

King Josiah



Scripture Reference: [2 Kings 22-23:30](#)

Suggested Theme: God rejoices when people return to Him. Even if others don't obey God, we can choose to follow Him with passion, taking action to make the world better.

Memory Verse: "Do not let evil defeat you. Defeat evil by doing good." [Romans 12:21, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

Unlike his evil grandfather and father, King Josiah tried to lead the people of Judah back to God. He cleared Judah of all forms of idol worship. When he ordered the temple of the Lord cleaned and repaired, the high priest found the Book of the Law that had been lost and forgotten. Convicted by the words in the book, Josiah gathered all the people and read the Book of the Law to them. For the first time in hundreds of years, God's people celebrated the Passover according to God's law. Although the Word of God had been in the temple all along, it had not been read.

Background Study:

A parallel version of these events is recorded in [2 Chronicles 34-35](#).

After Solomon's death, the people of God were divided into two kingdoms: Israel and Judah. During the reign of Hezekiah, Israel was captured by the Assyrians. Although Judah had some good kings, the nation was often corrupt and was beginning to follow in the rebellious Israel's footsteps. [Background Information on the Divided Kingdom](#).

At eight, Josiah inherited a corrupt kingdom that had turned away from the Lord. His father, Amon, had been the king of Israel only two years before his servants assassinated him.

Amon and his grandfather, Manasseh, had done "what the Lord said was wrong" ([2 Kings 21:20](#)). Manasseh reigned for fifty-five years, longer than any other king of Judah and was considered the wickedest king. It was Manasseh who introduced many forms of idolatry to Israel and broke Israel's covenant with the Lord. Eventually, Manasseh's sins destroyed the nation and led it into captivity.

Taking over such a kingdom would have been a challenge to anyone, but Josiah showed great wisdom and followed the example of the good kings.

“In his eighth year as king, Josiah began to obey the God his ancestor David had followed. This was while Josiah was still young. In his twelfth year as king, Josiah began to remove the false gods from Judah and Jerusalem. He destroyed the places for worshipping false gods. He removed the Asherah idols and the wooden and metal idols.” [2 Chronicles. 34:3,ICB](#)

In the eighteenth year of his reign, he raised money to repair the temple. It was during the work on the temple that a discovery was made. The Book of the Law was found. Scholars disagree whether this book included the entire Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) or only the Book of Deuteronomy. It may be that only Deuteronomy was found since the reforms after this event are closely related to this book.

When Josiah read the Book of the Law, he was distressed and tore his clothes because of what it said. God’s Word told of the destruction that was to come to the nation because of the evil idolatry that had occurred under Manasseh and Amon.

The King sent Hilkiah, the priest, and four other officials to “inquire of the Lord.” This was done by going to speak to the prophetess, Huldah. Her message from God was that God’s judgement would fall on the people and their homes. Because of his genuine response to God, King Josiah would not have to see this take place ([2 Kings 22:13-20](#)). Later on, we will find that this was a message with both “good news” and “bad news.” The good news was that Josiah would not have to see the full measure of God’s wrath on the people. The bad news was that God’s wrath would eventually be poured out because other kings of the future would not obey. The reason Josiah would not see this happen was because he would be dead before that took place ([2 Kings 23:29-30](#)).

Meanwhile, after Huldah’s prophesy, Josiah called all the people together to read God’s Word to them. Then he renewed the covenant to keep God’s commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and soul. The people pledged themselves to the same covenant ([2 Kings 22:1-3](#)).

King Josiah ordered a major cleansing of the idolatrous altars and shrines of the high places. Anything to do with idol worship and practices that were taking place in the temple was stopped. Altars and idol worship all over the country were destroyed. The details of this can be found in [2 Kings 23:4-25](#).

Following this, King Josiah and the people celebrated the Passover.

Josiah reigned from 640 to 609 B.C. Judah returned to reading God’s Word during his reign and experienced spiritual renewal. For his work, Josiah is remembered as one of the greatest kings of Judah.

“There was no king like Josiah before or after him. He obeyed the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength. He followed all the Teachings of Moses.” [2 Kings 23:25, ICB](#)

Way to Introduce the Story:

Before the children gather, hide a scroll (rolled-up paper) in the room. You can write something like “read God’s Word” on the scroll. Provide cleaning supplies and let the children help clean the room. Tell them there is something important in the room that they might find when cleaning. “In today’s lesson, we are going to learn about a time when someone was cleaning and found a very important scroll.”

The Story:

Josiah was eight years old when he became king of Judah. His father had been a bad king, but Josiah wanted to be good. He obeyed God and tried to teach the people to obey God, too. He was king for 31 years.

One of the things that King Josiah wanted to do was to clean up and repair the temple of the Lord. The people had ignored the temple, and it looked worn out and dirty.

King Josiah sent his royal assistant, Shaphan, to the temple of the Lord to tell the priests to clean and repair it. Shaphan told the High Priest, Hilkiah, to gather the temple money the people had given. The money would be given to those who would do all the repair work. People who are working to repair the temple need the money.

Hilkiah did as Shaphan asked. The money was given to the supervisors of the work on the temple. There were carpenters, builders and stoneworkers. The money was also used to buy timber and cut stone to repair the temple.

Everyone worked very hard to repair and clean the temple. Hilkiah found something in the temple and brought it to Shaphan. It was a scroll. This scroll was very special. It told all about the Law of God. Some of the laws in the scroll were those that the people had forgotten. Hilkiah told Shaphan to read it because it was God's word.

When Shaphan read the scroll, he knew it was very important. He took it to King Josiah and reported, "The money has been given to the workers and supervisors at the temple. And Hilkiah, the priest, gave me this scroll." Shaphan read the scroll to King Josiah.

Josiah was very upset when he heard the words of the scroll. He knew that the people had not been obeying the Lord. He sent word to the priest Hilkiah that he wanted everyone to obey God's word. King Josiah told Hilkiah and four of his most important helpers to go and ask advice from the Prophetess, Huldah. As a prophetess, Huldah gave people special messages from God. Huldah's message was that the people had disobeyed God for a very long time and would have to be punished. The Lord knew that the King loved his people, so the message from the prophet was that King Josiah would not live to see his people suffer.

Once King Josiah heard God's message, he asked the elders of the people to gather all of the people. The King went to the temple and spoke in front of all the people. He made a promise to God. He promised to follow God and obey His commands, rules and laws. He promised to do what was written in God's Word. Then, all the people made the same promise.

One of the things written in the scroll was about the Passover. The Law of God said that the Jews should celebrate the Passover every year. The people had not celebrated the Passover for many years. They had not obeyed God because they had not read His word. It is easy to disobey the Lord if we do not read His words.

King Josiah reigned for 31 years. He was killed a battle with the King of Egypt and his body brought back to be buried near his home. The kings before Josiah had disobeyed God. The people had disobeyed God. But, even though Josiah saw all of the wrong things that others did, he wanted to try to make things better. And he did!

This is what the Bible says about King Josiah,

"There was no king like Josiah before or after him. He obeyed the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength. He followed all the Teachings of Moses." [2 Kings 23:25, ICB](#)

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of 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.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) 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.

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:

- How old was Josiah when he became king? (Eight years old)
- What good things did Josiah do as king? (He had the people repair and restore the Temple; he read God's word to them, destroyed the idols and led the people to obey God)
- What did the High Priest find when cleaning and repairing the temple? (A scroll of God's word)
- Why was he so upset when King Josiah heard the words in the scroll? (Because he knew his ancestors had not obeyed God's word)
- Who did Josiah send the high priest and the priest's helpers to, telling them to ask her about God's word? (Huldah, the prophetess)
- When King Josiah heard the words in the scroll, what did he do with the scroll? (He read it to the people)
- Why had the people not celebrated the Passover every year? (Because God's Law had been lost, and they had not read about it or remembered it)
- How will we know how to obey God? (Read His word - the bible)
- What is something new you learned from this story?

Reflection:

- What question do you have for God about this story?
- What do you think the Temple looked like before Josiah had it cleaned and repaired?
- How do you think Josiah felt when he read the scroll for the first time?
- Josiah's father and grandfather didn't lead the people to obey God. Why do you think Josiah wanted to be a good king and obey God?
- Why was there 'no king like Josiah before or after him'?
- King Josiah wanted everyone to hear God's word so that they could know how to follow and love God. Who has helped you know God's word and learn to love God?
- Who can you talk to about God and His word? Who can you help read the Bible?
- Josiah used his life to help his kingdom improve and help the people follow God. What is something you want to change or improve in your community? What could you do to help things change?

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 life-long 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:

- [Read Your Bible, Pray Everyday Song](#)
- [B-I-B-L-E Song](#)
- [Books of the Old Testament Song](#)
- [Books of the Old Testament](#)
- [B-I-B-L-E](#)
- 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:

- Review how to look up a scripture (testament, book, chapter, verse)
- Older children can learn how to use a concordance
- Choose a passage of scripture ([Psalm 119:9-11](#), [Romans 10:17](#), [Matthew 7:24](#) or [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), for instance) and let children take turns reading it aloud to the group.
- Memorise [Romans 12:21](#), [ICB](#), today. *“Do not let evil defeat you. Defeat evil by doing good.”*
- Arrange to meet after church and clean and straighten the auditorium (be sure to hide a scroll for the children to find while they are cleaning)
- Place a food item or candy bar in front of the children. Lay your bible beside it. Talk about how simply looking at the candy bar is not enough. It is not until we take it and eat it that we can enjoy it. The Bible is the same. Just carrying it around or looking at it is not enough. It is not until we read it that we can receive the benefits. Read a few Scriptures you have chosen beforehand. After discussing this with the children, let them enjoy the candy bar.



- The temple was a beautiful place that God instructed Solomon to build to represent the holiness of his presence. [Create a “special and holy” place](#) in the room where you are teaching where children can pray and talk about how holy and special God is. This is not a re-creation of the temple but an area the children know is “special”. This might be sitting on a beautiful blanket or cloth. It may be a table with a shiny tablecloth.
 - First, enjoy and appreciate God’s presence. Read some scriptures. Talk about the amazing things he has done. Pray.
 - Next, introduce “idols” into the space. This could be as simple as writing the word “IDOL” on papers and then placing them in the holy space. Allow a few moments for the children to be offended by these being in an area devoted to God.
 - Finally, talk about Josiah being so angry because people had placed unholy things in God’s space. He set out to remove all of these throughout his kingdom. Allow children to crumple up and “destroy” the idols you introduced.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Make a bible times scroll
- Make a crown for a king

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets-King Josiah \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page with text \(Ministry Spark\)](#)
- [Craft: Instructions for a simple paper crown \(DLTK\)](#)

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Date

2026/04/04