

THE KINGDOM'S FALL

Bible Basis: Jeremiah 1:4–10; 2:21–28; 5:1–2; 16:17–19; 2 Chronicles 36:1–16

Key Verse: I say to myself, “The Lord is everything I will ever need. So I will put my hope in him.”
—Lamentations 3:24 NIV

Bible Point: God’s people suffer because of their sin, but God still loves them. His love for me will never end.

Resource: *The Story for Children*, Chapter 17: “The Kingdom’s Fall”

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Stuff You Need: “What Happens?” Activity Sheet

Give each child an activity sheet. Ask a series of “what happens” questions that establish cause and effect. The questions begin with simple facts and progress to matters of choice. Every choice has a consequence. After going through the list talk about:

- What happens if you sometimes make the wrong choice?
- What is the purpose of punishment?

Say, **The Bible story today is about a time when God’s people were making lots of wrong choices. Let’s find out what happened to them.**

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

Stuff You Need: copies of *The Story for Children*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 17*

Tell the story from *The Story for Children*, Chapter 17. You can also have children find 2 Chronicles 36 and mark it in their Bibles. Either you or a child in your class can read the Scripture passages listed throughout the story.

God’s Love Never Ends

Before you begin the Bible story, teach the children this cue and response. When you say, “Oops!” they respond by putting their hands on their cheeks, shaking their heads, and saying, “Uh-oh, not again.” Practice the cue and response a few times then begin the story.

How long does it take you to learn a lesson? What does it take to finally get through to you? God might have been asking those questions about his people. Although he was kind and good to them, for years and years and years, they did just as they wanted. They followed

other gods who weren't true gods at all, but just statues and carvings. King after king thought only about himself, and not about God. Oops! *Kids respond, "Uh-oh, not again."*

God sent messengers to his people to warn them what was going to happen. Isaiah, for instance, tried to tell the people that they were going to be carried off as prisoners to another country, to serve another king, if they didn't straighten out. But the people didn't listen. God called another messenger named Jeremiah to warn all the people again about what was going to happen to them. But did they listen? No! Oops! *Kids respond, "Uh-oh, not again."*

Jeremiah was a little scared by what God wanted him to do, because he knew the kings of Judah were hard-headed and wouldn't like his message at all. And did they? No! Oops! *Kids respond, "Uh-oh, not again."*

God told Jeremiah to say, "You say to a piece of wood, 'You are my father.' You say to a stone, 'You are my mother.' You have turned your backs to me. You refuse to look at me. Let these gods you have made save you when you're in trouble!" Did the people listen? Did they change their ways? No! Oops! *Kids respond, "Uh-oh, not again."*

Jeremiah told the people over and over about the horrible things that would happen if they didn't repent, but no one listened. And then everything started to happen just the way he said. The king of Babylon attacked God's people! Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. Zedekiah was the king of Judah. Zedekiah did what was evil in the sight of God. He didn't pay any attention to the message the Lord spoke through the prophet Jeremiah. Oops! *Kids respond, "Uh-oh, not again."*

Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem, where Zedekiah lived. All his armies went with him. He surrounded the city so no one could get in or out. That meant no food and supplies could get in or out, either. Zedekiah was scared, and the people were getting desperate. Oops! *Kids respond, "Uh-oh, not again."*

Then the Babylonians broke through the city wall. Judah's whole army ran away. The Babylonians chased Zedekiah until they captured him. They took him prisoner! Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah in bronze chains and carried him off to Babylon. Zedekiah had lots of chances to be sorry and change his ways, but he never did. Oops! *Kids respond, "Uh-oh, not again."*

Read 2 Chronicles 36:18–20. They should have listened! Oops! Kids respond, "Uh-oh, not again."

Jeremiah, on the other hand, had trusted God and had done whatever God wanted, so God promised to protect Jeremiah so he wouldn't have to live in Babylon as a slave. Instead of putting Jeremiah in chains, the Babylonians let him go and even promised to take care of him.

Jeremiah knew the story wasn't over, though. He knew God had not forgotten about his people forever. Being slaves in Babylon was punishment for their sins. Isaiah, who had come before Jeremiah, knew that one day God would bring his people back. Jeremiah knew this, too. He knew that God's love for his people never ends.

After you have told the Bible story, give each child a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 17*. Ask the children to look at the picture and tell you about what part Jeremiah had in the kingdoms' fall. As a class, read the key verse from the back of the card or from the Bible. Ask:

- What message did God give Jeremiah to tell the people?
- What happened when the people didn't listen to Jeremiah's message?

Say, **When we mess up, we have to face the consequences of our actions. But that doesn't mean God ever stops loving us.**

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: CARRIED OFF

Stuff You Need: assortment of small ordinary items, masking tape

Bring in an assortment of ordinary household items: mugs, toys, plastic containers, books, office supplies, boxes, kitchen utensils, or use things from around the classroom. Vary the weight and shape of the items. Try to have at least one item for each child. Say, **In today's story, God's people refused to be sorry for all the things they were doing wrong. They had to face the consequence of their choice. God allowed them to be carried off in chains as prisoners to live in another country with another king.** Explain that the game is about carrying things off. Children should work together to use the tape to "chain" the items together. However, they may only make one loop of tape around each item, so they must plan carefully how they will connect the items with adequate support. When everything is connected, see how few children are required to transport the entire chain across the room. Can just two carry the ends of the tape, or must other children support sections of the chain as well? Children may only touch tape, not the items, as they transport the collection. (If you have a very small group, use multiple items per child to increase the challenge.) Ask:

- Why were God's people carried off in chains?
- Can punishment be a way of showing love? Explain.

Say, **God's people suffered the consequences of their sin, but God never stopped loving them. And his love for us never ends either.**

OPTION 2: I SAY TO MYSELF BALLOON RUB

Stuff You Need: balloons, permanent markers

Briefly talk about what a "speech balloon" is. Most will recognize the device of words in a shape over someone's head, such as in newspaper comics or comic books. Say, **We're going to try to make**

another kind of speech balloon today to show our thoughts. Review the words of the Bible verse: "I say to myself, 'The Lord is everything I will ever need. So I will put my hope in him'" (Lamentations 3:24). Then have kids inflate the balloons and tie them closed. The children can use markers to write the words of the Bible verse on an inflated balloon. Then have them rub the balloons on their hair and try to get them to stick to their heads. How much of the Bible verse can they recite before the balloons come loose? Keep playing and see who can say the entire verse. Then ask:

- **Why is it good to remind ourselves—to say to ourselves—that the Lord is everything we need?**
- **What does it mean to put your hope in the Lord?**

Say, **Even when we mess up big time, like God's people in the Bible story, his love for us never ends.**

OPTION 3: PUT HOPE IN GOD

Stuff You Need: Put Hope in God Activity Sheet, watercolor paints and brushes

Give an activity sheet to each child. Have the students trace over the letters of the verse several times as they recite the verse to learn it. Paint the pot. Have the children take the sheet home and tell their family about Jeremiah.

OPTION 4: FLOUR DRAWING

Stuff You Need: flour or sand, large baking sheets (If you don't have baking sheets, allow children to draw on the tables, but cleanup will be much more difficult.)

1. Let the children scoop out a few handfuls of flour onto their baking sheet (or onto the table in front of them).
2. Have them spread the flour out on the baking sheet so that a thin layer covers the entire surface.
3. Read the Bible story aloud.
4. As you read, ask the children to draw scenes from the story in the flour with their fingers. It might help to tell children that this is a similar concept to drawing in the sand at the beach.
5. Continue reading the story, pausing occasionally to allow children to draw the scene you describe.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

Pray together thanking God that he still loves us even when we sin. You may want to give the children some quiet time to confess sins to God. Make sure each child takes home a copy of *The Story Elementary Trading Card 17*, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents' Page.