

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 Kids*, Chapter 14: “A Kingdom Torn in Two”

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Stuff You Need: rod pretzels (one for each pair of children) or a loaf of French bread

If you're using a loaf of French bread, ask two volunteers to help you. If you have rod pretzels, have children partner up and give one pretzel to each pair. As you get started, tell the class you're going to play tug-of-war with the bread or pretzels. The goal is to pull on the item until a piece breaks off and see who ends up with the biggest piece. The bread makes a good large group visual, but the pretzels allow everyone to participate. Choose what works best for your setting. Talk about:

- Can we put these pieces back together and make them whole again?
- 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 Kids*, Bibles, *The Story Elementary Trading Card 14*, copies of Divided Kingdom Map Activity Sheet, scissors

Optional: something to make a breaking sound

Tell the story from *The Story for Kids*, 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

Give an activity sheet to each child. As you tell the story, pause as indicated and have children cut their Divided Kingdom Map 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 rod pretzel in half or a downloaded sound of glass breaking.

The first king of Israel was Saul. He was tall and handsome and popular, but he turned out to not 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 15:11. 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 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 the 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:

- What lessons did King Asa want the people to learn?
- What lessons can we learn when bad things happen to us?

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

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

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose any or all of these activity options to help your class explore the lesson further.

OPTION 1: MY MISTAKE

Stuff You Need: My Mistake Activity Sheet

Give an activity sheet to each child. Say, **Sometimes bad things happen just because they happen, not because God caused it. But even then we can look back and learn from our mistakes.**

Have a volunteer read one My Mistake scenario at a time from the Activity Sheet. Ask children to identify 1) the mistake someone made in the story and 2) lessons to be learned from the mistake. Let children role play their answers. Then guide a closing discussion:

- **Why is it hard to think about learning from mistakes?**
- **How can bad experiences make our lives better?**

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: CAN YOU COUNT?

Ask your class if they think they can count to 100 without making a mistake. They should all tell you they can do that easily. Challenge them to show you. Have your class stand in a circle to count, each child counting the next number in turn. When they are ready to start, tell your class that they must count to 100, but for any number that is a multiple of seven, they have to say “king” instead of the number. If someone makes a mistake, they must start over from the beginning, starting with the next person in line. See how long it takes them to count to 100 without any mistakes. Then discuss:

- **Was it as easy to count to 100 as you thought?**
- **How did you feel when a mistake was made?**
- **Did you learn anything from the mistakes you made?**
- **What can we learn from the mistakes that we made that applies to today's Bible story?**

OPTION 3: BIBLE SEARCH

Stuff You Need: Bible Search Activity Sheet, pencils, Bibles

Give an activity sheet to each child. Talk about the idea that everyone does make mistakes, even people that seem to be really great all the time. Give some examples of people in today's spotlight that have made some mistakes and learned from them. Talk about the Bible and how many people, not just the Israelites, made mistakes and learned that God will still love them. Divide the class into small groups, give one or two Bibles to each group, and have them search for three people from Bible times that made mistakes but were still loved by God. Have the class write the Bible location and a brief summary of each to share.

OPTION 4: LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

Share with your class a mistake you made and what you learned from it. Then, let children share what they have learned from mistakes. Don't force anyone to share who doesn't want to.

Talk about some current events that have impacted people positively and negatively and what kinds of lessons can be learned. Children of any age love to debate. Ask them what they think about the question of why bad things happen to good people.

STEP 4: GOING HOME

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