

# GOD CALLS LEADERS

## 3

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### GOOD LEADERS / BAD LEADERS

#### **Background from the Author**

A considerable span of Israelite history is covered in this session. We may not find it easy to keep focused on the leaders who carry the story line, but we surely cannot avoid the historical continuity. If you emphasize the principal details given in the *Resource Book*, the group should get a sense of the framework in which Jewish religion developed. It was the leaders who carried the weight of this progression.

The character of Solomon portrays the degree to which personal strengths and weaknesses are sometimes interrelated even in God's servants. The wisdom that led him to international greatness was insufficient to avoid the error of religious syncretism (is there a modern lesson in there?). As with David, it also appears that his relationship with his children left a great deal to be desired. His son, Rehoboam, opened the door to the rebellion of Jeroboam.

It is important to note the continuity of tribal rivalries that led to the division of the kingdom. You need not take it back to the sons of Jacob, but you should at least refer to the effect of the geographical dispersion of the tribal settlements. Be sure the group understands the importance of the centralized worship at Jerusalem and the consequences of the rival centers established in the north. Incidentally, it will be helpful to acknowledge and reiterate the possible confusion that may arise from the use of the name "Israel" for the northern kingdom. We are stuck with this!

The stories from the charismatic careers of Elijah and Elisha are tempting distractions. In our time frame it is impossible to deal with all of the intriguing stories—Naboth's vineyard, Elijah at Horeb, Elisha and the siege of Samaria, etc. There is too much material unless you prepare very carefully. Perhaps the most difficult area will be the stories of the amazing miracles in which the two prophets were involved. A discussion of this could sidetrack the whole session. Perhaps you may schedule a separate time for this discussion.

Note Research 2. The group may ask for help. It is too early to get into a discussion of messianic expectation, but the Passover connections are intriguing.

The introduction of two “minor” prophets is another challenge. Keep clearly in mind how they fit into the movement of the story line. Their messages reflect the underlying problems of the nation. This is not the time, of course, to discuss in detail the formation of the canon—another separate topic.

Another byway to be avoided is the complicated mention of so many kings of Israel and Judah with the cross-references to who was contemporary with whom. It is not necessary to prepare a list of who was bad and who was good and when they were. It is enough to stick to the leaders mentioned in the *Resource Book*. We are building toward the disasters that befell both nations. Athaliah must be mentioned. She was the only queen-ruler in either line, and she was a “northerner” who ruled in the “south,” albeit badly.

This session deals mainly with the northern kingdom. We shall deal with Judah in the next part. As a connection, however, we have the story of Joash of Judah. You will note the somewhat complicated relationship of his ancestry, which connects him with Israel.

## SESSION PLANS

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### *Learning Objectives*

This session is intended to enable participants to:

1. Explain the division of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms, noting geography, date, and leadership.
2. Describe the roles played by 5-7 kings and prophets during the period from the beginning of the divided kingdom to the fall of the northern kingdom.
3. Discuss the role of prophets in biblical times and today.
4. Cite at least six examples of positive and negative leadership characteristics illustrated in the lives of biblical figures of this period.

### *Resources You May Need*

A large map showing the conquest of Canaan and the location of the 12 tribes

3 x 5 cards

A Bible Timeline (Appendix 2)

Chalkboard or newsprint and markers

Bibles

Copies of Worksheet A, "Studies in Leadership"

Copies of "A Personal Meditation"

Player and tape or CD of quiet music for meditation

Hymnals or copies of "Here O My Lord, I See You Face to Face," or "Spirit of the Living God"

Copies of the Hymn "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" (Appendix 1)

## *Leadership Strategy*

### SETTING THE STAGE

- 1. Regional Rivalries.** Invite the participants to think of examples of rivalries between different regions of this country. For example, they may suggest tensions between rural and city residents, East Coast and Midwest stereotypes, regional accents, etc. List the examples on the board as they are given. (5 minutes)
- 2. 12 Tribes.** Using a large map showing the conquest of Canaan, point out the location of each of the 12 tribes: Ephraim, Manasseh, Reuben, Gad, Benjamin, Judah, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. Mention that the tribes are named for the 12 sons of Jacob with the exception of Joseph, whose descendants divided into two tribes named for his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Joshua 17:14-18). Also explain that the tribe of Manasseh, located on both sides of the Jordan River, and the tribe of Levi did not inherit land; instead, as priests, the Levites received the offerings brought to the temple. As you note the geographical areas, you might point out the tribal ancestry of the following leaders covered in this session:

Ephraim: (Joshua, Samuel)      Judah (Naomi, Boaz, Ruth, David)

Manasseh (Gideon)                      Zebulun and Naphtali (Fought with  
Barak & Deborah)

Benjamin (Saul)                          Dan (Samson)

Invite the group to imagine what factors might have contributed to the tribal rivalries that developed (e.g. land comparisons, power struggles, willingness or unwillingness to help defend one another from outside attacks). Conclude by recalling that at the end of the previous session, David had united all the tribes of Israel into a single kingdom, moved the political capital from Hebron to Jerusalem, and brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, making it the religious capital as well. David reigned over a united kingdom for 33 years and was succeeded by his son, Solomon. (10 minutes)

## EXPLORING THE SCRIPTURE

1. **Solomon's Reign.** Referring to the "Bible Timeline" in Appendix 2, note the date of the death of David and the beginning of the reign of his son, Solomon. Place Solomon's reign on your timeline, if you have made one. (5 minutes)

**and**

**Solomon's Leadership.** Ahead of time, print the following scripture references, each on a separate 3 x 5 card:

1 Kings 3:5-9

1 Kings 7:1, 8

1 Kings 11:1-2

**1 Kings 3:27-28**

1 Kings 8:1, 22, 27-30

1 Kings 11:4-7

Distribute the cards to volunteers, who will read each text aloud. Title 2 sheets of newsprint or 2 sides of the board "POSITIVE" and "NEGATIVE." After each passage is read, invite the participants to suggest positive and negative aspects of Solomon's leadership illustrated in each passage. List the leadership qualities in the appropriate column. Leave the chart in place so that you may continue to add to it during later discussions. (10 minutes)

2. **Civil War.** Referring to the section "Rehoboam and Jeroboam," in the *Resource Book*, describe the civil war that broke out after the death of Solomon and the resulting division of the kingdom. Bring out the following points:

- During Solomon's reign, the Northern tribes resented the heavy taxes and forced labor Solomon imposed on them to support his extravagant tastes and building projects. ( 1 Kings 12:1-4).
- Solomon had placed the Ephraimite Jeroboam in charge of the forced labor that was brought into Jerusalem from the tribe of Ephraim (1 Kings 11:28).
- Suspecting that Jeroboam was planning to lead a rebellion, Solomon plotted to kill him, but Jeroboam escaped and took sanctuary in Egypt until Solomon's death (1 Kings 11:28-41).
- Rehoboam became king after Solomon's death, but he failed to follow his elder advisors' advice to make peace with Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:6-11).

- The ten Northern tribes seceded under the leadership of Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:16-17).
- From this point on (931 BCE), the Southern kingdom, called Judah, was made up of only two tribes. It was ruled by the descendants of David. Jerusalem continued as its capital and all religious activity centered there in the Temple on Mount Zion.
- The Northern Kingdom, called Israel, was also sometimes referred to as Ephraim, the most prominent of the 10 northern tribes. Bethel became the religious capital. Later, the political capital moved to Samaria.

Note that this session focuses on the kings and prophets of the Northern Kingdom. The next session will follow the history of Judah. (8-10 minutes)

**or**

**Dividing the Nation.** Ahead of time, invite three volunteers to act out the brief dramatization titled “Dividing the Nation.” When the drama is presented, invite the “audience” to act as people of the northern tribes who are gathered to acclaim their new king. After the presentation, title two columns of chalkboard or newsprint “NORTHERN KINGDOM” and “SOUTHERN KINGDOM.” Down the left side of the board, write the following categories: “NATION’S NAME, TRIBES, FIRST LEADER, CENTER OF WORSHIP, CAPITAL.” Invite the participants to fill in the information for each column, based on the *Resource Book* and on their prior knowledge. The completed chart may look like this:

	<b>Southern Kingdom</b>	<b>Northern Kingdom</b>
<b>Name</b>	Judah	Israel*
<b>Tribes</b>	Judah & Benjamin	the other 10
<b>First leader</b>	Rehoboam	Jeroboam
<b>Center of Worship</b>	Jerusalem	Bethel
<b>Capital</b>	Jerusalem	Samaria

\*Note that Israel is sometimes referred to as Ephraim because the Ephraimites were the largest northern tribe. (15 minutes)

- 3. Writing Obituaries of Northern Kingdom Leaders.** Ahead of time, write the names and scripture references below, each on a separate 3 x 5 card. Form groups of 2-4 and give each group one of the cards. (If there are fewer than 20 participants, eliminate some of the assignments.) Based on the assigned passage and their collective knowledge, each group is to write a newspaper obituary for its leader, outlining briefly the events and leadership qualities that made that leader important.

**Ahab: 1 Kings 18**

**Elijah: 2 Kings 21:1-18**

**Elijah: 1 Kings 18**

**Naaman: 2 Kings 5:1-19a**

**Jehoshaphat: 1 Kings 22:5-28**

**Elisha: 2 Kings 5:1-19a**

**Micaiah: 1 Kings 22:5-28**

**Amos: Amos 7:10-15**

**Elisha: 2 Kings 2:1-18**

**Hosea: Hosea 11:1-12**

After about 15 minutes, bring everyone together and invite the groups to read their obituaries, taking them in chronological order as listed above. After each obituary is read, turn to the list of Positive and Negative Leadership Qualities that you began with Solomon in Exploring the Scripture #1. Invite the participants to suggest additions to both lists, based on each obituary. The completed lists might include some of the following:

**POSITIVE LEADERSHIP**

**NEGATIVE LEADERSHIP**

Fairness (Solomon)

Oppressive policies (Rehoboam)

Expanded empire (Solomon)

Insensitive to people (Rehoboam)

Asked God's blessing (Solomon)

Unwilling to reconcile (Rehoboam, Jeroboam)

Courage, trust in God (many leaders)

Forsook commandments (Ahab)

Sought God's counsel (Jehoshaphat)

Worshipped foreign gods (Ahab)

Persuasive communication (Hosea)

Lacked courage (many leaders)

Willing to listen to prophet (Naaman)

Jealousy (Amaziah)

Conclude by commenting on the number and variety of lessons we can learn from these leaders of our faith history. (25-30 minutes)

or

**Studies in Leadership.** Invite the participants to complete Worksheet A, “Studies in Leadership,” working in groups of 4-7. Assign one of the Bible passages to each group. (Depending on the number of participants, you may eliminate passages or assign some passages to more than one group.) After 25-30 minutes, bring the whole group together and invite spokespersons from each group to report the highlights of their discussions. As leadership qualities are named, add them to the list of Positive and Negative Leadership Qualities that you began in Exploring the Scripture #1. An example of a completed list is given in the option above. Conclude by commenting on the number and variety of lessons to be learned from the leaders of our faith history. (30-40 minutes)

- 4. Amos and the Role of a Prophet.** Invite the participants to read Amos 2:6-8, 5:21-24, and **7:10-15**. Then lead a discussion with the whole group, based on the following questions. (Another option is to write the questions on newsprint and discuss them in groups of 4-7.)

Why do you think Amaziah wanted to get rid of Amos? (7:10-14)

Why was the king tempted to listen to Amaziah?

Why is it important that the king have an “Amos”?

How do we distinguish between true and false prophets?

What is the role of a true prophet?

Draw from information in the *Resource Book* as you lead this discussion. Be sure the group understands that the primary role of a prophet is not foretelling the future, even though at times the prophet’s message does concern future events. The role of a prophet is to listen to and speak for God. Prophetic leadership is characteristic of God’s own way of speaking to the people. (15-25 minutes)



**or**

**Discussion: Prophets Then and Now.** Based on the discussions in Exploring the Scripture #3, lead a discussion on the role of a prophet during biblical times and in our world today. Here are some possible questions:

- Why did Ahab, King of Israel, say, “I hate Micaiah?” (**1 Kings 22:8**)
- What did Elijah mean when he said, “How long will you go limping with two different opinions?” (**1 Kings 18:21**)
- How do we distinguish between true and false prophets?
- What is the job description of a true prophet?
- Who do you think might be modern prophets to the church?

If participants disagree on the last question, remind them that these conflicting opinions highlight the difficulty of discerning true from false prophets. List every suggestion, and do not try to reach consensus. Simply observe that the list represents the variety of opinions that are represented in the group. (10-15 minutes)

### CLOSING

**Silent Meditation.** Give each participant a copy of “A Personal Meditation” to complete individually. Or read the meditation aloud, leaving spaces of silence for meditation between each section. Quiet music could provide a meditative mood. Close, if desired, by singing one or more verses of “Here, O My Lord, I See You Face to Face” or “Spirit of the Living God.” (8-10 minutes)

**and/or**

**Solomon's Prayer.** Read aloud **1 Kings 8:27-30**, a portion of Solomon’s prayer for the Temple. Then lead a prayer for your own church modeled after Solomon's prayer. The prayer might begin like this: **O God, we know that you can never be enclosed in any building that we have made. Yet we pray for our church, that we may find you here, and that you will hear the prayers we offer to you now:** (*Group members may offer their thanksgivings and petitions.*) Close by saying the Lord's Prayer together. (5 minutes)

**and/or**

**A Hymn.** Sing “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” if you are using it as your theme hymn. If you have encouraged the participants to create additional verses, invite anyone who wishes to do so to share a new verse. (3 minutes)

**and/or**

**Prayer.** Close with your own prayer asking for openness to God’s call and for courage and strength to respond. (2 minutes)

### ***Looking Ahead***

The next session suggests using a large map showing the Divided Kingdom. This can be the same map used to show the location of the 12 tribes, marked to show the dividing line between the two kingdoms.

Session 4 (Exploring the Scripture #1) also suggests asking four volunteers to make presentations on the lives of Isaiah, Josiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Give each volunteer a copy of the worksheet that corresponds to the assignment and direct the volunteers to available Bible Dictionaries.

## Dividing the Nation

A Dramatization based on 1 Kings 12

*Place a chair at the center of the “stage” to represent a throne.*

**Narrator:** The time is 931 BCE. We are in Shechem, where the new king, Rehoboam, has come to meet with the northern tribes and to be acclaimed as king. Rehoboam’s father, King Solomon, ruled the nation of Israel for 39 years. Sometimes he was wise, but not always. The cost of building the temple—and supporting his seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines—imposed a heavy burden on all his subjects. But now King Solomon is dead, and his son, Rehoboam, has been designated to succeed him. Rehoboam has come to Shechem to greet his subjects. *(Rehoboam enters, waves crown to audience, seats himself on his “throne.” The narrator continues.)* But there is a problem. Jeroboam, the leader of the northern tribes of the nation, has not come to acclaim Rehoboam as king; he has come to negotiate with him.

**Jeroboam:** Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the heavy yoke and the hard service of your father and we will serve you.

**Rehoboam:** I’ll have to think about that.

**Narrator:** Rehoboam thought. And he consulted the elders in Judah, who advised him to listen to Jeroboam. But the king ignored their advice. Three days later, Jeroboam returned.

**Jeroboam:** Have you thought about my request?

**Rehoboam:** I have! And here is your answer. My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions!

**Jeroboam:** *(Speaks to the audience.)* What portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse! *(Shouts to the audience.)* To your tents, O Israel! *(Stalks away, then stops and turns back to Rehoboam.)* Look to your own house, you descendants of David!

**Narrator:** So the people of the ten tribes in the north separated from the two tribes in the south. What had been one united kingdom under David and Solomon now became two nations. Under the leadership of Jeroboam, the northern nation took the name Israel. The southern nation took the name of its largest tribe, Judah.

## Worksheet A

### Studies in Leadership

*Read one of the following biblical passages:*

**1 Kings 18**

**2 Kings 2:1-18**

**1 Kings 22:5-28**

**2 Kings 5:1-19a**

*Discuss the following questions, and designate a spokesperson to report the highlights of your discussion to the large group.*

Who are the main characters in this story?

What is the setting (time and place)?

What happens in the story?

What examples of positive or negative leadership do you see in this passage? (For example, Jehoshaphat showed positive leadership when he sought the counsel of the Lord. Amaziah showed negative leadership because he lacked the courage to give the king bad news.)

## A Personal Meditation

*Read 1 Kings 19:9-18. Then reflect on one or more of the following questions. You will not be asked to share your reflection with anyone.*

What alternative responses might this leader have made and what might have been the consequences? Think of some *what ifs*. For example, *what if* Moses had not 'argued' with God? *What if* Joseph had not forgiven his brothers?

After Elijah defeated and killed the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Jezebel threatened to kill him. How or when have you experienced the anger of others directed at you?

Later, the Lord found Elijah hiding in a cave. He felt discouraged, fearful and very alone. When have you felt discouraged, fearful, or alone?

First there came an earthquake, then wind, then fire, all of which are used in other places in the Bible to convey the presence and activity of God. But God was not present in these for Elijah. On this occasion, Elijah sensed the presence of God in "the sound of sheer silence." How would you complete this sentence?

For me, God was present in \_\_\_\_\_

but not in \_\_\_\_\_.

The presence of God released Elijah from his discouragement, self-pity, and fear, and he received a new sense of purpose and direction. What is something that God is calling you to do?

What do you need to be freed from in order to respond to God's call?