King Hezekiah Prays for Health



Scripture Reference: 2 Kings 20:1-11

Suggested Theme: God hears our prayers when we pray for those who are sick. God can heal people.

Memory Verse: “And the prayer that is said with faith will make the sick person well. The Lord will heal him. And if he has sinned, God will forgive him.” James 5:15, ICB

Story Overview:

King Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah delivered the message from God that the king would die. Hezekiah knew there was still much work to do in Judah. He wanted to help the country be better and teach the people to love God. Hezekiah could not do that if he were dead! Hezekiah prayed that the Lord would give him a longer life. The Lord stopped Isaiah before he had even left Hezekiah’s palace. He told Isaiah to go back and tell Hezekiah that he would live 15 more years. A sign of this healing was the miraculous moving of a shadow on the palace steps.

Background Study:

Hezekiah was a good king (2 Kings 18:5-7). Hezekiah’s fatal illness occurred in the same year as the Assyrian invasion described in 2 Kings 19. This could have even happened during the crisis with Assyria itself.

Background Information on the Divided Kingdom.

The Lord sent the prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah to tell him that he was about to die. Verse one contains the familiar expression, “Put your house in order.” When Isaiah left, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed earnestly with tears. Hezekiah had been a good king who tried to obey God, and one of his strengths was that he was a man of prayer. He did not stop praying just because he was sick. He wanted the Lord to give him a longer life. This was not just for himself. Hezekiah knew that he was a good king, and he wanted to live a long life to bring the people closer to God. He also would have wanted to produce an heir to the throne. Also, in Old Testament times, people believed that long life was a reward for righteous living.

In the earlier story, God Protects King Hezekiah and the People, the Lord takes his time answering Hezekiah’s prayer. In this instance, the answer was immediate. Before Isaiah had even left the palace courtyard, God told him to return to the king. Hezekiah would live fifteen more years! This would nearly double the years of his reign. From a reading of verse 5, it seems God granted Hezekiah’s prayer because he was king and a descendant of David.

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Placing the lump of figs on the boil was a symbolic act; Hezekiah began to get better at that time. A fig poultice was a way to bring a boil to the surface of the skin. We do not know what Hezekiah's exact illness was but it had something to do with boils.

But Hezekiah still wanted a sign that he would be well in three days. Neither God nor the prophet was angry when Hezekiah asked for a sign. The stairway served as a sundial of some sort. Hezekiah was given the choice of whether the shadow should go back or forward ten degrees. Hezekiah chose the way that was not possible. It happened just as he requested.

We can read Isaiah's version of this event in Isaiah chapter 38.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring some items that relate to illness. These items might include medicine bottles, blankets, thermometers, soup, etc. Talk about how it feels to be sick. "In today's story, we are going to learn about a time when King Hezekiah was sick."

The Story:

King Hezekiah was a very good king. He prayed to God often and obeyed God. One time, King Hezekiah became very ill and almost died. Hezekiah did not forget the Lord or blame him because of his sickness. He just continued to pray and ask God to help him.

While he was sick, the prophet Isaiah came to visit him. King Hezekiah probably hoped that Isaiah would have some good news. Instead, the news was bad. The prophet told Hezekiah, "The Lord says you are going to die. So you should give your last orders to everyone. You will not get well."

As soon as Isaiah left, Hezekiah began to pray to God. He said, "Lord, please remember that I have always obeyed You. I have done what You said was right." Then Hezekiah cried loudly. He did not want to die. The country needed him. Many of the people still did not follow God. Hezekiah wanted to teach them some more so that they would learn to love and obey God. If he died now, he could not do that. Hezekiah cried and kept praying and begging the Lord to make him well.

Even though Isaiah had gone, he had not gotten very far. He was still in the palace courtyard. God spoke to him and told him to go back to Hezekiah. The Lord had a special message for King Hezekiah, and he wanted Isaiah to give the king the message. This time, he would have some good news to tell the king.

The Lord said to Isaiah, "Tell Hezekiah that I have heard his prayer, and I will heal him. I have decided to add more years to his life. In three days, Hezekiah should go to the temple, and I will add fifteen years to his life." Isaiah did just as the Lord commanded. He went to Hezekiah and told him the good news. The King was very happy. Now, he would have the chance to help his people.

Then, Isaiah had Hezekiah's servants boil some figs and make a paste from them. The servants spread the paste on the king's skin, and he got better.

King Hezekiah wanted a sign from the Lord. He wanted a sign to ensure he would go to the temple in three days. Hezekiah wanted a sign that he really would live for fifteen more years.

So Isaiah asked Hezekiah, "Do you see the shadow on the steps?"

Hezekiah thought for a moment, "It is normal for a shadow to go forward, so let it go back ten steps as a sign from God that He will keep His promise."

Then Isaiah called to the Lord. God brought the shadow back ten steps, and Hezekiah knew God would make him well. He knew this sign meant God would keep His promise and add fifteen years to his life when he went to the temple in three days.

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It happened just as the Lord said. King Hezekiah lived fifteen more years and was a good king.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- When King Hezekiah got sick, what did Isaiah say would happen? (He would die)
- When Hezekiah prayed for a longer life, what did he say? (He reminded God that he had been a faithful king)
- When Hezekiah prayed for a longer life, what answer did the Lord give him? (He told him he would live for fifteen more years)
- What did Hezekiah's servants do after Isaiah said Hezekiah would live longer? (They made a paste of figs and put it on Hezekiah's skin)
- What sign did the Lord give Hezekiah to show he would get well? (He caused a shadow on some steps to fall in the opposite way from normal)
- What did this story show you about God?
- What did King Hezekiah learn from this experience?

Reflection:

- What kind of sickness do you think King Hezekiah had? What did he look or sound like?
- How far do you think Isaiah had to walk to go back and give Hezekiah the new message from God?
- Why do you think God decided to give Hezekiah 15 more years of life?
- What do you think Hezekiah wanted to do with his extra fifteen years of life?
- How do you think Hezekiah felt when Isaiah told him he would live for 15 more years?
- If you were Hezekiah, and Isaiah said you were going to die, would you have prayed for more years of life or not?

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- Hezekiah asked God to give him an impossible sign about shadows. What sign would you have asked God to give you?
- Who do you know who is sick? (Suggestion: pray together for them)
- Is it hard or easy to believe God hears your prayers? Why?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- God Answers Prayer
- Read Your Bible, Pray Everyday
- God is Listening When We Pray (Song) English/Cebuano
- My God is So Big
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Find out who in your congregation is sick and pray for these people with the children.
- Approach the children's ward at a local hospital and ask if there are items your group could collect to donate. Some ideas might be packets of crayons and pictures to colour. They could make games or collect stickers. Just ask the children what they would want to do if they were in the hospital.
- Write the memory verse on a chalk/whiteboard. Have the children say the verse together a few times. Erase one word and have the class repeat it together again. Erase another word and recite the verse. Continue to do this until all of the words of the verse are erased, and the children can say the verse.
- Spend some time talking about prayer. Make sure that the children in your class know how to pray.
- Go outside and experiment with shadows and talk about how it was a miracle that God changed the shadow. You could do this with a lamp indoors if it is not a sunny day.
- Figs were used for medicinge in this story. They are also nice to eat. Bring a fig to class and let the children have a taste.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

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Crafts:

- Make cards or gift baskets to send to someone who is sick.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Craft: Instructions for a simple paper crown (DLTK)
- Craft: Prayer pail with popsicle/craft sticks (Lu bird baby)
- Activity: “Five finger prayer” to teach children to pray (Ministry to children)
- Youtube video demonstrating simple hand shadow puppets
- Lesson on prayer for children (Ministry to children)
- Explaining how to teach children to pray (Ministry to children)

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