

2 Kings 17:1-23

Christ Connection: When the Israelites disobeyed God, God judged their sin and punished them by removing them from His presence. Jesus took the punishment for our sin upon Himself. He unites and restores those who trust in Him. Jesus brings us into God's presence and keeps us there.

Adult Connection Point:

Revelation 5:9-10

The Northern Kingdom of Israel had a problem: they continually disobeyed God and rejected His authority in their lives. God judged their sin and removed them from His presence. But God did not give up on His plan of redemption. Jesus' humble sacrifice changed the way authority works in the world, and it sent the course of history in a new, hopeful direction. Instead of a steady march to destruction, we see a steady flow of resurrection. One day, creation will be restored to a glorious kingdom with Christ at the center, ruled and reigned over by God's redeemed. Jesus' blood not only satisfied God's wrath against sin, it purchased His followers and brought them into God's family. Through His blood, we will once again reflect the glory of God rightly.

As Christians, we have an incredible hope. Jesus promised to return and reign forever. We can experience foretastes of it now as we live in His footsteps, and we can look forward to the day when those foretastes are fulfilled with a feast in the new Jerusalem. What better way to anticipate that day than to beckon others to repent and believe, to join us for the feast?

Family Devotion:

Materials: building blocks of your choice

Display building blocks around your devotion area. Invite your family to build something using the blocks. When they are finished, command them to tear it down. Repeat as desired.

Talk with your family about the results of disobedience. What are the consequences in your home for disobedience? What are the consequences when people disobey God? What happened to the Israelites after they disobeyed God?

Say: "Because of the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, God provided a way for people to be forgiven of their sins when they put their faith and trust in Jesus. When we put trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are reunited with God. God will never remove His presence from those who trust in Jesus."

Pray, thanking God for Jesus' sacrifice for sinners.

Unit 14, Session 1: Amos, Prophet to Israel

(Oct. 6)

Amos 1–9

Christ Connection: God is holy and just, but He is also loving and gracious. God wanted His people to turn back to Him, but they refused. Israel faced the punishment for their sin. God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sin. God accepts anyone who trusts in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Adult Connection Point:

Jesus Christ is the perfect reflection of the glory of God. He never fell short. The good news is that once we trust in Christ's sacrifice for us and then begin proclaiming the gospel, we too reflect the glory of God in Christ. Like the ancient people of Israel, we are on mission with God to display His glory throughout the world. But unlike the ancient people of Israel, we know that God's glory is seen in its greatest clarity in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though the New Testament Jews studied the Scriptures, they completely missed the point: The Scriptures are all about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The gospel is God's answer to the sinfulness of humanity. It is the only remedy for the human predicament. Anyone who is outside of Christ still remains in darkness.

Like Paul, we are to be servants of Christ, not servants of self. The reason we serve is because God has graciously given us "the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6) Now we are to shine for His glory so that others may be brought out of darkness and into the light.

Family Devotion:

Materials: a handheld mirror

Invite each family member to take a long look in the handheld mirror. Ask family members to put the mirror down and then describe what they look like in as much detail as they can. See who can describe the most features without looking back in the mirror.

Read Colossians 1:19-20. Say: "Jesus is the earthly representation of God. The Bible shows us through Jesus' life what God is like. When we read about Jesus and how He never sinned, we know how God wants us to live."

Remind your kids that Amos was a shepherd and a farmer. Ask your kids to tell what they want to be when they grow up. Affirm their choices and tell them that no matter what God leads them to do, He also wants them to tell other people about Jesus Christ.

Pray, asking God to help your family tell others about Jesus, the Son of God.

Christ Connection: Hosea’s relationship with Gomer reminds us of God’s relationship with the people of Israel and with us. Even though God’s people are unfaithful and love other things more than they love God, God still loves us. God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sin and brings us back to Him.

Adult Connection Point:

Christ’s work of reconciliation provides a stark contrast to the alienation, hostility, and depravity we have in our hearts toward God. In Colossians 1:21-23, we go from “alienated and hostile” to “reconciled,” “holy, faultless, and blameless.” What an astonishing contrast! The gospel produces a profound break with the past. Not only do we have access to God through the reconciling work of the Son on the cross, but we also have an eternal relationship with Him. We are part of His family so that we might be more like Him—to bear the family resemblance. Holy, faultless, blameless—these are to be the characteristics of the person reconciled to God. The gospel has the power to bring people into a right relationship with God. But the only way people will know is through Christians who tell them the good news.

Family Devotion:

Read Colossians 1:21-23. Ask: “What do you think *evil actions* means?” (Some translations say “wicked works.”) Guide your family to remember that even though God made people perfect, Adam and Eve’s sin caused all people to sin and turn away from God. Recall the story of Hosea. No matter how much Hosea loved her, Gomer always chose to be unfaithful. Remind your family that Gomer is a picture of how people treat God. God wants His followers to be faithful to Him, but they continually choose to be unfaithful.

Play a simple game of red light green light. This might be a fun activity to do outside. Line up your family side by side facing you. Stand a good distance away. Turn around so your back is to your family and announce “Green light!” Family members must sneak towards you to tag you. When you spin around and announce “Red light,” they must freeze in place. If you catch someone walking or moving during the red light, they must return to the start line. The first one to tag you is the new “light.” Play as time allows.

After the game say: “The people of Israel had turned their backs on God, just like I turned my back to you when we were playing the game.” Ask: “What did God do when the people of Israel turned their backs on Him?” The people turned their backs on God, but God still loved His people and He planned to rescue them. No matter what we do, God still loves us too.

Pray, thanking God that He loves us no matter what we do. When we trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, God forgives us for the wrong things we do.

Christ Connection: God displayed His mercy and grace by forgiving the people of Nineveh when they repented of their sin. God showed His love to the rest of the world by sending His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross. God saves those who trust in Jesus and repent of their sin, and He sends them out, like Jonah, with the good news of salvation.

Adult Connection Point:

Because of our sin, we deserve eternal death; instead Christ has redeemed us by His perfect life, substitutionary death, and His victorious resurrection from the dead. Without these core elements, there would be no gospel at all. Life would indeed be empty and futile, and we would have no mission or purpose.

The resurrection not only affects our vertical relationship with God, but it also affects our horizontal relationship with others. We “love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Pet. 1:22-23). Christ’s resurrection leads to our resurrection living. Being born again signifies that we have been saved to walk in the newness of life, which is to live on mission for God’s kingdom.

The opposite of an empty and futile way of life is not a life of health, wealth, and earthly possessions. It’s a life on mission for Christ. It’s a life that models the missionary heart of God, who sent Jesus to be the unblemished Lamb we needed as our sacrifice. It’s a life that beckons others to taste and see that the Lord is good.

Family Devotion:

Invite your family members to close their eyes as you begin your time of devotion. Invite each family member to tell you, one at a time, what it feels like to be unable to see. Give each person time to speak. Follow up by asking what it would feel like if not only were they unable to see, but they were also in the belly of a fish. What might they smell? What would they touch? How would they get around? How long could they survive in the stomach of a fish?

Read 1 Peter 1:18-21. Tell your family that God decided before He created the world that He was going to send Jesus to be our Savior. Say: “Jonah stayed in a dark, smelly fish stomach for three days. God provided for Jonah’s salvation while he was in the fish, and God told the fish to spit Jonah out onto dry land. God sent Jesus to provide salvation for all people, not from being swallowed by a fish, but from sin.”

Play the song from the Family App, or choose a praise song of your choice to spend some time in worship.

Pray, thanking God that He rescued Jonah from his sin, and He does the same for us.

Unit 14, Session 4: Joel, Prophet to Judah

(Oct. 27)

Joel 1–3

Christ Connection: God used locusts and drought to get Judah's attention. Judah had turned from God, and the prophet Joel called them to repent. Like Joel, Jesus calls sinners to repent. Jesus died and was resurrected so repentant people could experience forgiveness. (Luke 24:46-47)

Adult Connection Point:

Voices from the Church

“Will you put yourself in submission to Jesus as master, as Lord? Will you root yourself in the blood and brokenness of Jesus in order to make the necessary life-changing submission to his sovereignty? If you will, you’ll take part in the new creation, the way in which God is bringing wonderful, final redemption into the world.”

—Jared Wilson, *Your Jesus Is Too Safe*

Jesus’ reign fulfills our hearts’ deepest longings because God created us to submit to His lordship. His reign also fulfills our deepest desires for freedom. When we submit to the reign of Christ, we experience true freedom. We can only be truly free when we have surrendered to His reign over us.

Family Devotion:

Materials: beanbags, hula hoops or another “target,” an empty glass

Gather your family outside and tell them you are going to play a “locust tossing” game. Give each family member a locust (beanbag) and guide her to toss the beanbag at the target. See who can get the “locust” closest to the target.

Tell your family members that locusts are similar to grasshoppers. Recall with your family that God used locusts to get the attention of Judah’s residents. Ask: “Did the people of Judah listen to Joel’s warnings?” No, they did not listen to Joel.

Show the empty glass and ask your kids what they see in the glass. Clearly it’s empty. Ask if your kids know what it’s called when a land goes without rainfall for a long time. *Drought* is a period of no rain. God also used drought to get Judah’s attention. Ask again if Judah followed God after He sent a drought to get their attention. No, once again, the people did not follow God.

Sing a song of your choosing, or use the song found on the Family App.

Pray, thanking God for loving people enough to give them opportunity to listen to Him and obey Him. Thank God for sending Jesus, who gave His life to pay the penalty for our sin.

Unit 15, Session 1: God Called Isaiah

(Nov. 3)

Isaiah 6

Christ Connection: Isaiah saw God in a vision and he knew he didn't deserve to be with God because God is holy. God forgave Isaiah's sin. One day God would send His Son, Jesus, to pay for Isaiah's sin. God forgives anyone who trusts in Jesus. When we trust in Jesus, we answer like Isaiah: "Here I am. Send me."

Adult Connection Point:

Galatians 3:27-29: "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ like a garment. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.*"

We were hopeless and helpless in our state of sin. *But God.* What a profound transition in two words! Our rescue and restoration of identity begins and ends with Jesus Christ. *But God.* Such sweet words usher us into the beautiful reality known as adoption.

The church focuses quite a bit on terms like forgiveness, justification, and redemption as benefits of the gospel, and rightfully so. But we often overlook an even higher privilege. Adoption is a majestic expression of the expansive heights of God's love. Not only does He call us out of sin, but He also calls us sons and daughters!

Family Devotion:

Play a game of "Send Me." Ask someone to go get you something, and let the first person to hop up and say, "Send me!" be the one to go get it. Continue playing until interest wanes or time is up.

Talk about how God used a hot coal to "clean" Isaiah's lips. Ask, "Why do you use hot water when you take a shower or bath?" Hot water cleans better than cold water and helps kill bacteria or germs. Say, "Isaiah's lips were not really cleaned by the coal. God used this as a symbol to let Isaiah know God was ready to use Isaiah to tell others about Him."

Read Galatians 3:27-29. This passage of Scripture is another picture of what Jesus did for us when He gave His life as a sacrifice for sinners. Because of Jesus' sacrifice all people can live as one in Christ.

Pray, thanking God that Jesus came as an example for us and showed us how to live as one in Him.

Isaiah 7

Christ Connection: Through the prophet Isaiah, God promised to send Immanuel, which means "God with us." Jesus fulfilled this promise when He came to earth and was born of a virgin. Jesus is our Immanuel, God with us.

Adult Connection Point:

Human beings have an innate ability to take on the characteristics of things we observe. Consider how closely your speech patterns and style of dress mirror those of your family or friends. Consider how an accent betrays your place of origin. This can work for our ruin or our restoration. By fixing our eyes on the world, we become more and more like the world. However, God has graciously given us a new image upon which to fix our gaze. The more we look at Christ in love and trust, the more we look like Christ—the more we reflect God in the way He originally intended. Consider the following passage from 2 Corinthians 3 to catch a glimpse of this reality:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit. (vv. 17-18)

Family Devotion:

Recite today's big picture question and answer (*Who is our Immanuel? Jesus is God with us* for kids, *What does Immanuel mean? Immanuel means "God is with us"* for preschoolers) but ask each member of your family to do it in a silly voice. Examples of silly voices could be: robot, alien, an accent of your choosing, and so forth.

Say: "King Ahaz was looking at things going on around him and he became worried. God gave Isaiah an important message for King Ahaz. Isaiah clearly delivered God's message. Isaiah told Ahaz not to worry because God was going to send a Savior."

Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. Remind your family that people take on characteristics of those they live and associate closely with. When we live with Jesus guiding us, we begin to take on Jesus' characteristics. King Ahaz was worried about the political situation around him and wasn't focused on God's ability to rescue him from danger. God wanted King Ahaz to trust Him and only Him. God wanted Ahaz to worry more about being a follower of God than being a follower of the world.

Sing a praise song of your choosing that helps to focus your family on God.

Pray, thanking God for His ability to rescue people from harm. Ask God to help your family always live in a way that keeps their eyes on Jesus and not on others.

Christ Connection: Hezekiah was a faithful king who led the people of Judah to worship God like they were supposed to. But even good kings sin. Jesus is our faithful King who never sinned. One day He will return to make all things the way they are supposed to be. Jesus is our King forever.

Adult Connection Point:

Voices from Church History

“The assurance of my salvation comes not from the fact that I did trust Christ but that I am trusting Christ for my salvation.”

—Adrian Rogers from *Adrianisms: The Wit and Wisdom of Adrian Rogers*, vol. 2

Even though the strength of several kids combined can overcome me in an arm-wrestling match, nothing can overcome the hand of God. God is stronger than me, stronger than you plus me, stronger than the Devil plus all the demons plus all the angels plus all the World's Strongest Men competitors *and* all our hydraulic machines. We could go on and on. Jesus spoke to this reality in John 10. He told His disciples this:

My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (vv. 27-29)

Family Devotion:

Arm wrestle with your kids and other family members. Have fun but don't hurt anyone. Ask: “How easy was it to arm wrestle me? How easy do you think it would be if you could arm wrestle God? Do you think I could win an arm-wrestling contest against God?”

Invite your family to think of things that are very strong. Make a list. Ask: “Is God stronger than all of these things?” Read John 10:27-29. Talk about God's ability to keep those who love Him secure in His plan.

Recall the fact that Hezekiah was a king who understood that his sin separated him from God. Hezekiah became sorry for his sin, and God forgave Hezekiah. Hezekiah led the people of Judah to worship God like they were supposed to.

Spend some time worshiping God by singing and through prayer.

Isaiah 53

Christ Connection: God planned a very long time ago that Jesus would die on the cross for our sins. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote that this would happen! Jesus was the servant who suffered so that those who trust in Him could be forgiven.

Adult Connection Point:

Voices from the Church

“Easter morning is the sunrise on a whole new world. Jesus came back from the dead, and if you repent of your sin and believe in Him, so will you.”

–Michael Wittmer from *The Last Enemy: Preparing to Win the Fight of Your Life*

As Christians, we are absolutely convinced of the brokenness of this fallen world but also of the future restoration to be accomplished at Christ’s return. But such knowledge of the future neither excuses nor implies laziness on our parts. Rather, we are empowered by these truths to go forth in the power of the Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel for the good of our fellow creatures and this fragile creation and the glory of our faithful Creator.

Family Devotion:

Ask: “What do you think was happening at our house 700 years ago?” Let your family answer and make a list if necessary. Of course, your house did not exist 700 years ago, nor were there likely any people living on the land where your house is built. Ask: “What do you think will be happening at our house 700 years from now?” Again, entertain answers but reveal that no one, except God, knows what will be happening at your house 700 years into the future.

Read Isaiah 53. Talk about Isaiah’s explanation of who Jesus would become a full 700 years before Jesus was born. Ask your family to think about how Isaiah could write those things having no knowledge of Jesus or what Jesus would do. God gave Isaiah the words to write.

Read the Easter story from one of the Gospels. Compare the story you just read to Isaiah 53.

Pray, asking God to make the truth of Jesus’ resurrection important to each member of your family.