

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
MARCH302024

life sentence

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17–21.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 15.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This lesson focuses on the story of Jehoshaphat's reign, a king who sought to do what was right in God's eyes. During Jehoshaphat's 25-year reign he continued to lead God's people faithfully in the way his father, Asa, led. Jehoshaphat took over the throne during a time of war so his reformation began with reforming the military and fortifying the borders. He also started a religious reformation and stood firm against the idolatry that seemed to hamstring God's people in every generation. Jehoshaphat started a traveling school headed up by 16 well-trained teachers who taught the law of God from place to place (2 Chronicles 17:7–9). The result of his leadership was internal peace and security (2 Chronicles 17:12; 20:30).

If Jehoshaphat had a weakness, it was connected to his struggle for diplomacy. He made a habit of forming alliances with people less devoted to God than he was. First, with Ahab, then with Ahab's son, Ahaziah, and finally with Ahab's other son Jehoram. In his zeal to do the right thing he sometimes misjudged the evil intents of others, and God firmly corrected this tendency over the years (1 Kings 22:44; 2 Chronicles 18:1). Most of what people remember about the kings of Israel are often summed up in a sentence. The *Life Sentence* that captures Jehoshaphat's time on earth states: "In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD" (1 Kings 22:43, NIV). History categorizes the kings of Israel into two groups, good and bad. Invite the students to consider what their life sentence will be as they study the story of a great king of Israel.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Survey the key stories of a great king's life. *(Know)*
- Wrestle with the tension between strengths and weaknesses, success and failure. *(Feel)*
- Choose to live an uncompromising life. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Law of God, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 19

"The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. . . . (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-14; 40:7, 8; Matt. 5:17-20; 22:36-40; John 14:15; 15:7-10; Rom. 8:3, 4; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 8:8-10; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Invite the students to share and explain their first choice and the item they chose last in the ranking exercise. Ask what elements they would add to this list to make it more comprehensive.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Timothy is a successful businessman who always leaves the table a little bit hungry. He can afford to eat to the full, but an unexpected epiphany made such an impact on him that he was never the same. Walking home late in the evening from work, he happened upon a man sitting on his sidewalk rummaging through a pile of garbage. The beggar scraped off maggots from rotten pieces of food and shoved the pieces of garbage in his mouth with dirty hands. Timothy, shocked by the desperation of that man, vowed never to take food for granted. Timothy is not perfect, but he started a soup kitchen in his community and volunteers regularly to inspire others to contribute. Some people are driven by personal experiences that deeply affect them. Examine any great leader for the events and stories that make them so passionate. They are often stories that clearly mark what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad.

Consider one moment in Jehoshaphat's experience that made an indelible impact on him as a leader. When his enemy in battle, the king of Moab, saw that he was losing the battle, he took his firstborn son, who would have become the next king, to the top of the city wall and offered him as a sacrifice as a last ditch attempt for victory (2 Kings 3:26, 27, NIV). Witnessing such an act must have made an everlasting impression on Jehoshaphat's mind. Such immorality, he decided, could be met only with passionate, deliberate obedience to God's Word.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Do you ever wonder what is at the heart of great heroes of faith? What makes them brave? Passionate? Wise? Committed? Some of the good things Jehoshaphat did may have come from a keen experience of right, but perhaps many of his decisions were the result of knowing what was wrong. As you survey the life of Jehoshaphat, you may notice a moment of weakness or a chink in the armor of his character. But the overwhelming impact of his leadership was good, right, and true. Check out this story, but also scan through the various events of his reign and note the depth of his devotion to God.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

- What do you think is the key verse in this week's story?
- What are the leadership qualities you see in Jehoshaphat that are most noble?
- What might be one of Jehoshaphat's weaknesses as a leader?
- How do you think his name, the Lord judges, fits Jehoshaphat as a king?
- Jehoshaphat faced an army that far outnumbered him, but he trusted the Lord. What stance does God want us to take when we face challenges beyond our ability?

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

1. Jehoshaphat made his share of mistakes, but the overriding theme of his life is summed up as being devoted to God and His commands. His story includes at least four full chapters in 2 Chronicles, so covering his life might be time-consuming.

   One way to maximize time and get the entire class involved would be to use a teaching strategy known as "jigsaw." Divide your students into groups and give one or more of the "snap-

shots" below to each group. Have each group read and then discuss together what they learn from their passage or passages.

Then let each group report to everyone, or form other groups made up of at least one person from each of the original groups. Each person can explain to their new group what they learned in their original group. This way, everyone will get to "see" all the "snapshots" as well as to participate.

2 Chronicles 17:1–6	General summary
2 Chronicles 17:7–10	Teachers are sent out to instruct the people about God
2 Chronicles 17:11–19	Wealth and security
2 Chronicles 18:1–34	Debacle with Ahab against Ramoth Gilead
2 Chronicles 19:1, 2	Jehu's rebuke and affirmation
2 Chronicles 19:4–11	Judges organized for civil order
2 Chronicles 20:16–29	Battle victory won through singing

2. This week's story highlights Jehoshaphat's leadership and his unwavering dependence on God. Notice the first step the faithful king takes is: "Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 20:3, NIV). What does the word "resolve" mean? To set your mind with unshakable focus. Another aspect of Jehoshaphat's leadership is the way the people rallied around his example. Some have said, "If you want to know if you are a leader, see if anyone is following." The Bible says: "Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him" (2 Chronicles 20:4, NIV).

Jehoshaphat is also a great leader because of his humility. The king admits to God, "We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you" (2 Chronicles 20:12, NIV).

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Less Is More

One teaching strategy that really stirs up the brain is the activity of synthesis—the work of blending and unifying many ideas into one new thought. One way to get students to synthesize is to challenge them by limiting the amount of words they can use or by keeping their statements to one sentence. For example, "If you had to sum up your life story in one sentence, how would you characterize your life?" This activity calls for students to distill vast amounts of information into one meaningful statement. It often helps to give them time to write out their "life sentence" and share it with others.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

And finally, Jehoshaphat acts on his convictions and "appointed men to sing to the LORD" (2 Chronicles 20:21, NIV). This is just another war God wins by singing! As a result, the enemies, in their confusion, "destroy one another" (2 Chronicles 20:23, NIV). The victory is one of many moments in Scripture where God intervenes when human efforts could not prevail, and God's involvement and glory are unmistakable.

3. Unfortunately, the faithful heritage of Asa and Jehoshaphat was only a brief season of brightness for God's people. Jehoram chose not to follow the same path as his father and grandfather (2 Chronicles 21:12, 13).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Invite each student to respond to the following question:

If you were to become a leader of a country and you had to enforce five main rules, what would those rules say? Debrief by allowing the students to share their list of five rules. Jehoshaphat's life had many ups and downs, but ultimately, the faithful king lived by a few basic principles/rules that he never compromised. What were they?

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Everyone has the chance to live in such a way that they can one day earn a positive "life sentence." What is so impressive about Jehoshaphat is the way he remained devoted to God, even when his failures and mistakes were evident to all. And when things were going well, he continued to innovate and create new efforts to better life for Israel. His humility and courage form a brief statement of truth: "In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD" (1 Kings 22:43, NIV). So, what are the nonnegotiable principles by which you will choose to live your life? About which values will you say today, "I will not compromise"? Take a moment to reflect and pray about your devotion to God.



Remind the students about the reading plan, which will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 15.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 17–21.
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life sentence



Photo Getty Images

flashlight

"If the teachings of God's Word were made the controlling influence in the life of every man and woman, if mind and heart were brought under its restraining power, the evils that now exist in national and in social life would find no place" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 192).

keytext

"In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there."

(1 Kings 22:43, NIV)

what do you think?

Which do you think are characteristics of God's inspired leadership? Rank the following according to how crucial they are for good government—mark (1) for most crucial and (6) for least crucial.

___ Civil peace and security
___ Spiritual teaching and wisdom
___ Military strength and protection
___ Charismatic leadership
___ Clear sense of right and wrong
___ Abundance of wealth

Explain your reasons for ranking these the way you did.

did you know?

The path of men who are placed as leaders is not an easy one. But they are to see in every difficulty a call to prayer. Never are they to fail of consulting the great Source of all wisdom. Strengthened and enlightened by the Master Worker, they will be enabled to stand firm against unholy influences and to discern right from wrong, good from evil. They will approve that which God approves, and will strive earnestly against the introduction of wrong principles into His cause."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 31

INTO THE STORY

"After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.

"Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, 'A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar' (that is, En Gedi). Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

"Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard and said:

" 'LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, "If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us." '

" 'But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.'

"All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.

"Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

"He said: 'Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's." ' "

(2 Chronicles 20:1–15, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

In verse 1 of 2 Chronicles 20 the Bible sets the stage for this week's story of Jehoshaphat with "After this . . ." Survey the following snapshots of his reign and note the various aspects of Jehoshaphat's leadership.

2 Chronicles 17:1–6: General summary
2 Chronicles 17:7–10: Jehoshaphat sends out teachers to instruct the people about God
2 Chronicles 17:11–19: Wealth and security
2 Chronicles 18:1–34: Debacle with Ahab against Ramoth Gilead
2 Chronicles 19:1–2: Jehu's rebuke and affirmation
2 Chronicles 19:4–11: Organized judges for civil order
2 Chronicles 20:16–29: Battle victory through singing

What do you think is the key verse in this week's story?

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What other people in Scripture does Jehoshaphat remind you of? Why?

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What leadership qualities do you see in Jehoshaphat that are most noble?

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What might be one of Jehoshaphat's weaknesses as a leader?

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punch lines

"Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God" **(Psalm 86:2, NIV).**

"Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him" **(Psalm 32:10, NIV).**

"As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more" **(1 Thessalonians 4:1, NIV).**

"You must distinguish between what is sacred and what is common, between what is ceremonially unclean and what is clean. And you must teach the Israelites all the decrees that the LORD has given them through Moses" **(Leviticus 10:10, 11, NLT).**

"And you will find happiness by worshiping him. God will answer your prayers, and you will keep the promises you made to him" **(Job 22:26, 27, CEV).**

further insight

"Position does not give holiness of character. It is by honoring God and obeying His commands that a man is made truly great."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 30

Sabbath

Read 2 Chronicles 20:12.

The ranking exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section of this lesson challenges you to identify the leadership qualities you think are most important as well as least important. We often think leaders always have a clear sense of what to do in times of crisis; but note what Jehoshaphat said to God as the enemies of Israel were approaching in today's Bible verse. How would you describe this act as an attribute of a good leader?

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_____

Sunday

Read John 20:30, 31 and 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

The *Into the Story* section contains a portion of a battle that demonstrates the God-inspired leadership of Jehoshaphat. Answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section, including the snapshots of Jehoshaphat's reign. How would you compare Jehoshaphat's leadership style with other leaders in the Bible? According to our Bible readings for today, all stories of Scripture have the power to speak to us. As you learn more about this great king, what message do you think God has for you in this passage?

_____

_____

_____

Monday

Read 1 Kings 22:43.

King Jehoshaphat's great qualities are summed up in one sentence in today's Bible verse and this week's *Key Text*; in the following sentence the Bible admits a shortcoming that also marked his life. Read this passage in a few different translations, if available, and think about what close friends might say about you, in a sentence. In the space given below, write a sentence about the life of someone you admire:

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read Psalm 86:2.

While there are many things that influence your outlook and your behavior, there are a few basic ideas that influence most of your decisions. Read the quote from *Prophets and Kings* about the controlling influences in your life. To what degree do you think the evil in the world would diminish if people allowed God's will to become the "controlling influence" in their lives? What laws or principles of God's way of life would make the most significant change for the better?

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Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* listed in this week's lesson and identify the verse that speaks to you the most. In what way is this passage most relevant to your life today?

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Think of a friend or someone you know that has the ability to influence others but does not often seize those moments for good. Say a prayer today for that person and pray for an opportunity to encourage their leadership potential. Sometimes a little positive encouragement can awaken a more earnest desire to make a positive impact on the world around us. Sometimes affirming words can remind people of previous commitments they had made that need to be renewed.

Thursday

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

It may be that the great things that are ultimately remembered about your life are built on the practical things you do from day to day. Make a list of three "great" things you want to do today that will have eternal significance. Perhaps it is an act of generosity or a secret deed of kindness. Maybe you could extend grace for those who are struggling or forgiveness for someone who has wronged you. Make your list specific enough so that you can know that you have done a "great thing" today. It will also be helpful for you to share this with a supporting friend or two, which will strengthen your resolve to implement it. (Go to www.cornerstoneconnections.net to find resources for choosing a support/accountability partner.)

1. _____
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2. _____
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3. _____
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Friday

Read Leviticus 10:10, 11.

Take time to reflect on Jehoshaphat's storied journey of devotion, mistakes, and uncompromising faithfulness to God's plan for Israel. His story holds up a high standard of loyalty to God and courageous leadership for Israel. But his life has mistakes and moments that exposed his flaws as well. Ruminate on how we can be great leaders and people of influence for God even though we are not always perfect. Write down a few thoughts you have on the tension between greatness and making mistakes, as it appears in your life. (You can use the Notes pages in the back of your study guide.)

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 15.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.