

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

TWO KINGDOMS: SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTION NOTES

As mentioned elsewhere, these notes are not the “answer key.” They’re suggestions for where the discussion questions in this book can go, but feel free to go in entirely different directions. (In fact, feel free to introduce other questions.) The notes below are deliberately brief, so as to provide suggestions and pointers, but not “official” answers. In some cases, there are follow-up questions you might add to the discussion.

1. JEROBOAM, A VALIANT WARRIOR

1. Remember why God does this (Solomon’s idolatry). We can’t say that Rehoboam’s reign over Israel would have been any better than Jeroboam’s. God does this to keep the promise He made to Solomon: you and your descendants will rule forever as long as they obey Me; if not, their rule will end.

When God promises the kingdom to Jeroboam, He makes the same promise that He makes to Saul, David and Solomon: obey Me and your house will rule forever (1 Kings 11:37-39). Both Jeroboam and Rehoboam rule foolishly and wickedly ... this is the beginning of a sad, almost unbroken line of evil kings over both kingdoms.

2. a. This is unlikely to have one best correct answer. Jeroboam has a problem, and as long as he puts his pride and fear of losing people ahead of his devotion to God, he’s going to make the wrong decision. Discuss this so that the class realizes he’s got to let people go to worship if he’s going to stay faithful to God (who gave him the kingdom in the first place).

b. Figure out a way within Moses’ Law. Perhaps most important, he should ask God what to do, rather than his human advisors.

3. a. Various possible answers here; probably pride and foolishness are the greatest factors. Pride: Rehoboam has got to be more powerful than this father (one of the most powerful men on earth), and Jeroboam can’t stand the thought of anyone leaving his kingdom, even for a day’s worship. Foolishness: they both ask their human advisors, but neglect to ask God (1 Kings 12:8, 28). They both assume that they’re in charge, rather than God.

b. We definitely can be just as blinded by pride. For example, we can insist on having our own way, we can refuse to listen to wise advice (from God or our friends), we can insist that everyone do it our way, we can make our popularity more important than our devotion to God (and so forth).

2. ELIJAH, THE PROPHET

1. Elijah is Elijah and you are you. He sees amazing wonders, yet lives in a land of horrendous evil. You don’t see miracles of this sort today, but you do have a reliable record of them. Better still, you know what Elijah doesn’t — he will not only survive Jezebel, but will be rewarded with a glorious ascension into the heavens. And we also have the wonderful history of Christ’s life on earth, and all that He has done with us. Ask yourself this: what is discouragement on earth compared to the glory God gave Elijah and has promised to give you?

2. It’s important to remember Elijah hiding from Jezebel, Hagar in the wilderness (Genesis 21), and others who have felt abandoned, but weren’t — God was with them, and God is with you today. He will be there if you call Him.

Usually, there is some person who shares your beliefs and can understand your fears — it’s important to seek that help. But even more so, it’s important to call on God and ask for His help.

3. The answer isn’t obvious or indisputable. Possibles: God is saying that His normal way to stimulate people isn’t in spectacular miracles, but rather in smaller, gentler influences such as a person’s meek, godly example or the effect of His Word.

Or, God is giving Elijah what he needs, not a sign of His power (he’s just seen that, on Mt. Carmel), but the assurance of His love.

Or, God is telling Elijah that he might be the only one performing glorious miracles, but many more godly people are going about their daily lives, affecting the world like a gentle breeze.

3. AHAB, JEZEBEL’S HUSBAND

1. a. Possibles: “You can reach your divine peak through God, or Allah, or Buddha, or any other god.” “It isn’t *who* you worship, but rather *how* you worship — as long as you are trying to be good, you’re on the right path.” “Worship God in the church of your choice” (various churches have various depictions of God; most are wrong, which means they’re not really worshipping God, but some image that’s sort of like God).

b. Possibles: God is divine, like none other. He is all-powerful and all-knowing. He has proven His existence by fulfilling prophecy; none other has done that.

c. Possibles: We can be special ourselves, reflecting God’s glory — merciful, trustworthy, honest, loving all, etc. We can show how His Word is different from any other “holy writing” — its prophecy is fulfilled and its history is accurate. We can (gently) show the lack of power or knowledge of other “gods.”

2. Possibles: If Ahab has paid attention to history, he would know what God wants done with idolatrous kings. And if he doesn’t know, he could ask God.

3. There are many factors involved in God’s dealing with Israel. For example, God’s wartime help for Ahab demonstrates His power, regardless of who is king in Israel. Ahab turns to God toward the end of his life; perhaps God wants to show that even an evil, idolatrous man can humble himself to God (1 Kings 21:20-29). Perhaps Benhadad needs to be punished. God often has reasons that are not at all apparent to us; it can be foolish to conclude (for example) that God is being arbitrary in helping evil Ahab.

4. ELISHA, A PERSISTENT PROPHET

1. He is *not* asking to be twice as powerful as Elijah. A “double portion” is what the firstborn son gets as an inheritance from his father (Deuteronomy 21:17). Here, Elisha is asking to be the primary successor to Elijah. Please help the students understand that while he’s asking to have the same power that Elijah has had (which could be neat), he’s also asking for the same responsibilities (which would be very hard to undergo — see this lesson’s “Did You Know?”). Elijah tells him this is hard — perhaps hard to grant, but most definitely a hard life to live.

2. Possibles: practice; familiarity with God’s Word (especially in understanding what He wants us to do); knowing (from stories like this) that God stands with us when we stand up to do the right thing.

3. We should be confident, but we must also be careful. We must make sure that what we are confidently doing is actually what God wants us to do.

For both 2 & 3: James 4:17: *Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

5. NAAMAN, THE WARRIOR LEPER

1. a. He worships a false god. He is prideful. He thinks that he knows better than God. (You can get into whether it’s wrong to assume God can only be worshipped on His home soil, or to have captive servants, but those are marginal.)

b. He obeys God’s instructions (through Elisha). He overcomes his pride. He makes an attempt to worship God.

2. a. We don’t know exactly what he does, or what God expects of him. He misses an opportunity to openly proclaim God’s power with continual public worship, but it’s not clear that this lack makes his worship unacceptable.

b. It’s unlikely that you’ll be called on to worship a false god today, but you should be aware when you’re being pressured to put something else before God. For example, some bosses expect/demand that you put your job before anything else in your life.

3. a. God doesn’t tell us everything; we don’t know for sure. However, we do know that God works through other people and nations in addition to the Israelites (here; also the Assyrians, Isaiah 10:5-15). His reasons include displaying His power worldwide (Joshua 2:9-11), and using a nation as a tool to punish.

b. Again, we don’t know, but people (then and now) can learn from it: God’s cleansing power; His reward of obedience for all (including non-Jews); that God can work through small actions (dipping seven times) as well as great deeds; etc.

6. JEHU, THE HOUSE CLEANER

1. a. We don’t have a physical kingdom on earth today; God’s kingdom is spiritual, and our responsibilities are much more spiritual than physical. You won’t be called on to execute hundreds of sinners, but God may call on you to publicly oppose and condemn their sin.

b. We should resist those who persist in sinning (while staying aware of our own sins; Matthew 7:3-5), but it’s even more important to oppose those who are leading others to sin. We must make clear the difference between sinful and righteous behavior, so that people can clearly choose between them.

2. Possibles: Deciding which scriptures are important to carefully follow, and which aren't as important; being stricter and harder on people than God commands; not forgiving people that God has forgiven. It's easy to not just oppose sin (which God commands), but to also label the sinner with additional sinful motivations (such as intentional false teaching).
3. By eliminating Ahab's line, God publicly punishes sin; He fulfills prophecy (1 Kings 21:19-29); He executes the Baal cult that is leading many to sin; He eliminates a sinful influence on the southern kingdom of Judah.

7. JEHOIADA, THE PRIESTLY "KING"

1. If Jehoiada doesn't do it, who will? Sometimes you're the only one who is available to do a job, no matter how little you might want to do it. You can nearly always find a reason not to do a job; it's important to get into the habit of finding ways to work for God, rather than excuses for not working.
2. You can't. But there are things you can do to set them on the right path: show them that you love and respect God yourself; be a good role-model of an active servant; know God's Word, and make sure that they know it; make sure they realize the benefits of a godly life; etc. Pray for them.
3. Continue to be a godly role-model; encourage them to improve their lives; try not to push so hard that you turn them away from God. Pray for them.

8. JONAH CONDEMNS NINEVEH

1. Possibles: By avoiding: situations and people where we can teach; opportunities to be a good example (discuss specific situations that can occur — going along with sin, using foul language, etc.); meeting with Christians when opportunities to work are being discussed. Also, by being too busy (with work, school, family) to find time to do God's work, and by giving excuses, rather than effort.
2. a. He doesn't destroy them because they turn from their sin with sincere and sorrowful repentance, which God will always accept.
b. (1) God doesn't want to punish people (2 Peter 3:9) and (2) nearly all promises that God makes are conditional promises. They are like contracts, in that God promises to save us — *if* we love and obey Him (John 14:23, Hebrews 5:9). He promises to condemn us — *if* we refuse Him (Matthew 10:33). God promises to destroy Nineveh because of its sin; He relents when they turn to Him with sincere repentance.
3. a. Jonah definitely hasn't wasted his time; because of his message, over 120,000 souls have turned to God (at least temporarily). That is a greater effect than most of us will ever accomplish. He just hasn't seen the result that he was looking for.
b. You can work hard to teach someone about God, with no visible result ... but that teaching might be the seed that grows into a new child of God, long after you have left. You can tell and demonstrate to your friends how to live godly lives, and see no result ... but they're watching, and you're influencing them. A choice not to sin is not always obvious. You won't always see the result you hoped for, but you will have given God what He wants — your effort.

9. UZZIAH, A MOSTLY GOOD KING IN MOSTLY GOOD TIMES

1. Possibles: Ingratitude (taking life for granted), forgetting that you need God/assuming you can take care of yourself, laziness, etc.
2. Possibles: Ego ("I did it all myself"), inability to put yourself in the shoes of less successful people (assuming God is punishing those worse off than you), tending to believe what people are saying about you, comparing yourself to other people (rather than to Christ), losing humility, etc.
3. Possibles: greed (you want even more, and you must maintain the standard of living that you're used to), gluttony, lack of gratitude toward God, idleness (which can lead to a variety of pleasure-seeking sins), assuming God will continue to keep you prosperous, etc.

10. ISAIAH IS SENT BY GOD

1. a. Possibles: someone asks you for help in understanding God; you see or hear about a need; you read a passage like Matthew 28:19-20, and realize that God wants you to work for Him.
b. Possibles: study with anyone who asks for help (perhaps even finding someone to help you both); do something about needs that you see; teach people; support other teachers; feed the hungry; etc.
2. God is frustrated, and He is being sarcastic. He has clearly told His people what to do, and they are willfully ignoring Him. He is trying again (with Isaiah), but He knows how they will respond — with dull ears, dim eyes and hardened hearts.
3. 8-10. Greedy and covetous — always wanting more and more. These people value possessions more than people and relationships.
11-17. Gluttons and drunkards — wealth is more important than wisdom. These people value pleasure more than self-control; enjoy-

ment more than wisdom and knowledge.

18-19. Habitual sinners — you can't do anything without sinning. Always cursing, or lying, or making sexually suggestive comments; also habitual cheating, stealing, etc.

20. Those who twist words so that good motives are slandered while sinful actions are applauded. Too many politicians are good at this.

21. Those who smart off, especially those who enjoy getting laughs from their cruel comments about other people.

22-23. Those who try to function while they're drunk or otherwise drugged, rather than clear-headed.

11. HEZEKIAH TRUSTS IN THE LORD

1. a. Possibles: death of someone close to you; addiction (drugs, alcohol, sex/pornography); life-altering sin (that results in prison); etc.
b. Yes, but that doesn't mean that you'll enjoy it. You don't have to face any of this alone (God will always be with you if you turn to Him), and He won't stop loving you, regardless of what you've done.
2. Review and study stories like this, that demonstrate the value of trusting in God; talk to Christians (especially older ones) about how God has supported them; work at building a closer relationship with God and with His children, so that you'll have confidence in Him and them when you need them.
3. Yes, you can trust so much that you do foolish things — that's what Satan was trying to convince Jesus to do in the wilderness (Matthew 4:6). God has promised to protect you, but that is spiritual protection, not permanent body armor. Don't put God to the test. Live life sensibly, and trust God to take care of you.

12. JOSIAH TURNS TO THE LORD

1. Possibles: the rest of his family (especially his mother) and those who help raise him. God is sending plenty of prophets; perhaps he chooses to pay attention to what they say. There's no way to know for sure what influences him; what we should realize is that anyone we know might be an influence for good, and that we should try to be an influence for good ourselves to as many people as we can.
2. a. Lots of people are ready to lead Josiah into sin, especially if they tell him he is too young and inexperienced to make his own decisions. Most of his subjects want him to continue leading them in sin. He is creating conflict with the established false priesthoods and those who make a living supporting them. And without the written Law, he doesn't have a complete grasp on what God wants.
b. Family, friends and associates who want us to act like they do; the insistence on political correctness (it's wrong to oppose sin); some people think Christians are fools, and treat them that way; denying promotions and rewards if you insist on God's priority in your life.
3. None of these are roadblocks if you focus on what is important (God and godly living) and set goals that fit that focus. This is easier said than done — there are many distractions along the way, and you will lose business opportunities, friends, maybe even family by focusing on God.

13. JEREMIAH BREAKS A JAR

1. Possibles: ridicule, exclusion, marked as weird, goody-goody, holier-than-thou, religious nut, etc. A few people might strike out physically if you make them feel guilty. Some will twist your words, so that your warnings about sinful actions result in accusations that you are intolerant, hateful, prejudiced, discriminatory, even violating laws against hate speech.
2. Israel was faithless, so God (after many warnings) punished it. Judah clearly sees Israel's sin and punishment, and gets many more warnings itself, but even so, it insists on blatant sin. Judah ignores Israel's example, and so is even more treacherous.
For you today: if you insist on sinning, despite the examples of both Israel and Judah, God will judge you even more harshly than He has judged Judah.
3. a. Punishes: sends famine (2 Kings 25), drought (1 Kings 17-18, Joel 1), plague (2 Samuel 24), insects (Exodus 8 & 10, Joel 1), persecution (Judges 3), conquest (Jeremiah 27), destruction (2 Kings 17). Protects: destroys attackers (Exodus 14, 2 Kings 19), provides abundant food (Numbers 13).
b. In the time of the Old Testament, God has a chosen nation (Israel) and He miraculously directs the affairs of both Israel and other nations. Since the time of the New Testament, God's emphasis to us in His Word has been the spiritual kingdom of His Son, and He no longer performs obvious miracles to demonstrate His power and desires. It is very possible that God's providence (influencing natural events, such as health for a sick child) affects the lives of both individuals and even nations today, but His focus (as far as we can tell from scripture) is on leading people to His spiritual kingdom, not the rise and fall of earthly nations.