Preschool–Grade 6

Rehoboam and the Divided Kingdom

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

Main point: King Rehoboam would not listen to wise counsel, and his kingdom was split. We listen to wise counsel 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, 5 paper strips, a marker, tape, a bag with a few books, a soft ball or beanbag, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 5 paper strips (see part 4). Put bookmarks in your Bible at 1 Kings 12:4, 12:7 and 12:14.

1. Opening game: Heavy or Light? (5 minutes)

Let a child lift the empty bag. "Is it heavy or light?" (Light!) Put in one book at a time and let other children lift it. "Now is it heavy or light?" Say: "When something is heavy, it is hard to carry. Today we will hear a true story about people who asked their new king to make their heavy load lighter."

2. Bible story: The King Who Would Not Listen (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to 1 Kings 12, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

King Solomon died, and his son **Rehoboam** was going to be the new king (1 Kings 11:43). All the people of **Israel** came to a city called **Shechem** to make him king (12:1). A man named **Jeroboam** came too (12:3).

The people said to Rehoboam, "Thy father made our **yoke** grievous" (12:4). **Grievous** means hard and heavy. They asked him to make it lighter, and they would serve him (12:4). A yoke is a wooden bar that goes on the necks of oxen so they can pull a heavy plow. The people meant that King Solomon had made them work very hard. Rehoboam said, "Depart yet for three days, then come again to me" (12:5). That means, "Go away for three days, then come back."

First, Rehoboam asked the **old men** who had helped his father Solomon. **Read 1 Kings 12:7 from your Bible.** They said: be a **servant** to the people, help them, and "speak good words to them," and they will serve you for ever. That was wise **counsel**. Counsel means advice.

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The story continues: But Rehoboam **forsook**, or turned away from, the counsel of the old men (12:8). He asked the **young men** who grew up with him (12:8). They told him to say, "I will add to your yoke" (12:10–11). That means, "I will make it even heavier!"

After three days, the people came back (12:12). The king answered them **roughly**, in a hard and unkind way. He did what the young men said: "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke" (12:13–14).

When the people saw that the king would not listen to them, they said, "To your **tents**, O Israel!" and they went home to their tents (12:16). They did not want Rehoboam to be their king. They made Jeroboam king over Israel instead (12:20). Only the tribe of **Judah** stayed with Rehoboam (12:20). God's people were split into two kingdoms.

Rehoboam did not listen to wise counsel, and he did not speak good words. God wants us to listen to good counsel and to speak kind, good words.

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. What did the people ask Rehoboam to do? *(Make their heavy yoke lighter, 1 Kings 12:4)*
2. What did the old men tell him to do? *(Be a servant to the people and "speak good words to them," 12:7)*
3. Did Rehoboam listen to the old men? *(No, he forsook their counsel, 12:8)*
4. What did Rehoboam say to the people? *("I will add to your yoke," 12:14)*
5. Who stayed with Rehoboam? *(Only the tribe of Judah, 12:20)*

4. Memory verse: Verse Strips (5 minutes)

Tape the 5 strips on the wall in order: *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.* Explain the old words: **spake** means spoke; **thou wilt** means you will; **a servant** is a helper; **for ever** means always. Read the verse together. Then take one strip away and read it again. Keep taking strips away, one each time, until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The old men said to serve the people and speak good words. Jesus came to serve too (Mark 10:45). God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things, like unkind words. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus 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. 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 when your parents and teachers give you good advice, and speak good words to someone every day.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Rehoboam word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/rehoboam-word-search), crossword, maze or worksheet, the craft (vbshq.com/crafts/rehoboam-craft), or **Good Words Toss:** kids stand in a circle. Toss the soft ball to a child and say one good word about them, like "You are kind!" That child tosses it to someone else and says a good word too. Keep going until everyone has heard a good word. Say: "The old men said, 'speak good words to them' (1 Kings 12:7). That's what we just did!"

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for people who give us wise counsel, like our parents, pastors and teachers. Help us listen to them. Help us serve others and speak good words, not rough words. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: what this lesson leaves out. The young men's words about whips and scorpions (12:11, 12:14) are told here simply as "I will make it even heavier." The man the people stoned and Rehoboam's flight to Jerusalem (12:18) are left out. If a child asks why God let the kingdom split, say: "God was still in charge. He had told Jeroboam ahead of time that it would happen (12:15). But Rehoboam chose not to listen to wise counsel."

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