Preschool–Grade 6

Josiah, the Boy King

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Josiah followed God when he was young, and he obeyed God's Word. You can follow God too.
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, a sheet of paper rolled up and tied with yarn (the "book of the law"), masking tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: put bookmarks in your Bible at 2 Kings 22:1, 2 Kings 22:8 and 1 Timothy 4:12. Hide the rolled-up paper somewhere in the room. Put a long straight line of masking tape on the floor.

1. Opening game: Fix the House, Find the Book (5 minutes)

Say: "We are workers fixing God's house!" Lead the kids in pretend work: hammer nails, saw wood, lift heavy stones and stack them. Then say, "Keep working, and look carefully. Something very important is hidden in this house!" Kids look around the room while they "work." Whoever finds the rolled-up paper holds it up high, and everyone cheers. Play again, with the finder hiding it. Say: "Today we will hear about a book that was found while workers were fixing God's house, and a young king who listened to it."

2. Bible story: The Book in God's House (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to 2 Kings 22, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Long ago, a boy named **Josiah** became the king of Judah. How old was he? **Read 2 Kings 22:1 from your Bible:** "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign..." To **reign** means to rule as king. Hold up eight fingers! Josiah was a king when he was only eight. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD (22:2). The Bible says he "turned not aside to the right hand or to the left." That means he kept walking God's way and didn't wander off it.

Josiah grew up. When he had been king for eighteen years, he sent **Shaphan the scribe**, a writer who worked for the king, to God's house, the **house of the LORD** (22:3). God's house needed fixing. The money the people gave paid **carpenters**, who work with wood, **builders** and **masons**, who work with stone, to **repair** the house, to fix it (22:5–6).

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The story continues: While the work was going on, **Hilkiah the high priest** found something. **Read 2 Kings 22:8 from your Bible:** "...I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." The **book of the law** was God's Word, the words God gave His people to tell them how to live. It had been lost in God's own house!

Shaphan took the book to King Josiah and read it to him (22:10). When Josiah heard God's words, he **rent his clothes** (22:11). **Rent** means tore. Josiah tore his clothes to show he was very, very sorry, because the people had not been obeying God's book (22:13). He wept, he cried, before the LORD (22:19).

Josiah sent his helpers to ask the LORD what to do. They went to **Huldah the prophetess**, a woman who spoke God's words (22:14). God sent this message to Josiah: "thine heart was tender" (22:19). A **tender** heart is a soft heart, a heart that listens to God and wants to obey. God said, "I also have heard thee" (22:19). God heard Josiah!

Then Josiah called all the people together at the house of the LORD, "both small and great," young and old, and **he read God's book to them**, all the words of it (23:2). Josiah stood by a pillar and made a **covenant**, a serious promise before God, to walk after the LORD and keep His commandments with all his heart. And all the people stood to the covenant: they promised too (23:3).

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. How old was Josiah when he became king? *(Eight years old, 2 Kings 22:1)*
2. What were the workers doing at God's house? *(Repairing it, fixing it, 22:5–6)*
3. What did Hilkiah the high priest find? *(The book of the law, God's Word, 22:8)*
4. What did Josiah do when he heard God's words? *(He rent, tore, his clothes and wept, 22:11, 22:19)*
5. Who did Josiah read the book to? *(All the people, small and great, 23:2)*

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4. Memory verse: Walk the Straight Line (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **despise** means look down on, and **thy youth** means you being young. "Let no man despise thy youth" means don't let anyone think you are too young to follow God. An **example** is someone others can copy. **Conversation** means the way you live, **charity** means love, and **purity** means being clean and good inside. Say the verse in parts: *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.* Kids walk the tape line one at a time, heel to toe, saying one part with each few steps. Remind them: "Josiah turned not aside to the right hand or to the left (2 Kings 22:2). Stay on the line!" Then say the whole verse together.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Josiah was young, but he followed God. When he heard God's Word, he obeyed it. God's Word tells us the most important thing of all: how to be saved. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). He died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it, like Josiah was sorry. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."

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: listen to God's Word and do what it says. Ask someone at home to read a Bible story with you.

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6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Josiah word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/josiah-word-search), the **Josiah maze** (vbshq.com/puzzles/josiah-maze), or the **Josiah craft**, a paper house of the LORD where kids find the book of the law hidden in a pile of stones and pull it out (vbshq.com/crafts/josiah-craft).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Your Word. Give us a tender heart like Josiah's, so we listen to Your Word and obey it. Help us follow You even while we are young. In Jesus' name, amen."

What this lesson leaves out: the lesson ends with Josiah reading God's book to the people and making a covenant (2 Kings 23:2–3). It leaves out the hard words God sent about the punishment coming on the land (22:16–17), how Josiah broke down and burned the idols and their altars (23:4–20), and Josiah's death in battle years later (23:29–30). If a child asks what Josiah did next, say simply: Josiah took the false gods out of the land, and the people kept the passover, a special feast for the LORD, just as God's book said (23:21–24). If a child is worried, remind them that God heard Josiah, and God hears us when we pray (22:19).

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