Preschool–Grade 6

Josiah, the Boy King

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: You are not too young to follow God. Josiah sought God while he was young, and when God's Word was found, he heard it with a tender heart and obeyed it with all his heart.
Bible passage: 2 Kings 22–23. Students read 2 Kings 22:1–2, 22:8–13, 22:18–20 and 23:1–3 out loud themselves.
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)* and "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." *James 1:22 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read 2 Kings 22–23 and 2 Chronicles 34:1–3. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: How Old Do You Have to Be? (5–10 minutes)

Call out things people can only do at a certain age, and students guess the age: drive a car, vote, rent a car, run for president. Write the answers on the board. Then ask: "How old do you have to be to follow God with all your heart?" Let them answer. Say: "Today we meet someone who became a king at eight years old, began to seek God at about sixteen, and turned a whole nation back to God's Word."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: 2 Kings 22:1–2. Old words in this passage:

- **began to reign** (22:1): became king; **turned not aside to the right hand or to the left** (22:2): did not wander off God's way

Tell the next part in your own words: 2 Chronicles 34:3 adds that "while he was yet young," in the eighth year of his reign, about sixteen years old, Josiah "began to seek after the God of David his father." In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he was about twenty-six, Josiah sent Shaphan the scribe to the house of the LORD to pay the carpenters, builders and masons repairing it (22:3–6).

Read out loud: 2 Kings 22:8–13. Old words in this passage:

- **the book of the law** (22:8): God's written Word given through Moses
- **rent his clothes** (22:11): tore his clothes, a sign of great sorrow
- **enquire of the LORD** (22:13): ask God; **hearkened**: listened and obeyed; **wrath**: God's anger at sin

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Tell the middle in your own words: The king's men went to Huldah the prophetess (22:14). God's message was that trouble would come on the land, because the people had forsaken Him and burned incense to other gods (22:16–17).

Read out loud: 2 Kings 22:18–20. Old words in this passage:

- **tender** (22:19): soft, easily moved by God's Word; **humbled thyself**: made yourself low before God
- **gathered unto thy fathers... in peace** (22:20): you will die in peace before the trouble comes

Read out loud: 2 Kings 23:1–3. Old words in this passage:

- **read in their ears** (23:2): read out loud so they all heard; **both small and great**: everyone, the least to the most important
- **covenant** (23:3): a solemn promise before God; **testimonies and statutes**: God's laws; **stood to the covenant**: agreed to it

Tell the end in your own words: Josiah put away the idols from the land (23:4, 23:24) and kept a passover "as it is written in the book of this covenant" (23:21), a passover like none since the days of the judges (23:22). "Like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might" (23:25).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Josiah began to seek God "while he was yet young" (2 Chronicles 34:3), years before the book was found. What does it look like for someone your age to seek God?
2. God's book was lost inside God's own house (22:8). What are some ways the Bible gets "lost" in a Christian home or a church today?
3. Josiah's response to the Word had three parts: he tore his clothes and wept (22:11, 22:19), he asked God what to do (22:13), and he obeyed (23:3). Which part is hardest for you?
4. Josiah wasn't responsible for his fathers' sin (22:13), but he still humbled himself. Why does God care so much about a tender heart?
5. Josiah read the whole book to everyone, "both small and great" (23:2). Why do you think he didn't just obey it privately?
6. James 1:22 says to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only." What is one thing you already know the Bible says that you need to start doing?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **despise** means look down on; **thy youth**, you being young; **conversation**, the way you live; **charity**, love; **deceiving your own selves**, fooling yourself. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say 1 Timothy 4:12 this week; keep working on James 1:22 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "When Josiah heard God's Word, he didn't argue with it; he obeyed it. God's Word tells us plainly how to be saved. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin with a tender heart, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where is God's Word "lost" in my life right now: a Bible I don't open, or a verse I know but don't do?
2. What is one thing I will do this week because the Bible says it?
3. Write a short prayer asking God for a tender heart like Josiah's.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence. Early finishers can do the **Josiah crossword** (vbshq.com/puzzles/josiah-crossword).

This week: read 2 Chronicles 34, the second telling of Josiah's story. Say 1 Timothy 4:12 every day.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Your Word. Give us tender hearts that hear it and obey it. Help us be an example of the believers while we are young, and turn to You with all our heart, soul and might. In Jesus' name, amen."

About the idols and the priests: answer honestly and gently if students ask. 2 Kings 23:4–20 tells how Josiah burned the idols, broke down their altars and high places, and slew the priests of the high places who served false gods (23:20). The lesson says only that he put away the idols (23:4, 23:24). If students ask, say: God's law forbade idol worship, and Josiah did what God's book said. Don't go beyond what the text says.

About Josiah's death: Josiah died in battle at Megiddo against Pharaoh-nechoh (23:29–30). If students ask, point to God's promise that Josiah would go to his grave in peace and not see the trouble that came on Judah afterward (22:20).

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