

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 16: The Kingdom Divided; Early Kings of Judah

2 Chronicles 10:1–16:14

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson centers on God's covenant faithfulness and the human responsibility to rely on Him rather than on human strength. The kings of Judah become case studies: God blesses reliance on Him and warns against trusting alliances and idols. The teacher must give full weight to Asa's tragic later turn, for it teaches plainly that a person who once relied wholly on God can drift into self-reliance and fall away. This refutes the notion that perseverance is automatic and underscores the New Testament warning that the one who thinks he stands should take heed lest he fall.

The lesson also aims at the spiritual formation of the student. Rehoboam's pride warns against harshness and the rejection of wise counsel. Abijah and the early Asa model bold, dependent faith. The later Asa warns against the slow drift toward self-reliance and an unrepentant heart. The teacher should help students examine where they are leaning on human arrangements rather than God and call them to finish faithfully, relying on the Lord to the very end.

Throughout, present the cycles not as mere history but as a mirror. The same God who was faithful to Judah is faithful to us, and the same dangers that felled these kings threaten us. The goal is hearts that rely on God wholeheartedly and persevere.

Question 1

Student Question:

What does Rehoboam's harsh, prideful response and the resulting division of the kingdom teach about the consequences of pride and the rejection of wise counsel?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The division of the kingdom turns on Rehoboam's response at Shechem. The people ask him to lighten the heavy yoke, and he consults two sets of advisers. The older men counsel kindness, telling him that if he is good to the people and speaks kind words, they will be his servants forever. The young men he grew up with counsel harshness. Rehoboam chooses harshness, declaring he will add to their yoke and discipline them with scorpions.

The result is catastrophic. Ten tribes reject the house of David, and the united kingdom splits. The Chronicler also notes that this turn of events was from God, fulfilling His word to Solomon, yet Rehoboam is fully responsible for his foolish pride. Divine providence and human accountability stand together.

Pride and the rejection of wise counsel are the engines of this disaster. Rehoboam preferred the flattering advice of peers who told him to assert power over the seasoned wisdom of those who urged servant leadership. The consequences were irreversible.

The application is sobering. Pride blinds, and the refusal to heed wise counsel can ruin in a moment what took generations to build. Scripture commends humility and the seeking of counsel (Proverbs 11:14, 15:22). The teacher should help students see how pride and a closed ear to counsel breed division and loss.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Pride and harshness divided the kingdom in a single decision.
- Rehoboam rejected wise counsel for flattering advice.
- God's providence and Rehoboam's accountability stand together.
- Pride can ruin in a moment what took generations to build.

Discussion Prompts

- How did pride and the rejection of wise counsel divide the kingdom?
- How do divine providence and human responsibility fit together here?
- Why is seeking and heeding wise counsel so important?

Question 2

Student Question:

Where has pride or an unwillingness to listen to wise counsel created division or damage in your own relationships, and what would humility look like there?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question turns Rehoboam's failure inward. Pride and an unwillingness to listen still wreck relationships, families, churches, and workplaces. We, too, can prefer voices that flatter us over voices that tell us the truth.

Harshness, like Rehoboam's, often masquerades as strength. We mistake domineering for leadership and lose the very people we were meant to serve. Servant leadership, by contrast, wins hearts.

The remedy is humility: a willingness to listen, to admit we may be wrong, to seek and accept counsel, and to speak kindly rather than to assert power. Humility heals what pride divides.

Application: ask students to identify one relationship damaged by pride or a closed ear and to name one humble step, such as listening, apologizing, or seeking counsel, they can take this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Pride and unwillingness to listen still damage relationships.
- Harshness masquerades as strength but loses people.
- Servant leadership wins hearts; domineering divides.
- Humility heals what pride divides.

Discussion Prompts

- Where has pride or a closed ear damaged a relationship of yours?
- How does servant leadership differ from domineering?
- What humble step can you take to begin healing it?

Question 3

Student Question:

When Abijah declared that the Lord is our God and we have not forsaken Him, and God gave the victory because Judah relied on the Lord, what does this reveal about God's faithfulness to those who rely on Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In chapter 13, Abijah of Judah faces Jeroboam's larger army and, before the battle, stands on Mount Zemaraim and preaches. He declares that the Lord is the God of Judah, that they have not forsaken Him, that the priests serve according to God's command, and that as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him. Then he says, behold, God is with us at our head.

Though Judah is outnumbered and ambushed, they cry out to the Lord, the priests blow the trumpets, and God strikes down Jeroboam's army. The Chronicler states plainly that the men of Judah prevailed because they relied on the Lord, the God of their fathers.

This is a central theme of Chronicles: God is faithful to those who rely on Him. Victory came not from superior numbers or strategy but from dependence on God. Abijah's confidence rested in the covenant God, not in Judah's strength.

The application is the abiding truth that God honors genuine reliance on Him. This is not a guarantee of earthly victory in every circumstance, but it reveals God's faithful character toward those who trust Him. The teacher should draw out the contrast between relying on God and relying on human resources, a contrast that runs through the whole lesson.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God is faithful to those who genuinely rely on Him.
- Judah prevailed because they relied on the Lord, not their numbers.

- Abijah's confidence rested in the covenant God.
- Reliance on God is a central theme of Chronicles.

Discussion Prompts

- Why did Judah prevail despite being outnumbered?
- What does this reveal about God's faithfulness to those who rely on Him?
- How does reliance on God differ from reliance on human resources?

Question 4

Student Question:

In what specific battle or pressure are you facing right now is God calling you to declare, like Abijah, that the Lord is your God and to rely on Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question presses Abijah's confession into the student's present. Each of us faces some battle or pressure, a health crisis, a financial strain, a difficult relationship, a temptation, where God calls us to declare with Abijah that the Lord is our God and to rely on Him.

The point is not mere positive thinking but real dependence: bringing the battle to God in prayer, acting in obedience, and trusting Him with the outcome rather than leaning on our own strength.

Abijah declared his reliance publicly and before the battle, not after. There is value in naming our dependence on God clearly and early, anchoring our hearts before the pressure peaks.

Application: ask students to name the specific battle they currently face and one concrete way they will rely on God in it this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Every believer faces battles calling for reliance on God.
- Real dependence means prayer, obedience, and trust in the outcome.
- Declaring reliance early anchors the heart before pressure peaks.
- Reliance is more than positive thinking; it is genuine trust.

Discussion Prompts

- What battle or pressure are you facing right now?
- How can you declare, like Abijah, that the Lord is your God in it?
- What concrete way will you rely on God this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

What do Asa's early reforms, tearing down idols and commanding the people to seek the Lord, teach about the kind of wholehearted worship and decisive obedience God desires?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Asa begins his reign well. The Chronicler says he did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord. He took away the foreign altars and high places, broke down the pillars, cut down the idols, and commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment. He removed idolatry decisively and even deposed his grandmother from her position as queen mother because she had made an abominable image.

Asa's reforms model wholehearted, decisive obedience. He did not negotiate with idolatry or leave it half-removed; he tore it down. True reform is not gradual tolerance of sin but decisive removal of it.

The Chronicler also records that Asa led the people in a covenant to seek the Lord with all their heart and soul, and that those who would not seek the Lord were to be put to death, an indication under the old covenant of how seriously God's people took wholehearted devotion.

The application is that God desires wholehearted worship and decisive dealing with sin. Halfway measures leave idols standing. The teacher should help students see that genuine repentance and reform mean tearing down what competes with God, not merely managing it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Asa's reforms model wholehearted, decisive obedience.
- True reform removes idolatry rather than tolerating it.
- God desires wholehearted devotion with all heart and soul.
- Halfway measures leave idols standing.

Discussion Prompts

- What made Asa's early reforms wholehearted and decisive?
- Why does true reform require removing sin, not just managing it?
- What does wholehearted devotion to God look like?

Question 6**Student Question:**

What idols or compromises is God calling you to tear down decisively in your own life so that your worship of Him is wholehearted?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question follows Asa's reforms into our own hearts. We all have idols, things that compete with God for our trust, time, and affection: money, comfort, approval, control, entertainment, relationships placed before God. Asa's example calls us to tear them down decisively.

The temptation is to manage idols rather than remove them, to keep them at a manageable level rather than to break them down. But idolatry tolerated grows. Asa broke the images; he did not merely relocate them.

Decisive action may mean cutting off a habit, restructuring a schedule, ending a compromise, or removing a temptation entirely. Wholehearted worship requires clearing away rivals to God.

Application: ask students to name one specific idol or compromise and one decisive step they will take this week to tear it down.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We all have idols that compete with God.
- The temptation is to manage idols rather than remove them.
- Tolerated idolatry grows over time.
- Wholehearted worship requires clearing away rivals to God.

Discussion Prompts

- What idols or compromises compete with God in your life?
- Why is it tempting to manage idols rather than remove them?
- What decisive step will you take to tear one down this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

What does Asa's prayer, that there is none like God to help and that he relied on God against a vast multitude, teach about genuine dependence on God in the face of overwhelming odds?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In chapter 14, a vast army under Zerah the Ethiopian comes against Judah, an immense force. Asa cries out to the Lord his God: Lord, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O Lord, you are our God; let not man prevail against you.

This is one of the great prayers of dependence in Scripture. Asa acknowledges that God alone can help, that human strength is irrelevant before Him, and that the battle is ultimately God's. He rests his whole hope on the Lord. And God strikes down the Ethiopians; the victory is the Lord's.

The prayer models genuine dependence in the face of overwhelming odds. Asa does not minimize the threat, nor does he trust his own army; he turns wholly to God. This is faith that acts, marching out while trusting God for the outcome.

The application is that overwhelming odds are an invitation to deeper reliance, not despair. When we are outmatched, we are positioned to see that the victory is God's. The teacher should hold this early Asa up as a model, even as the lesson will soon show his tragic turn away from such reliance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Asa's prayer models genuine dependence on God against overwhelming odds.
- God alone can help; human strength is irrelevant before Him.
- Faith acts while trusting God for the outcome.
- Overwhelming odds invite deeper reliance, not despair.

Discussion Prompts

- What makes Asa's prayer a model of dependence on God?
- How does Asa hold together acting and trusting God?
- Why are overwhelming odds an invitation to deeper reliance?

Question 8

Student Question:

When you face odds that feel overwhelming, do you instinctively turn first to God in dependent prayer or to your own resources, and what would deeper reliance look like?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question presses Asa's prayer into our instinctive habits. When facing odds that feel overwhelming, where do we turn first? Many of us reflexively reach for our own resources, planning, working, worrying, and only turn to God when those fail.

Asa, at his best, turned first to God, declaring his reliance before he engaged the enemy. Dependence was his first move, not his last resort. That order reveals the heart.

Deeper reliance does not mean passivity; Asa still marched out. But it means that prayer and trust precede and undergird our action, rather than action being our god and prayer a backup plan.

Application: ask students to recall a recent overwhelming situation and honestly assess whether they turned first to God or to themselves, then name one way to make dependent prayer their first response.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We often turn first to our own resources, not to God.
- Asa, at his best, made dependence his first move.
- Reliance undergirds action rather than replacing it.
- The order of our response reveals the heart.

Discussion Prompts

- When facing overwhelming odds, do you turn first to God or to yourself?
- How can dependent prayer become your first response rather than your last?
- What would deeper reliance look like in a current situation?

Question 9

Student Question:

How do the cycles of faithfulness and apostasy in these chapters, especially Asa's tragic later turn to rely on Syria rather than God, his imprisoning of the seer, and his refusal to seek the Lord even in disease, teach both God's covenant faithfulness and the sobering reality that those who once relied on God can fall away, so that the call is to rely on God rather than human alliances and to finish faithfully?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the lesson reaches its doctrinal summit, gathering the cycles of faithfulness and apostasy and confronting Asa's tragic later turn. The same God who was faithful to Judah throughout these chapters remains faithful, rewarding reliance and warning against self-trust. But the heart of the warning is Asa himself.

In chapter 16, decades after his great prayer of dependence, Asa faces a threat from Baasha king of Israel. This time he does not cry out to God. Instead he takes silver and gold from the house of the Lord and buys a treaty with Ben-hadad of Syria, relying on a foreign king rather than on the Lord. Hanani the seer confronts him: because you relied on the king of Syria and did not rely on the Lord your God, the army of Syria has escaped you. He reminds Asa that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him.

Asa's response is heartbreaking. He does not repent; he is enraged, puts the seer in prison, and inflicts cruelties on some of the people. And when, in his old age, he is diseased in his feet, even then he did not seek the Lord but only the physicians. The man who once prayed there is none like you to help now refuses to seek God at all. He dies estranged from the dependence that once defined him.

The doctrinal weight is twofold. First, God's covenant faithfulness is unwavering; He gives strong support to those whose hearts are wholly His, and He calls His people to rely on Him rather than on human alliances. Trusting in Syria, in Egypt, in horses and chariots, in human arrangements rather than God, is rebuked throughout Scripture (Isaiah 31:1, Jeremiah 17:5). Second, and crucially, Asa's fall teaches that a person who once relied wholly on God can drift into self-reliance and harden into an unrepentant heart. This decisively refutes the idea that perseverance is automatic or that one who has been faithful cannot fall away.

The New Testament makes the warning explicit: let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12), and take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God (Hebrews 3:12). The call, therefore, is not merely to begin well but to finish faithfully, relying on God to the very end. The teacher should drive home that faithfulness is a path to be walked, not a trophy won once, and that the God who is faithful invites us to keep relying on Him all the way home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's covenant faithfulness gives strong support to those wholly His.
- God calls His people to rely on Him, not human alliances.
- Trusting in human arrangements rather than God is rebuked throughout Scripture.
- Asa's fall shows that one who once relied on God can drift and fall away.
- This refutes the idea that perseverance is automatic.
- The New Testament warns the one who stands to take heed lest he fall.
- The call is to finish faithfully, relying on God to the end.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Asa's later turn to Syria contrast with his earlier reliance on God?
- Why does Asa's fall show that those who once relied on God can fall away?
- What does it mean to rely on God rather than human alliances and to finish faithfully?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across the divided kingdom and these early kings, name one specific way the Lord is calling you to rely on Him rather than human alliances and to finish your walk faithfully to the end.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the whole lesson into personal resolve. We have watched pride divide a kingdom, faith win battles, reform tear down idols, dependent prayer prevail against overwhelming odds, and a faithful king drift tragically into self-reliance and an unrepentant heart.

The decisive question is not how we begin but how we finish. Asa began on his knees and ended with clenched fists. The student is invited to consider where they are drifting and to choose reliance on God to the end.

The teacher should help each person name one specific way they are tempted to lean on human alliances or their own resources and one concrete commitment to rely on God instead, finishing the race faithfully.

Application: ask each student to name one specific way the Lord is calling them to rely on Him rather than human arrangements and to finish faithfully, holding it as a commitment before God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The decisive question is whether we finish faithfully, not just begin.
- Asa's life warns against drifting into self-reliance.
- The lesson aims at concrete reliance on God to the end.
- God is faithful and invites us to keep relying on Him all the way home.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to lean on human alliances rather than God?
- What does finishing faithfully look like in your life?
- What commitment will you make to rely on God to the very end?