



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

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**Scripture Story:** 2 Kings 21; 22; 2 Chronicles 33.  
**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 32.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

The storied lives of Manasseh, Amon, and Josiah portray examples of extreme contrast in their loyalty and faithfulness to God. Manasseh was literally hell-bent on defying God's leadership and guidance. It was written about Manasseh: "He sacrificed his sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord . . ." (2 Chronicles 33:6, NIV). Even though he experienced a last-minute repentance, the effects of his sin bore fruit in his son Amon.

Amon "increased his guilt" and sinned, causing others to sin boundlessly during his brief two-year reign, but was assassinated by officials of his own court with the support of the people. The depravity of idolatry and self-absorbed behavior prompted the people to choose Josiah, a God-fearing child, to be king. While Josiah was not perfect, he led God's people faithfully, causing a much-needed reform in Israel.

This lesson arrests many angles for discussion, but consider a few areas of emphasis: 1. God has and will discipline leaders, such as Manasseh, who lead His people astray, in whatever way is necessary to bring about repentance. 2. Leaders don't always repent but respond to God's voice by a more earnest rebellion, as Amon illustrated. 3. Many great themes emerge from Josiah's reign about how allegiance to God while we are young is crucial, or how the cooperation between faithful children and godly elders produces blessings and growth. But another amazing

facet of Josiah's leadership is that he completely changed the direction his father postured before him. As a young person, he personified what it means to "go against the flow." Josiah led a reformation against the tendencies of his own heritage, against the religious apathy of unconverted leaders, and against the habitual idolatry of three generations of Israel.

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Deepen their knowledge of the storied lives of the kings of Israel. (*Know*)
- Sense the urgency of choosing to be loyal to God while young. (*Feel*)
- Decide to live deliberately for God and avoid evil. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

- Sin/evil/devil
- Hope
- The judgment

You will find material to help you explore these and other topics with your students at [www.leadoutministries.com](http://www.leadoutministries.com).

### TEACHING

#### I. GETTING STARTED

##### **Activity**

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Invite the students to share their responses to the ranking activity. Why do you think the leadership qualities you chose are essential?

### **Illustration**

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

You have heard the saying, “Like father, like son.” There are times in life you hope this saying is not true. Songs and rhymes have been written about Henry VIII, the king of England, at the early part of the 16th century. In 1534 King Henry appointed himself the head of the church so he could sanction his own divorce and remarriage to another woman in order to produce a male heir. As the king and head of the Church of England, he could essentially do whatever he wanted. As a result he married six wives, and produced a son, Edward. While young Edward had excellent religious instructors, he was a sickly child. But in spite of the uncertainties of his health, Edward was crowned king at the age of 9. During King Edward’s leadership, wise and godly people surrounded him with support, and a spiritual transformation began to take place in England during a relatively brief period of time. Edward VI contracted tuberculosis at age 15. As he lay dying, he prayed fervently for his people:

“O Lord, thou knowest how happy it were for me to be with thee; yet for thy chosen sake send me life and health that I may truly serve thee. O my Lord God, bless thy people and thine inheritance. O Lord God, save thy chosen people of England” (E. Michael and Sharon Rusten, *The One Year Book of Christian History*, Tyndale, 2003, p. 377).

Whom do you know that turned from the destructive patterns of a parent/s and followed God faithfully? Compare them to other people in the Bible who did not follow the footsteps of a parent.

## **II. TEACHING THE STORY**

### **Bridge to the Story**

*Share the following in your own words:*

If the phrase “Like father, like son” is accurate, it is true only in the sense that a parent can significantly shape their children. But does it mean that children are trapped in a vicious cycle repeating the same path as their parents? Of course not! King Edward, while affected by his father’s lifestyle, changed his course and made a new way. The three kings in this week’s lesson are all cut from the same cloth and even faced

similar challenges, but their lives turned out much different. Read the story and mark the difference and difference-maker moments in their lives.

### **Out of the Story for Teachers**

*After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

Identify and *circle* the three different generations of kings mentioned in this passage.

Briefly describe what the text says about the kind of people they were. (Use only the words and phrases in this passage.)

—Manasseh

—Amon

—Josiah

What are some words or phrases that are repeated in this story?

This story is mostly about . . . (choose three and explain)

1. Obedience to God
2. Influence of parents/leaders
3. Results of sin
4. Blessings of faithfulness
5. Selfishness and idolatry
6. Moral courage

Some might perceive God’s punishment of Manasseh to be harsh, but the ultimate result was his repentance. Compare the religious experience of these three kings and consider how God dealt with each of them, and how they responded to His promptings. How has God found ways to arrest your attention when you were growing distant from Him?

What do you think is the most difficult challenge for a king/leader?

To what degree do parents shape their children’s faithfulness to God?

Which verse do you think conveys a key lesson or point of this story?

*Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today’s story:*

Acts 5:29; Daniel 3; Exodus 10; Matthew 18:4; Romans 2:4.

### **Sharing Context and Background**

*Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.*

- 1. Manasseh: From One Extreme to the Other**

Consider Manasseh's claim to fame as a leader: "Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites" (2 Kings 21:9). In 2 Chronicles 33:6, it says, "He [Manasseh] sacrificed his sons in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord." But a few verses later the Bible says: "In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom" (verses 12, 13). Furthermore, Manasseh is one of the kings listed in the proud lineage of the Messiah (Matthew 1). Clearly this man made a last-minute turnaround, going from reckless idolatry to genuine humility. It might be helpful to discuss with the students the impact of amazing conversion stories. In what way are these conversion experiences inspirational? What do they teach about the matchless power of God's grace? What might be the downside to such stories?

## 2. Amon: Like Father, Like Sun

*The SDA Bible Commentary* states that Amon's name is "identical with that of the Egyptian sun-god Amen. It would appear that Manasseh selected this name for his son to show his regard for that Egyptian deity" (vol. 2, p. 971). The commentary continues by asserting that "Manasseh's apostasy had left a stamp of evil upon Amon that shaped his life beyond recall"

## Tips for Top-notch Teaching

### Teach by Storytelling

The unmistakable quality of stories is that everyone—young and old—connect with narratives personally. Lists and equations, acronyms and paradigms, and clever sayings may lodge themselves in the mind, but stories evoke the human experience to action. William Barclay says it well when he states: "To teach in parables is to teach in pictures, and most men think in pictures" (William Barclay, *The Mind of Christ*, p. 95). Another rich quality of storytelling is that stories don't necessarily tell people "the truth," but engage the listener in a thoughtful journey through which he/she discovers the truth for themselves. As we teach, we can trust the story to do more than we will ever do by trying to explain. Some teachers simply tell the story or have students read it and ask: "What does this story teach you?" or "What is the central truth of this story?" or even "Why do you think this story is meaningful?"

(p. 971). Apparently, the pattern of behaving badly became so deeply ingrained in his childhood that he simply increased his sin over time. After reigning for only two years, he was assassinated by palace officials. Some think this might have been a grudge

## Teaching From . . .

*Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.*

- **Other Eyes**

*Ask them how the quotes in Other Eyes convey the point of the story in this lesson.*

- **Flashlight**

*Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Prophets and Kings. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.*

- **Punch Lines**

*Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them read the passages and ask each one to choose the verse that speaks most directly to them today. Then ask them to explain why they chose the one they did.*

*Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.*

against the king while others infer that it was a reaction to the horrible direction Amon was taking the nation. Either way, his miserable reign was short (he died at age 24; his son Josiah was 8). Imagine what it must have been like for Josiah. How did he maintain the sensibilities to God while living with such an evil parent? What are some truths you glean from looking at the odds Josiah faced as a believer in God and as a young leader of a nation?

The more you dig into the details given in Scripture about these three men, the more you marvel at what God can do with seemingly impossible situations.

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

*Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.*

Fill one bowl with hot water (hot enough to touch but not burn) and another with ice-cold water. Invite the students (or volunteers) to place their right hand in the cold water long enough for it to get a little uncomfortable, then dry the cold hand off and immediately place it in the hot water. Clearly, a cold hand experiences the contrast in the hot water more keenly than if you were to place your room temperature hand directly in the hot water. The students can try it with the other hand to note the difference. You might also make available two other bowls of water (one lukewarm and the other only slightly cool) and note the contrast.

*Ask:* What are some spiritual truths that this exercise illustrates? (Have them get into groups of two or three to discuss and share their responses.)

#### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

You are not trapped by your genetic makeup. You, like Abraham (whose father was an idolater), are endowed with the potential to choose God whether your parents have or not. Manasseh was evil, and God rattled him through failure and shame. But he responded in the sunset of his life—although too late to really make a positive difference in the lives of others. Perhaps you know someone who lived a life of rebellion against God for the majority of their life but finally turned to the Savior in the final hour. And like Amon, some don't repent. This story can easily seem like a sensational testimony of bad guys who turn good or bad guys who stay bad, but maybe this story is more about God's desire and ability to save the worst of sinners. You might appeal to the students, saying, "Maybe you feel as if you have refused God's promptings too much to be saved. As long as your heart beats in your chest God can redeem and restore your life. It simply takes a humble response to God's voice speaking to you now. Let's pray. . . ." Invite the students to use this story to evaluate their journey with God, gleaning positive attributes of faith they have learned from their parents and asking, "How can I move closer to God and be more faithful to His leading in my life?"



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 32.

\*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net).