Preschool–Grade 6

Rehoboam and the Divided Kingdom

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

Main point: Rehoboam forsook wise counsel and answered roughly, and the kingdom split. Wise people listen to good counsel, serve others and speak good words.
Bible passage: 1 Kings 12:1–20. Read it before class, and read the teacher note at the end of this lesson.
Memory verse: "And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever." *1 Kings 12:7 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Who Would You Ask? (5–10 minutes)

Read a problem, then three people kids could ask for help. Kids hold up one, two or three fingers to vote for the wisest choice. 1) "You don't understand your math homework": a friend who also doesn't get it, your teacher, or nobody. 2) "Your little brother is upset": your parent, a cartoon, or a friend who says to ignore him. 3) "You want to know what God says": the Bible and your pastor, a guess, or someone who never reads the Bible. Ask: *Why does it matter who we listen to?* Say: "Today we will meet a new king who had to choose whose advice to follow."

2. Bible story: The King Who Would Not Listen (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to 1 Kings 12. 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 new king. King Solomon died, and his son Rehoboam **reigned in his stead** (took his place) (1 Kings 11:43). **Look up 1 Kings 12:1.** Jeroboam, who had been living in Egypt, was called back, and he came with all the people (12:2–3).

A heavy yoke. Look up 1 Kings 12:4. A **yoke** is a wooden bar laid across the necks of oxen so they can pull together. **Grievous** means hard and painful. The people meant the hard service Solomon had put on them. Rehoboam told them to come back in three days (12:5).

Two kinds of counsel. Counsel means advice. First, Rehoboam **consulted** (asked) the old men who had stood before Solomon (12:6). **Look up 1 Kings 12:7.** Then he **forsook** (turned away from) their counsel and asked the young men that were grown up with him (12:8–9). They told him to say, "I will add to your yoke" (12:10–11).

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A rough answer. On the third day the people came back (12:12). **Look up 1 Kings 12:13–14. Roughly** means in a harsh, unkind way. **Chastised** means punished; the young men's words about **scorpions** meant an even more painful punishment than whips. **Hearkened not** means he would not listen (12:15).

The kingdom splits. Look up 1 Kings 12:16. What portion have we in David? means "We want no part in David's family as our kings." **To your tents** means "Go home!" **Look up 1 Kings 12:19–20. Rebelled** means turned against their king. All Israel made Jeroboam king, and only the tribe of Judah followed the house of David (12:20).

God was still in charge. 1 Kings 12:15 says "the cause was from the LORD": God had told Jeroboam ahead of time, by the prophet Ahijah, that this would happen. But Rehoboam chose not to listen to wise counsel.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

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

1. The old men said a good king is "a servant unto this people" (12:7). Why do you think serving others makes people want to follow you?
2. Why do you think Rehoboam liked the young men's counsel better (12:8–10)?
3. Rehoboam answered "roughly" (12:13). Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." How did that happen in this story?
4. Proverbs 12:15 says, "he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise." Who gives you wise counsel?
5. What is one "good word" you could say this week to someone who is having a hard time?

Recall questions

1. Where did all Israel go to make Rehoboam king? *(Shechem, 1 Kings 12:1)*
2. How many days did Rehoboam tell the people to wait? *(Three, 12:5)*
3. Who did Israel make king? *(Jeroboam, 12:20)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **spake** means spoke; **if thou wilt** means if you will; **a servant** is a helper; **thy** means your. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The old men told Rehoboam to serve the people. Jesus 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister' (Mark 10:45, KJV): He came to serve. 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; 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: before you answer someone, stop and choose good words. Ask a parent or teacher for advice on one thing.

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.

1. 1 Kings 12:1: Where did all Israel come to make Rehoboam king? *(Shechem)*
2. 1 Kings 12:4: What did the people say Solomon made grievous? *(Our yoke)*
3. 1 Kings 12:5: How long did Rehoboam tell them to go away? *(Three days)*
4. 1 Kings 12:6: Who did Rehoboam ask first? *(The old men that stood before Solomon his father)*
5. 1 Kings 12:7: What kind of words did the old men say to speak? *(Good words)*
6. 1 Kings 12:13: How did the king answer the people? *(Roughly)*
7. 1 Kings 12:16: Where did Israel go? *(Unto their tents)*
8. 1 Kings 12:20: Which tribe followed the house of David? *(The tribe of Judah only)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for people who give us wise counsel. Help us listen, serve others and answer with good words, not rough words. Thank You that Jesus came to serve and to save us. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: what this lesson leaves out. The young men's saying about the king's little finger (12:10) and the man the people stoned, with Rehoboam's flight to Jerusalem (12:18), are left out.

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