pit of sin. No matter who was king, the people there kept sinning and putting up more idols, which only made God angrier and angrier. But the people refused to learn the lessons God wanted to teach. They kept on doing all the wrong things. *Pause and cut. Finish off some of the slices made earlier so that parts of Israel start falling away.*

But there was still some hope for Judah. *Hold up the Judah portion. Occasionally there was a king there who loved God and who tried to be a good king like David. The first one of these good kings was Asa. He was ready to learn from the bad things that kept happening.*

Read 1 Kings 10:11. Asa knew that God had been trying to teach his people something, and he wanted to pay attention! He got rid of all the statues of false gods the kings before him had made. He even took his grandmother out of her job as queen mother because she made a pole to worship the goddess Asherah. Asa cut down the pole and burned it up. Everything he did focused on learning from mistakes and trying to turn Judah around to be a country that worshiped God again.

King Asa didn't get rid of every single place where false worship happened, but he committed his whole life completely to the Lord. He brought silver and gold and other valuable things to the Lord's temple to honor God.

As usual, the evil king in Israel wanted to fight a war against Judah. Asa had a feeling that King Baasha wanted to take all of God's treasures out of the temple. Asa definitely did not want Baasha to use these holy things to worship idols. That would be another mistake! He got the king of another country, Aram, to fight with him against Israel. The two parts of God's people went to war against each other again. *Pause and slice into the Judah portion.*

Then Asa invaded Israel and his soldiers carried away all the stones and wood Baasha had been using there. Asa used this stuff to build up the cities of Judah.

Asa knew the kings before him had made a lot of mistakes, but he thought the people could learn from their mistakes. It wasn't too late to change! It wasn't too late to serve God. It wasn't too late to worship the one true God. Asa was one of the best kings Judah had seen in a long time. But God's kingdom had been destroyed despite everything Asa did to save it. Israel and Judah had broken apart and would never come back together to be the strong kingdom they had been under David. *Pause and finish slicing up Judah.*

Take a moment to clean up paper scraps, particularly if you have had children cutting along with you. For a moment of extra fun, you could allow children a few minutes to see if they can put the map back together.

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 14*. Ask children to look at the picture and tell you about how King Asa followed God. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- How did God's people make him unhappy in this story?
- How does God teach us through our mistakes?

Say, **God's people went through some tough times, but God uses even the hard times to teach his people how to live his way.**

Collect the cards for now. You'll send them home with the children later.

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose from these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

OPTION 1: KNOCK 'EM DOWN

Stuff You Need: beanbags, small items to stack (such as blocks), empty boxes, small classroom items

Say, **God's people built idols. Even though the idols had no power, the people paid more attention to the idols than they did to God. King Asa knew the idols were wrong and knocked**

them down. Engage children in constructing towers from the items you've provided. Then take turns tossing beanbags at the towers to see how hard it is to knock them down. Gather for a discussion.

- **Name some things that people today pay more attention to than they do to God.**
- **Why is it a mistake to pay more attention to these things than to God?**

Say, **God's people made a lot of mistakes—and still do. But God doesn't give up, and he helps us learn from our mistakes so that we pay better attention to him.**

OPTION 2: MISTAKE CHARADES

Have the children think about mistakes they have made and what they have learned from those mistakes. Have children, one at a time, act out their mistake and let other children guess what the mistake was. Then the child should say what he or she learned from the mistake. Let everyone have a chance to act. Children may feel more comfortable acting out a mistake they know about rather than one they made.

OPTION 3: A BROKEN KINGDOM

Stuff You Need: A Broken Kingdom Activity Sheet, envelopes, safety scissors, crayons

Give an activity sheet and an envelope to each child. Remind the group that God's saving power will always bring his believers back together. Have the children cut apart the puzzle on the heavy dark lines. Then have them reassemble the puzzle. When they have done this, have them put the puzzle into the envelope and take it home to share.

OPTION 4: THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

Putting a divided kingdom back together

Stuff You Need: paper (you may want to use a heavier paper like poster board or card stock), crayons, markers or colored pencils, safety scissors

1. Give each child a piece of paper and coloring utensils.
2. Ask the children to picture a kingdom, and then draw what they imagine. You might need to give them starter ideas like castles, moats, kings, etc.
3. When the children are done drawing their picture, ask them to cut it into as many pieces as they want. Encourage them to make as many cuts as possible.
4. When they're done, have them try to put their picture back together.
5. Talk about how difficult it is to put their kingdom back together, but how easy it for God to unite us.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

Pray together asking God to help you learn from your mistakes. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 14*, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents' Page.