

29. Separation



BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

1 Kings 11:1-13, Jeremiah 25:1-11, Jeremiah 52:12-30, Lamentations 3:21-23

After Solomon's death, the kingdom of Israel splits in two, and the people are sent into exile



AIMS

To help the children see the seriousness of the consequences of sin – both for the Israelites and for us today – but to understand that God gives hope of restoration.

Disobeying God caused separation for the people as the kingdom split and they were exiled from their land. It also causes separation for us in our relationships with others and with God, but God provides hope of a way for things to be restored.



PREP FOR LEADERS

Read through the Bible passages for this session and reflect:

- What are the consequences of sin for the Israelites?
- What situations do you see today where there is brokenness or separation because of sin?
- How does God give us hope in the midst of this?

Take some time to pray for your group.



GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

► Empires

You will need: slips of paper, pens or pencils

This game works best with around 8-12 children. Get everyone to sit in a circle and give each person a slip of paper and a pen or pencil. Ask them to choose a well-known person or character and to write it on their slip without telling anyone else or letting them see. Collect in the slips of paper, mix them up and then read out the names on

the slips to everyone.

The children have to guess who wrote each name, and if they guess correctly, that person is captured and has to join their empire.

Choose one person to start. They can choose any person in the circle and say, "Are you..." and guess any of the names on the slips. If their guess is wrong, the person next to them in the circle has a turn.

If they guess correctly, the person whose name they guessed has to move to sit beside them and they are now part of their empire. They can have another go, and from now on their empire can work together to guess the identity of the other players.

The aim of the game is to capture as many people as

(continued overleaf)

possible in the circle and to end up with the biggest empire.

▶ Going on a Journey

Get everyone to sit in a circle. Tell the children that in the story today we are going to think about some people going on a journey.

Choose someone to start: they say, "I'm going on a journey and I'm going to take..." Then they add an item they are going to take on their journey. (This can be serious or silly.) The next child in the circle then repeats the same sentence, saying the first child's item and then adding one of their own.

Continue round the circle with a new item being added to the list by each person. See how far you can get with the person still remembering all the items on the list. If you have a small group this may mean going round the circle a few times.

▶ Separate the Sweets

You will need: sweets with lots of different colours (e.g. Smarties, Skittles, M&Ms), bowls, cups, timer

You can either have two children competing against one another to see who can complete the challenge first, or you can have one child attempting to complete it in a minute.

Give each participant a bowl of sweets and enough cups so that they have one for each colour of sweet. Their challenge is to separate the sweets by colour and put them into the cups. However, they may only use one hand, and they may only pick up one sweet at a time.

You can find a one minute countdown video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebvtJCu33vM> or you can

simply use a timer on a watch or a phone.



EXPLORING THE BIBLE

▶ Introduction/ Recap

You will need: map of Israel (from additional document: 12 tribes map), Saul, David and Solomon crowns (from additional document: Crowns and Prophets' Words), Blu tack

Show the children the map of Israel.

We learned before about how God made a promise to Abraham that he would lead his family to a land that would be theirs. It took a long time, but the people finally got there. It didn't end happily though because the people decided they didn't want God to be king and they didn't want to follow his rules. They wanted to be the same as the other countries around them and to have a man as a king.

Those of you who were here last term heard about the first three kings of Israel – Saul, David and Solomon.

(Use Blu tack to stick the three crowns with their names along the top of the map.)

▶ Story: The Split Kingdom and the Exile

You will need: map of Israel (from additional document: 12 tribes map), Rehoboam and Jeroboam crowns and speech bubbles with prophets' words (from additional document: Crowns and Prophets' Words), Blu tack, scissors

Solomon started off doing a good job as king, because he asked God for wisdom and he listened to God and obeyed him. He also had a Temple built, a special place where the people could come to worship

God.

He started well but, when he got older, Solomon's heart turned away from God and he started doing what he wanted. He got involved in worshipping other gods and began leading the people in the wrong direction, and God was angry.

The result was that when Solomon died the kingdom split in two. His son was called Rehoboam and he was meant to take over as king, but the land was made up of twelve tribes, and only two of them would accept Rehoboam as their king - the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

The other ten tribes decided that they wanted another man called Jeroboam to be their king instead, so the nation split into two separate countries.

*(Cut the map to separate Judah and Benjamin from the other tribes.)**

The part with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin became known as Judah, and its king was Rehoboam, (stick the crown with Rehoboam's name onto Judah) and the rest of the land continued to be called Israel, and it was ruled by Jeroboam. (Stick the crown with Jeroboam's name onto Israel.)

For the next 400 years there were lots of different kings of Israel and Judah. A few were good, but most of them were really bad and led the people in the wrong direction, away from what God wanted.

Again and again, God sent warnings to the people, telling them to change the way they were living. There were people called prophets, who gave messages from God to the people. (Stick speech bubbles with the prophets' words around the map - 'Turn back to God!' and 'Stop doing evil!') But the people ignored the

prophets' messages.

Eventually, God allowed the northern part of the kingdom – Israel – to be captured by the Assyrians and many of them were captured and taken away to Assyria.

God told the people of Judah that something similar was going to happen if they continued in doing wrong: “This whole country will become dry and empty. And these nations will serve the king of Babylon for 70 years.” (Jeremiah 25:11 NIV) *(Stick this speech bubble onto the map.)*

Finally, God decided he had had enough, and he was going to send the people into exile. That meant they were invaded by the Babylonian army and they were taken there to be slaves. The Temple which Solomon had built for the people to worship God in was burned down and the walls around Jerusalem (the main city) were knocked down.

Many of the people ended up in Babylon, which was about 900 miles from home.

If you have a large group, as an alternative to using the map, you could get the children to stand in groups representing the different tribes, and you could give them larger versions of the crowns and prophets' words to hold up as you go through the story. (See additional document: Crowns and prophets' words - large)

**Additional background information: the question may arise over what happened to the people of the tribe of Simeon, whose land was within the land of Judah. There is no clear-cut answer to this, but it is likely that many of the people moved to live in the northern kingdom of Israel, while some stayed in Judah. 2 Chronicles 15:9 refers to some members of*

the tribe of Simeon who had settled among the people of Judah, and in Genesis 49:7, as Jacob prophesies over his sons, he talks about Simeon's descendants being scattered throughout the nation of Israel.



REFLECT & RESPOND

► Reflection

This is not a very nice part of the story, but the Bible teaches that disobeying God leads to separation:

The people were separated from each other when the kingdom split in two.

They were separated from their land when they were taken away to foreign countries.

They were separated from God because they didn't want to follow him or obey him.

It's the same today. Because there is sin and selfishness in the world and people want to do their own thing, we see separation. We see friendships break up, we see families break up, we see people fighting and arguing, we see countries at war with one another, and it all makes God very sad. And, most of all, the wrong things we do separate us from God.

BUT there is a way back. God promised the people of Judah that one day they would be able to return to their own land, though it would take 70 years. And even when we have messed up there is a way back.

This means saying sorry for what we have done wrong, and asking God to help us change our ways to put God first. It also means being

willing to forgive other people if they have hurt us. It doesn't always happen quickly and it's not always easy to do these things, but the Bible is clear about one thing - God will always forgive us and welcome us back if we are sorry for the wrong things we have done and we ask him to help us.

► Prayer Activity

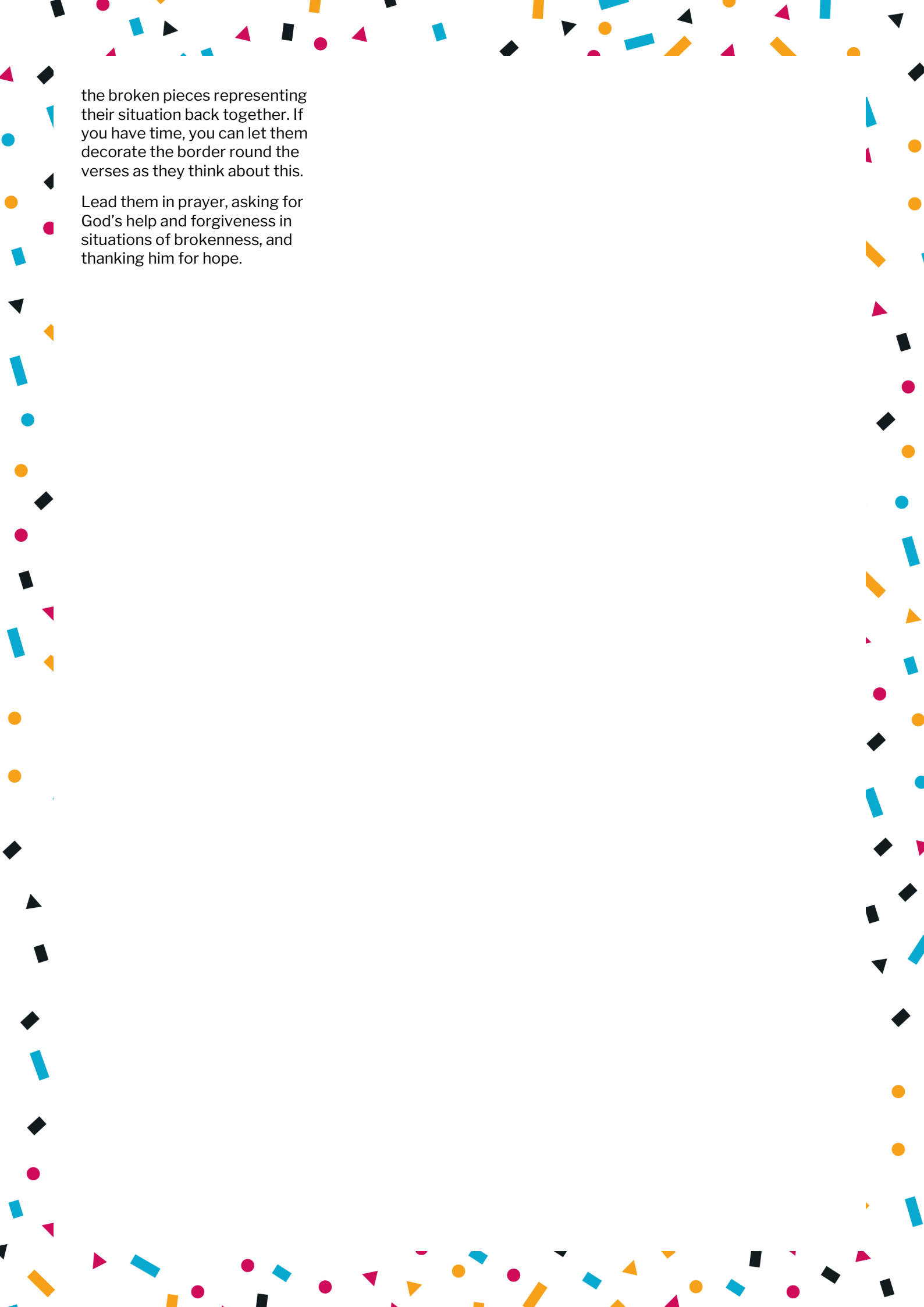
You will need: A5 size piece of card or paper for each child, printouts of Lamentations 3:21-23 (from additional document: Lamentations 3), glue sticks, coloured pens or pencils

Get the children to think of a situation where there is fighting or separation. It could be personal, such as a broken friendship or separation in their family, or it could be something more general such as countries at war, or refugees who have had to leave their country.

Give the children a piece of card or paper. Let them have a few moments to write or draw something that represents the situation they are thinking about, and then get them to tear their piece of paper in half. (Let them know in advance that they will be asked to tear the paper in half.)

Give them printouts of Lamentations 3:21-23 (from additional document: Lamentations 3). Tell them that these are words that one of the prophets, Jeremiah, wrote after the people were exiled. Talk about how he had hope, even in a difficult situation, because of God's faithfulness, and we can find hope in that too. Even though we might not see our situation fixed right away, or at all, we can trust that God is faithful.

Give the children glue sticks to put glue on the back of the Lamentations printout, and then get them to use it to stick

A decorative border composed of various colorful geometric shapes, including triangles, squares, circles, and rectangles, arranged in a circular pattern around the text. The colors include teal, orange, black, and pink.

the broken pieces representing
their situation back together. If
you have time, you can let them
decorate the border round the
verses as they think about this.

Lead them in prayer, asking for
God's help and forgiveness in
situations of brokenness, and
thanking him for hope.