

11

New Beginnings

(a lesson for New Year's or any time)

YOU'LL NEED

- foil-covered chocolate coins
- markers
- paper
- cellophane tape
- a hammer
- a bowl of charcoal chips
- a bowl of marbles or wrapped gum balls
- newsprint
- a dishpan of warm, soapy water
- a towel
- a Bible
- photocopies of the "God's Treasure" handout (p. 106)
- scissors

LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ God can make us clean inside.

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- tell what they would do if they were kings or queens,
- learn how a young king turned his people back to God,
- discover how God can make them clean inside, and
- discover that God's Word is their greatest treasure.

BIBLE BASIS

2 Chronicles 33:1-35:19

Josiah was crowned king of Judah when he was 8 years old. Both Josiah's father, Amon, and his grandfather, Manasseh, had led the people of Judah in idol worship. Manasseh's sin resulted in his capture, exile, and imprisonment by the Assyrian army. Manasseh eventually humbled himself before God, received forgiveness, and regained his kingship. On his return to Jerusalem, Manasseh ordered the destruction of idols and led the people in worshiping Jehovah God. After Manasseh's death, Amon took the throne and plunged the nation back into idol worship, sinning even more than his father had done. Amon was killed in his palace by his own

officers, and the crown passed to his 8-year-old son.

Despite his tender age and the evil example set by his father, Josiah “did what the Lord said was right.” When he was 16 years old, he began worshiping the true God. He rid the whole country of idols and set about rebuilding and restoring the temple. A priest working in the temple found a long-lost scroll containing the law given through Moses. When the young king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes in grief for the sins of his nation. The king stood in the temple and read the Law to his people, then made a covenant to follow God’s commands. A short time later, Josiah led his people in the greatest Passover celebration since the time of Samuel.

Josiah was a rare leader among the kings of Israel and Judah. His dedication to God ignited a new faith and a new covenant. God used his servant Josiah to give the people of Judah a new beginning.

Psalm 51:1-2, 10

God loves to hear the repentant cry of his people. He loves us even more than he hates the rotten things we do. God always stands ready to forgive us, make us clean inside, and renew our relationship with him.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

An 8-year-old king—boy, will your kids love that! If they were given an opportunity to rule, it wouldn’t be long before they’d come up with a great agenda. Rather than “a chicken in every pot,” today’s kids might legislate a Walt Disney World in every state and a Nintendo in every home. What a great surprise it will be for your kids to discover that this young ruler had far greater things than amusements on his mind.

There are two positive things for your kids to discover in this lesson. The first is that kids are never too young to make a difference. The second is that when they realize they’ve offended God, they need to make things right immediately. God is willing to forgive their sins, both purposeful and inadvertent, and make them clean inside.

The Lesson

ATTENTION GRABBER

TEACHER TIP

You might want to give the youngest children a five- or 10-second head start.

If I Were King

Before class, hide foil-covered chocolate coins around the room. Be sure you hide at least one for each student. To one of the coins tape a slip of paper on which you've written, "Congratulations, Your Majesty!"

Gather kids in a group and say: **I've hidden treasure all around this room. In just a moment I'll let you look for it. Don't pick up more than one piece of treasure. When you've found your piece, bring it back here and sit down. One of the treasures has a special message on it. If you find the treasure with a message, don't tell anyone what it says. Just bring it to me. Are you ready to be treasure hunters? Go!**

When everyone has found a coin, call the group together. Have the student whose coin has the special message come and stand by you. Hold up the coin and read the message to the class.

Then say: **I guess this makes you our ruler. What's your first command?**

If the child is shy or gives a command that seems inappropriate, whisper that he or she might order everyone to eat their treasure. Then ask:

- **Suppose you were suddenly to become the ruler of this country; what would you do?** (Make everyone give me chocolate; get homes for all the homeless people.)

- **How about the rest of you? What would you do if you suddenly became king or queen?** (Take a world tour; move to a palace; help poor people.)

- **What would make you a good king or queen?** (I would be fair and kind; I would tell people about God.)

- **What would make you a bad king or queen?** (If I took everyone's money; if I treated my friends and family better than everyone else.)

Say: **Believe it or not, today's Bible story is about a boy who became a king when he was 8 years old. And he turned out to be not just a good king, but a great one! This young king found a treasure, just as we found treasure here today. Let's find out about the treasure he found and what a difference it made in his life and his kingdom.**

BIBLE STUDY

The Little King Who Made a Big Difference (2 Chronicles 33:23–34:33)

Before class, write “The Little King Who Made a Big Difference” on a sheet of paper.

Help kids form pairs. For this activity it’s not necessary to pair younger kids with older ones. Have the pairs sit in a large circle. Set out markers, sheets of paper, and cellophane tape.

Say: **We’re going to illustrate this story with the quick-draw method. I’ll stand in front of a pair and read a part of the story. One partner will quickly draw a picture describing what I read. Then the other partner will run to this wall (indicate a blank wall) and tape the picture to the wall. If I come to your pair more than once, the drawer and the tapper may change roles. Don’t worry about making fancy pictures; stick figures are fine. Just draw something that will help everyone remember what happens in the story.**

**I’ll put up the first paper with the title of our story.
Who can read it?**

Tape the title paper to the wall. Then read “The Little King Who Made a Big Difference” (p. 102) as you walk around the circle, pausing in front of each pair. Pace the story carefully, waiting just a few seconds between each segment. It’s fine to go to the next pair as the previous pair finishes its picture and attaches it to the wall.

After the last picture is in place on the wall, invite kids to join you in front of the pictures. Have kids retell the story by explaining their pictures. Then ask:

- What made Josiah a good king? (He followed God; he made the people stop worshiping idols.)
- What was the great treasure in this story? (The book of God’s law.)
- What happened when the people of Judah heard what was written in the **scroll**? (It made them realize what they’d done wrong; it made them stop sinning and begin to worship God.)

Say: **★ God can make us clean inside. And that’s just what he did for King Josiah and the people of Judah. They had gotten off to a bad start by worshiping idols. But when they found out what was right, they asked God’s forgiveness and promised to obey God from then on. So the people got a fresh start.**

A new year is a fresh start for us. But God can give

The Little King Who Made a Big Difference

1. King Amon was a wicked man who taught the people of Judah to worship idols. One day he was killed by his own soldiers.

2. Then his young son, Josiah, became king. Josiah was only 8 years old.

3. Josiah worked and studied hard. He wanted to be a good king. When Josiah was 16, he began to worship the true God.

4. Josiah told the people to destroy all the idols in the land. The people obeyed their young king.

5. Josiah ordered the priests to rebuild and repair the temple. Everyone worked hard to make God's house a beautiful place again.

6. One day a priest who was working in the temple found a scroll that had been lost for many, many years. God's laws were written in the scroll.

7. The priest took the scroll to young King Josiah. When Josiah heard God's laws, he knew that his people had broken every law. He felt sad.

8. Josiah called the people to the temple and read God's laws so everyone could hear. The king promised to obey the Law. The people promised to obey, too.

9. Josiah and the people felt sad that they had disobeyed God. When God saw that they were sad and heard their promises to obey, he forgave their sins and made them clean inside.

10. Josiah was one of the greatest kings of Judah. He treasured God's Word and loved God with all his heart and soul and strength.

us a fresh start any time. Let's see what we can do to make a fresh start like Josiah did.

LIFE APPLICATION

Sad for This, Glad for That

Before class, hit a few charcoal briquettes with a hammer so they shatter into small pieces. Place the pieces in a bowl. Put glass marbles or wrapped gum balls in a second bowl. You'll need enough charcoal chips and marbles or gum balls for each student to have two of each.

Set the bowls together in the center of a table. Place a sheet of newsprint in front of each bowl. Have a dishpan of warm, soapy water and a towel nearby, out of sight.

Say: **When we want to make a fresh start, it's good to stop and think about the good things we've done, as well as the bad things.**

Stand in front of the table and have kids form a line behind you. Pick up a marble or gum ball and say: **I'm glad that I** (name one good thing you did this year). Drop the marble or gum ball on the sheet of newsprint.

Then pick up a charcoal chip and say: **I'm sad that I** (name one thing you did that you felt sorry about.) Drop the charcoal chip on the other sheet of newsprint.

Turn and face the kids. Say: **I'd like you to do just what I did. If you want to, you can just say, "I'm glad that..." and "I'm sad that..." and then finish the sentences in your head. Or, you can say what you did out loud. It's up to you. Either way is OK.**

After everyone has been through the line once, invite kids to go through the line again if they wish. It's fine if some kids choose to go a second time and others choose not to. You may want to lead the second round as you did the first.

Then gather everyone around the table and ask:

● **What happened to your hands when you named the things you were sad about?** (The charcoal turned them black; they got dirty.)

● **How does it feel to have charcoal on your hands?** (Icky; I want to get them clean.)

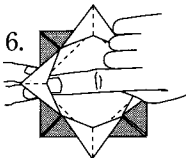
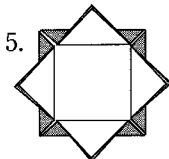
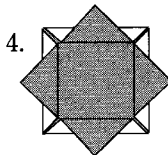
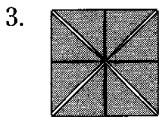
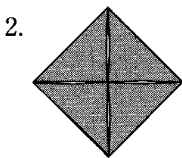
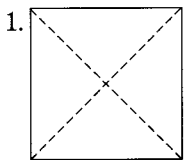
● **How is that like how it feels to have sin in your life?** (You feel bad about it.)

Say: **Listen to these verses from the Bible.** Read aloud Psalm 51:1-2, 10.

Set out the dishpan of warm, soapy water and the towel. Have kids take turns washing and drying their hands. As

TEACHER TIP

Practice folding the treasure box two or three times before class. You may want to train two or three students to be helpers. Take heart—making the box is much simpler than it looks! It's based on the familiar "salt cellar" or "May basket" pattern many kids are familiar with.



children put their hands in the water, have them repeat Psalm 51:2 after you: "Wash away all my guilt and make me clean again."

When everyone has washed and dried their hands, say: **Doesn't that feel better? Just as the soapy water cleaned our hands, ★ God can make us clean inside. Then we're ready for a fresh start, just like King Josiah and the people of Judah.**

Promise kids that they can take their gum balls or marbles home after class.

COMMITMENT

God's Treasure

Ask:

- **Who remembers what treasure helped Josiah and his people make a new start?** (The book of God's law.)

- **Why is God's Word a great treasure?** (Because it teaches us about God; because it tells us what God wants us to do.)

Say: **We're going to make treasure boxes to remind us of the new beginning God gave the people of Judah and the new beginning God is willing to give us when we ask him to forgive our sins.**

Distribute photocopies of the "God's Treasure" handout (p. 106) and scissors. Have kids cut out and roll the scroll containing Psalm 51:1-2, 10. Then demonstrate how to cut and fold the treasure box. The box can be made from the square pattern on the handout or from a 6-inch square of wrapping paper.

Have kids write their initials on the bottom of the finished treasure boxes then tuck the scrolls inside.

CLOSING

Treasures to Keep

Have kids stand in a circle holding their treasure boxes.

Ask:

- **What will these treasure boxes remind you of?** (That God can make us clean inside; that God can give us a fresh start; that God can take away our sins.)

Say: **Let's bow our heads and pray a prayer of thanks because ★ God can make us clean inside.**

Pray: Dear Lord, thank you for the treasure of your Word. Thank you for taking away our sins and making us clean inside. And thank you for giving us a fresh start. In Jesus' name, amen.

Encourage kids to tell their families about their treasure boxes then to keep the treasure boxes as reminders that God can make them clean inside.

