

Jeroboam Makes Two Golden Calves

1 Kings 12:25-13:6

## **MEMORY VERSE**

1 KINGS 13:30

“Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.”

## **WHAT YOU WILL NEED:**

As many “Ten Commandments” patterns as the number of children in your class, crayons and/or markers, scissors, glue and construction paper.

One rubber glove.

Construction paper, scissors and markers.

## **ATTENTION GRABBER!**

### **Follow the Leader**

Today, we will be learning about making a choice to obey the Lord or to disobey Him. How important it is to obey the Lord! He wants to bless us, and He knows what is best for us. This game of “Follow the Leader” will help to reinforce that.

Have the children get together in a line. Choose one child to be the line leader. Tell the children that they will follow the leader and do everything that the leader does. The leader will then lead the line and can be creative on what they do. They can hop, jump, crawl, etc. Then everyone in the line will need to do the same. Take turns so that everyone who would like to gets a turn.

After you have played the game, take a moment to ask the children what it was like to “follow the leader” and how important it is that we follow our leader—Jesus.

## LESSON TIME!

The nation of Israel divided into two separate nations. Rehoboam ruled the southern kingdom and Jeroboam ruled the northern kingdom. A king and a kingdom that follow the Lord will be blessed. What will become of the two kingdoms of divided Israel?

### 1 KINGS 12:25

Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Peniel.

As you remember, God pronounced that the kingdom would be torn apart because of Solomon's disobedience. Shortly after the death of Solomon, the people rebelled against his son, Rehoboam, and gave their allegiance to Jeroboam. Only the tribe of Judah and Benjamin stayed with Rehoboam. The Lord's promise to Jeroboam was fulfilled—"he would rule over all that his heart desired in Israel" (1 Kings 11:37).

Wow, what a beautiful opportunity given to Jeroboam. God wanted Jeroboam to be a leader and king over His people. He had an opportunity to do what was right and be blessed by God.

Jeroboam chose Shechem as his capitol and began at once to fortify it as his stronghold. He also built up Peniel as a fortress east of the Jordan River to help protect them from an invasion from the east. What God said to Jeroboam came true; He fulfilled His promise. Jeroboam was settled in as Israel's new king to lead and shepherd them to be a nation that loved the Lord in obedience and worship. Like all of us who embark on a journey, Jeroboam would need to make choices—would he stay on the right path? **Let us choose to obey God!**

### 1 KINGS 12:26-27

And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David:

"If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."

The children of Israel would travel several times of year to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was located in what was now the southern kingdom of Rehoboam. Jeroboam was afraid that when the people went to the temple in Jerusalem their hearts would be drawn to reunite with Judah and Rehoboam. His fears that the people would return to Rehoboam overwhelmed him, and he decided to take matters into his own hands.

### 1 KINGS 12:28-29

Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!"

And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

Jeroboam consulted with his advisors and came up with a plan to make two man-made idols fashioned out of gold. He placed the idols in Bethel and Dan to make it very convenient for the people, so they *did not have* to travel all the way to Jerusalem to worship God. As the leader of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam wanted to establish his own worship centers so he could keep the people to himself.

How sad that Jeroboam did not trust in God. Remember, God had already stopped Rehoboam from attacking Jeroboam. Yet, his unbelief led him to devise his own plans to secure the nation. He would allow and even encourage Israel to continue in their idol worshipping. What a tragedy! Israel would never be the same.

Do you think if Jeroboam chose to do the right thing that God would have protected Him? Sometimes our fears will lead us to do things that we should not do and make decisions that we should not make. We try to “fix” things ourselves instead of letting God take care of things. Unbelief is a sin that can cause serious consequences. God wants us to trust in Him. **Let us choose to obey God!**

### 1 KINGS 12:30-33

Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.

He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made.

So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.

What makes a person blessed by the Lord turn against Him? Solomon had been impressed with his abilities and had given him a special office in his kingdom (1 Kings 11:28). God had called and gifted Jeroboam to be a leader and a king over his people. He was chosen by God and given promises that his dynasty would continue and prosper if he obeyed the Lord (1 Kings 11:38-39). Jeroboam could have been an instrument of blessing for Israel. But, Jeroboam did not trust or obey the Lord. He took the position God gave him and used it for evil, encouraging Israel to continue in their idol worship.

Jeroboam created a new religious system for the people. Priests, sacrifices, and an altar were all provided to make Israel's festival just as good as if not better than Judah's. Jeroboam's desire was to separate Israel's worship from Judah's worship. He hoped his new feast would replace the feast in Jerusalem and encourage his people to stay in their own land to worship.

Why did the people accept Jeroboam's new religious system making them worship idols instead of the true and living God? It's possible that their motives were as sinful as Jeroboam's. It's very easy to sin and go along with someone with evil plans when our heart is in agreement. Perhaps, the people felt staying up north for worship was more easy and convenient .

How will we respond to someone who encourages us to turn from God? What if the person encouraging you to disobey God is popular or powerful? Don't let anyone talk you out of doing what is right. Do what God wants you to do, no matter how unpopular or hard the pressure may be. Disobedience is never the "easy way." It leads to disaster. **Let us choose to obey God!**

## The Top Ten

Pass out a “Ten Commandments Pattern” to each child (included with curriculum). Have them list the Ten commandments in order. You can simplify them as you wish. Allow the children to color and decorate their tablets. Next cut them out. As an option you can have them glue the tablets to a sheet of construction paper.

For the younger children, you will need to simplify it some. You will want to write the commandments down for them (suggestion - write down the commandments before copying the pattern). You may want to simplify the commandments, for example have them write, “no idols, no stealing, no lying, etc.” Allow them to color and cut out their tablets and glue them to a piece of construction paper.

Next, based on the story that we are learning today, see how many commandments that Jeroboam broke. (We counted at least six). Reinforce the theme: **Let us choose to obey God!**

### 1 KINGS 13:1-3

And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.

Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.'"

And he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out."

When Israel first became a nation, the city of Bethel was a symbol of commitment to God. This was the place that Jacob had rededicated his life to God (Genesis 28:16-19). But Jeroboam turned the city into a religious center of idol worship to compete with Jerusalem, which eventually led to Israel's downfall. The city of Bethel would be known as a wicked and idolatrous city for the next several hundred years.

A prophet of the Lord soon condemned Jeroboam's idolatrous system of worship. The Lord was not going to tolerate the wickedness of Jeroboam. While Jeroboam worshipped at his altar, the prophet spoke the Word of the Lord to confront Jeroboam and his idolatrous religious system publicly (so everyone could hear).

This prophecy was remarkable because the prophet predicted the name and actions of a king who would not appear on the scene for 290 years! Josiah would fulfill this prophecy by demolishing the Bethel altar built by Jeroboam and slaughtering the false priest there (2 Kings 23:15-20). The man of God predicted that the sign, a miracle to verify the prophecy, would happen by the altar splitting apart that very day.

### 1 KINGS 13:4-6

So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Arrest him!" Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself.

The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

Then the king answered and said to the man of God, "Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me." So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as before.

## The Withered Hand

As a visual aide to the story of Jeroboam's withered hand get a rubber glove. When you get to place of his hand being withered in the story, take off the glove to demonstrate a withered hand. Reinforce the importance of obedience.

Jeroboam, filled with anger at the words of the prophet, stretches out his hand giving the order to arrest him. Jeroboam quickly learns that it is God who is in control. His hand is withered so that he cannot even draw it back to himself. Jeroboam's world quickly changes as the living God confronts him.

The words of the prophet come true, as the altar was split in two causing the ashes to pour out on the ground. Jeroboam then realized he was in big trouble. God had dealt with his sin and shown him that his wickedness would not be tolerated.

Jeroboam had been given the opportunity to do great things for God, but instead he turned away from Him and led the nation of Israel to continue in idolatry. It is never pleasant to be corrected and disciplined by God, but His discipline is a sign of His deep love for us. God will discipline us when we walk in disobedience so that we may grow in grace and character (Hebrews 12:17-11).

Jeroboam then acknowledged God's power and asked the prophet to ask God to restore his hand, which God graciously did. His hand was healed but unfortunately his heart was not. Jeroboam referred to God when talking to the prophet as "your God." Even then, it seems, Jeroboam's heart was unwilling to turn from his idolatry.

Because Jeroboam had led God's people away from God, his house (dynasty) would be cut off (1Kings 14:10-11). God would raise up a king who would cut off Jeroboam's family (1 Kings 15:27-29). What a tragedy.

If only Jeroboam would have made God first in his life, to honor and obey Him. If only He had trusted God with the Kingdom God entrusted to him. Instead he was a king who is an example of what not to do. Not only did Jeroboam sin against God, but he encouraged an entire nation to continue in their idol worship.

Both Jeroboam and Rehoboam did what was good for themselves, not what was good for the people. As a result, the nation of Israel would never be the same again. God's intent was that Israel be a great nation that would influence the world for God, an example of His love and grace. Now, Israel like the nations around them, was filled with idolatry. How different this was than the days of King David's reign!

How important are the choices we make! God wants the best for us. He desires to bless our life as we live in obedience. **Let us choose to obey God!**

## **Our Hands Are the Lord's**

For this craft you will need construction paper, scissors, and markers. You will be making a border that can go on your bulletin board in your class or on the wall (can also be sent home individually with each child as a reminder). Take the construction paper and fold in half (for small hands you can use quarters). Have

the children put their hand on the construction paper. The “pinkie” finger should overlap the fold of the paper. With a pencil, draw an outline of their hand. Using scissors, cut out on the pencil lines. The hands will now open up and be attached at the “pinkie” finger.

On each hand write the phrase “I choose to obey the Lord!” Then have the children sign their names under it. When all of the hands are completed, put them in a row on the bulletin board or wall to make a border or garland.

Reinforce to the class the importance of obedience.

## **PRAYER**

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust the Lord and not try to take matters into their own hands; pray they will *choose* to obey the Lord. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

