Preschool–Grade 6

Josiah, the Boy King

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Josiah followed God while he was young. When God's Word was found, he heard it with a tender heart, obeyed it and led others to obey it.
Bible passage: 2 Kings 22–23. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." *1 Timothy 4:12 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a set of instruction slips (see part 1), a long strip of paper and a marker, a whiteboard or large paper, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write these on separate slips: *Stand up. Turn around once. Touch your toes. Clap three times. Sit down.* Write the memory verse on the long paper strip, then roll it up from both ends like a scroll.

1. Opening game: Hear It and Do It (5–10 minutes)

Give each slip to a different child, folded. One at a time, a child reads a slip out loud and the whole class does exactly what it says. Then do it again faster, and mix in one slip read in a whisper so kids have to listen hard. Say: "Hearing the words was only half of it. You had to do them. Today we meet a king who heard God's Word for the first time and did it." Ask afterward: *What would happen if you only heard the words but never did them?*

2. Bible story: A Book Found in God's House (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to 2 Kings 22. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

A young king. Look up 2 Kings 22:1. Josiah "was eight years old when he began to reign," and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. To **reign** means to rule as king. **Look up 2 Kings 22:2.** He did what was right in the sight of the LORD and "turned not aside to the right hand or to the left": he kept to God's way.

Repairing God's house. In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah sent **Shaphan the scribe**, a writer and official, to the house of the LORD (22:3). The money the people had given went to the carpenters, builders and masons, to buy timber and **hewn stone**, stone cut into blocks, to **repair** the house (22:4–6). The workers **dealt faithfully**: they were honest (22:7).

The book is found. Look up 2 Kings 22:8. Hilkiah the high priest said, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." God's own Word had been lost in God's own house! Shaphan read it to the king (22:10).

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A tender heart. Look up 2 Kings 22:11. When the king heard the words of the book of the law, "he rent his clothes." **Rent** means tore: people tore their clothes to show great sorrow. Josiah knew that the people's fathers "have not hearkened," have not listened to and obeyed, the words of this book (22:13). He sent men to **enquire of the LORD**, to ask God, and they went to **Huldah the prophetess**, who spoke God's words (22:14). God's message: because the people had **forsaken** Him, left Him, for other gods, trouble would come on the land (22:16–17). But to Josiah God said: **Look up 2 Kings 22:19.** "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD... I also have heard thee, saith the LORD."

The king reads the book. Look up 2 Kings 23:2. Josiah gathered everyone to the house of the LORD, "both small and great," and "read in their ears all the words of the book." **Look up 2 Kings 23:3.** The king stood by a pillar and made a **covenant**, a serious promise before the LORD, to walk after the LORD "with all their heart and all their soul." And all the people stood to the covenant.

Doing what the book said. Josiah took the idols, the false gods, out of the land (23:4, 23:24), and he commanded the people to keep the **passover**, the feast God gave Israel, "as it is written in the book of this covenant" (23:21). There had not been a passover like it since the days of the judges (23:22). **Look up 2 Kings 23:25.** There was no king before him "that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might."

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Josiah was only eight when he became king (22:1). What do you think made him choose to follow God?
2. How could God's book be lost in God's own house? How can a Bible get "lost" today, even on a shelf?
3. Josiah tore his clothes when he heard God's Word (22:11). Why do you think it made him so sorry?
4. God said Josiah's heart was tender (22:19). What does a tender heart toward God look like in a kid?
5. Josiah didn't keep God's Word to himself; he read it to everyone (23:2). Who could you share God's Word with?

Recall questions

1. Who found the book of the law? *(Hilkiah the high priest, 2 Kings 22:8)*
2. Who read the book to the king? *(Shaphan the scribe, 22:10)*
3. What did the king and the people make by the pillar? *(A covenant, a promise before the LORD, 23:3)*

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4. Memory verse: Unroll the Scroll (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **despise** means look down on; **thy youth** means you being young; an **example** is someone others can copy; **conversation** means the way you live; **charity** means love; **purity** means being clean and pure. Hold up the paper scroll. Unroll it a little at a time, and the class reads each part as it appears. Then roll it up again, and see how far kids can say it before you unroll it. Give the scroll to a child to unroll for the next round. Say: "Josiah was young too. Nobody could look down on a young king who followed God with all his heart."

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "When Josiah heard God's Word, he obeyed it. God's Word tells us how to be saved. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin, with a tender heart like Josiah's; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: read one chapter of the Bible each day, and do one thing it says.

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6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point. For early finishers: the **Josiah crossword** (vbshq.com/puzzles/josiah-crossword) or **worksheet** (vbshq.com/worksheets/josiah-worksheet).

1. 2 Kings 22:1: How many years did Josiah reign in Jerusalem? *(Thirty and one, 31)*
2. 2 Kings 22:3: Which year of King Josiah was it? *(The eighteenth)*
3. 2 Kings 22:6: Who did the work on the house? *(Carpenters, builders and masons)*
4. 2 Kings 22:7: How did the workers deal? *(Faithfully)*
5. 2 Kings 22:14: Who did the king's men go to? *(Huldah the prophetess)*
6. 2 Kings 22:19: What kind of heart did Josiah have? *(A tender heart)*
7. 2 Kings 23:2: Who heard the book read? *(All the people, both small and great)*
8. 2 Kings 23:3: Where did the king stand? *(By a pillar)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Your Word. Give us tender hearts like Josiah's, so we listen and obey. Help us be an example of the believers while we are young. In Jesus' name, amen."

About the idols and the priests: the lesson says simply that Josiah took the idols out of the land (2 Kings 23:4, 23:24). It leaves out the details of 23:4–20: how he burned the idols and broke down their altars, and that he slew the priests of the high places who served false gods (23:20). If a child asks, say: God's law said His people must not worship idols, and Josiah obeyed what God's book said. Don't add details the text doesn't give.

About Josiah's death: the lesson leaves out that Josiah died in battle at Megiddo years later (23:29–30). If a child asks, say that God had promised Josiah he would be gathered to his grave in peace and would not see the trouble that came on the land (22:20).

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