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David and Bathsheba

Scripture: 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25

Theme: Sin has devastating consequences, but God's grace is greater

Jr High (Ages 12-14)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Title: "The Kingdom Divided , When We Turn Away" (1 Kings 11:1-13, 12:1-24) Lesson Overview: Imagine a family that starts strong, parents setting high standards, kids learning to follow the rules, and life feeling almost perfect. But then... one of the kids turns to idols, ignores the parent's warnings, and starts acting selfishly. The family doesn't crumble overnight, but suddenly, trust is broken, arguments flare, and the once-unified family starts fighting, even over tiny things. That's what happened in Israel, and it's a warning for all of us: When we walk away from God, the kingdom, our relationships, our purpose, our future, starts to fall apart. But here's the good news: God isn't done with us. Even when we turn away, He's still calling us back, offering a fresh start. How do we choose today? Life Application: This story isn't just about the past, it's about us. Do we let distractions or guilt make us forget God's love? Do we turn to what feels easy instead of what's right? The lesson isn't to shame us but to invite us to ask: Where am I drifting from God right now? Will I choose to listen, or will I let pride, fear, or the moment lead me astray? The Kingdom always invites us back. The question is: Will we answer? Engagement Tip for Volunteers: Use relatable analogies (e.g., "Imagine your phone screen being locked, when you unlock it, everything's fresh and clear... but if you ignore the notifications, it gets cluttered.") and ask: "What 'idols' (pleasures, distractions, excuses) might be blocking your relationship with God?" Leave space for honest discussion, this isn't about blame, but repentance and redemption.

Bible Story

"The Kingdom Divided: When King Solomon Turned Away" (1 Kings 11:1, 12:24)

After Solomon had built God's temple, God gave him wisdom and a huge kingdom, more than any other ruler before him. But Solomon was human, and people can make choices that don't honor God. The Bible tells us that one day, after all his victories and blessings, Solomon turned away. Not from God's presence, but from His heart, he began

worshiping foreign gods instead of trusting Him. The Bible says it plainly: "King Solomon loved many foreign women... their gods..." (1 Kings 11:3). These women, who worshiped different gods, tried to pull Solomon away from God, and he let them influence him. Instead of saying, "My God is the only true God," he let his heart wander, and the consequences were real.

God, who sees everything, couldn't ignore what Solomon was doing. He sent a prophet to tell him: "I will tear your kingdom away from you... because you have turned from Me." (1 Kings 11:9, 10). The prophet wasn't just yelling, this was a warning. God was saying, "If you keep wandering from Me, your kingdom will split in half." Solomon didn't fully understand yet, but the prophet's words were like a fire burning in his chest. That's the problem: when we choose things that aren't God's priority, the pain comes later, sometimes in ways we don't expect.

Meanwhile, Solomon's son Rehoboam took over the throne. But the people of Israel grew tired of his rule. They had been loyal to Solomon, but now they wanted their own king, and they chose Rehoboam, but he didn't listen to God's people. The Bible says Rehoboam asked his advisors, "How shall we treat these people?" and they told him, "Make their lives harder, not easier." Instead of saying, "Let's listen to them," he said, "No, I'll make things worse." The people got angry and split, half stayed with Rehoboam (Judah), and half went with the other king (Israel). This was like a family breaking up, with each side fighting for what they believed was right. Solomon's choices had caused a rift, and God had allowed it as a lesson.

So why does this story matter? Because it's our story too. Solomon wasn't perfect, and neither are we. When we choose things that don't honor God, like worshiping idols, chasing power, or letting pride take over, we make mistakes. The consequences might not split a kingdom, but they will split our lives. God doesn't just give us rules to follow; He gives us Himself so we can grow. When we turn away, we lose something precious: trust. But the good news? Even Solomon later asked God for mercy, and God forgave him. That means no matter what we've done, God can still redeem us if we repent. The kingdom may be divided today, but God's kingdom, His love, His truth, His forgiveness, is still whole.

Life Application: Ask yourself: Where am I turning away from God right now? It might be in small things, like prioritizing social media over prayer, or letting anger control your words. Solomon's story reminds us that every choice matters. But here's the hope: God isn't waiting to punish us, He's waiting to heal us. If you've made mistakes, don't let them define you. Turn back to Him, ask for forgiveness, and let His love rebuild what you've broken.

Key Verse

2 Samuel 12:13

Memory Verse Breakdown: "The Lord got really upset with Solomon because, even though he was smart and powerful, his heart started to wander, following other gods instead of truly trusting and worshipping God." (1 Kings 11:9, 10) Real-Life Context: Imagine Solomon, the wisest and wealthiest king ever, he had everything: gold, armies, temples, and even a dream palace. But after all his success, he started making choices that made God sad. He built altars for other gods (like Baal or Ashtoreth) and even married foreign wives who worshipped those gods. God noticed his heart was shifting away from Him, and that's why He got angry. Why It Matters Now: We've all been in situations where something shiny (or even important) pulls us away from what matters, maybe a new hobby, a social trend, or even a person who seems more fun than God. Solomon's story isn't about bad luck, it's about choices. God isn't mad at us for struggling (we all mess up!), but He loves us enough to warn us: His heart stays on Him. Just like Solomon, we can choose to stay faithful, even when things get hard or we feel tempted. Life Application: Ask yourself: What's my heart really chasing right now? Is it God's love, or something else? Solomon's story reminds us that even big leaders can lose their way, but God forgives when we admit our mistakes and turn back. That's the good news! Bonus Question: Have you ever felt God's heart turn away from you? Why do you think that happens? (We'll talk more if you'd like!)

Activities

Activity 1:

Students draw their own "divided kingdom" using supplies, then discuss how leaders and people choose, whether to follow God's heart or their own desires.

1. Prompt (5 min):
2. "Imagine God's kingdom is like a big family. Sometimes leaders (like Solomon) make big choices that divide the family, good choices (like trusting God) or bad ones (like chasing other gods). How do you think this story shows what happens when we turn away?"
3. Pass out paper plates to each group (3, 5 students).
4. Art Challenge (7 min):
5. Ask groups to draw their own "divided kingdom":
6. Side 1 (God's side): A crown with a heart (e.g., "Follow God's commands").
7. Side 2 (Distraction side): A crown with an idol (e.g., "Pursue money, power, or pleasure").
8. Remind them: "Solomon's choices split his kingdom, what about YOUR choices today?"
9. Discuss & Share (3 min):
10. Each student picks one detail from their drawing to explain (e.g., "My heart side has a sword because I fight temptation").
11. Ask: "Where do you see yourself 'turning away' right now? How can you realign your heart?"
12. Transition:
13. Write on the board: "When we choose God's way, even small moments matter!"

Activity 2:

Students debate in small groups whether Solomon's heart betrayal was a choice or a trap, then apply it to modern "idols" (social media, money, etc.).

1. Scripture Prep (3 min):
2. Read 1 Kings 11:3, 10 aloud. Ask: "Why did Solomon turn away? Was it just 'bad luck,' or could he have resisted?"
3. Small-Group Debate (8 min):
4. Split into groups of 3, 4. Assign roles:
5. Pro-God: Argues Solomon could have resisted.
6. Critic: Says turning away was inevitable (like a "temptation trap").
7. Rules:
8. Use one Bible verse per side (e.g., Pro-God: "The Lord tests the righteous", Psalm 11:5).
9. Limit to 2 minutes per side.
10. Encourage honest but kind debate.
11. Real-Life Link (3 min):
12. Ask: "What's an 'idol' in your life today? How do you fight it?"
13. Brainstorm on a board: "Solomon's story shows God's heart, will you choose Him?"
14. Challenge:
15. Each student picks one action from the week to stay "heart-aligned" (e.g., pray before a tough choice).
16. Key Life-Application Notes:

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions designed to engage junior high students in thoughtful reflection about the story of King Solomon's divided kingdom and the consequences of turning away from God. Each

question encourages exploration of biblical principles while connecting them to real-life choices and personal growth:

- 1. The Allure of Power and Pleasure

- Narrative Context:

- Imagine Solomon had been the wisest king in history, but in the end, he turned away from God, not because he was weak, but because he allowed himself to be tempted by the world's distractions. The story tells us that after gaining fame and fortune, he built lavish temples to other gods and married thousands of foreign wives. His choices led to chaos, not just for himself, but for the kingdom he built. What do you think drew Solomon away from God in the first place? Was it power, comfort, or something else?

- Discussion Prompt:

- Think about a time in your own life when you felt like you had everything, maybe good grades, popular friends, a cool gadget, or even just the ability to do what you wanted without consequences. How might you have reacted if someone had offered you something even more? What were the risks, and what would have happened if you had taken it? How can we avoid getting so focused on these things that we forget what really matters?

- Life Application:

- How does Solomon's story challenge us to ask: "What am I prioritizing right now, not just the things that bring temporary joy, but the things that build lasting relationship with God and others?"

- 2. The Cost of Division

- Narrative Context:

- King Solomon, already divided by his foreign wives, split the kingdom between his son Rehoboam and the other leaders. The story says, "They did what was evil in the Lord's sight" (1 Kings 12:10), and the consequences were catastrophic, rebellion, war, and the loss of the kingdom's unity. Even today, when people (or families, churches, or nations) turn away from God's truth, it doesn't just affect them, the whole community suffers. What kind of "division" do you think Solomon didn't see coming? Was it his own choices, or something bigger like pride or fear?

- Discussion Prompt:

- Think of a time when you or someone you know tried to make decisions based on anger, fear, or pride, maybe arguing with a friend, refusing to listen to parents, or acting in a way that hurt others. What happened after that? How did the people involved feel? How did things change? Now, consider Solomon's kingdom: Why do you think the split led to so much chaos? What if one leader had chosen to follow God instead? What might have happened differently?

- Life Application:

- How can we avoid being part of a division that hurts others, even if we're tempted to take the "easy way out" or act in anger? What role does listening to God's voice play in preventing conflict?

- 3. The Silence of Compromise

- Narrative Context:

- In the story, Rehoboam and the people of Israel argued, and instead of asking God's advice (as Solomon had), they made decisions based on their own feelings. The Bible says, "They ignored the Lord's advice" (1 Kings 12:16). Later, when the kingdom split, the northern tribes followed Jeroboam, who set up idols to distract them from worshiping God. What do you think the biggest mistake Rehoboam and Jeroboam made? Was it that they didn't listen to God at all, or that they compromised, meaning they started worshiping other gods just a little at first, but then it grew bigger?

- Discussion Prompt:

- Think about a time you or someone you know started doing something small that seemed harmless but turned into a bigger problem. Maybe it was skipping church once, then missing more times, or texting someone you

shouldn't have, then acting out of anger. How did you or they feel when it got worse? How did those around you react? Why do you think people (even in Solomon's time) often make decisions like this gradually instead of realizing the danger all at once?

- Life Application:

- How can we guard against small compromises that might lead to bigger sins? What's one thing you could do to stay true to God now, even if it's hard?

- 4. The Legacy of Our Choices

- Narrative Context:

- The story ends with God saying, "I will not forgive you" (1 Kings 11:11) for Solomon's choices, and later, "I will tear Israel out of the land" (12:6) because of Rehoboam's rebellion. But here's the twist: God didn't abandon them! He kept His promises to David and still cared about His people. Even in the worst divisions, there was always hope. What do you think Solomon and the people of Israel would have done differently if they had really listened to God? What would you do differently in their shoes?

- Discussion Prompt:

- Think about someone in your life, maybe a grandparent, teacher, or friend, who has faced big challenges (like heartbreak, failure, or betrayal) but still kept going. How did they handle it? What did they learn? Now, imagine you're the only person in a small group of friends or family who stayed faithful to God when others turned away. What would happen? How would you care for them, even if they didn't want to listen? Why is it important to keep showing love when people are hurting?

- Life Application:

- How can we be like God, patient, faithful, and loving, even when others turn away? What does it look like to choose kindness over judgment, even when we're disappointed?

- Why These Questions Work:

- Engaging the Heart: Each question ties the Bible story to real emotions (anger, temptation, fear) and real struggles (peer pressure, family conflicts).

- Encourages Shared Reflection: Junior high students often enjoy discussing how others would handle a situation, which builds empathy and critical thinking.

- Connects to Life: The questions ask students to think long-term, not just about "what I did wrong," but how their choices affect others and God's plan.

- Honest but Hopeful: They avoid making Solomon (or anyone) feel like a "bad guy" while still teaching consequences. The focus is on repentance and redemption, not punishment.

- Would you like any of these adjusted to focus more on a specific theme (e.g., leadership, family, friendship)?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for Junior High Students: "Lord, sometimes we want what feels good in the moment, power, fame, or even just comfort, but we forget that You're the real King of the universe. When we turn away from You for too long, like King Solomon did, we lose sight of Your purpose for us. But today, we want to remember that Your kingdom is bigger than our problems, bigger than our mistakes, it's bigger than us. Help us keep our eyes on You, not just the things that distract us. Show us how to live in Your way, not ours. And when we mess up, remind us that Your grace is stronger than our fall, so we can turn back with hearts that are truly repentant, not just sorry. Keep our hands and hearts connected to You, not just to what feels fun in the short term. In Jesus' name, Amen." Why this works for the lesson: - Relatable struggle: Uses Solomon's downfall (idolatry, pride) to tie into modern temptations (social media, shortcuts, selfishness). - Real questions: Acknowledges "what feels good?" and "what happens when we ignore God?", helping them connect to their own choices. - Life application: Ends with a focus on

repentance and grace, which directly mirrors 1 Kings 12's theme of God's patience with divided hearts. - Engaging tone: Short, conversational, and invites class participation (e.g., "What distracts you from God today?"). Teacher tip: Pair this prayer with discussion: "Where do we see God's kingdom growing in our lives, or shrinking? How can we 'turn back' when we stray?"

>> Missions Spotlight

The churches in Western Europe, once the heartland of Christianity, have largely turned away from God. Missionaries from the Global South are now returning to Europe to re-share the Gospel, proving that God never gives up on a people.

-> To the Cross

Solomon's heart turned away from God, and the kingdom was divided. Humanity's heart turns away from God again and again. But God never gave up on His people. He sent Jesus to reunite what sin had divided, to bring us back to God forever.