



Community Group Discussion Guide

October 5, 2025

2 Kings 17:1-20 | Retribution

MOTIVATE

- ⇒ *Starter Question: Can you describe one of your earliest memories of experiencing consequences for your actions? What did you learn from the experience?*
- ⇒ *Life is full of consequences. The cause and effect of our actions applies to everyone universally. Is there a consistent pattern of cause and effect in Scripture? Explain your answer.*

DISCUSS

The books of 1 and 2 Kings record the history of Israelite kings over approximately four hundred years, beginning with the death of David and the start of Solomon's reign, through the split of the kingdom into Israel and Judah, and ending with the Jerusalem's destruction, to a few years into Judah's exile, when Israel had no more land, temple, king, or freedom. The author documented each king in both the north and the south in light of their faithfulness to the Lord.

While Judah enjoyed a few faithful kings, Israel's kings consistently followed a path away from the Lord, disobeying in spite of the warnings from the Lord's prophets (1 Kings 14:14-16)). 2 King 17:1-20 describes the Northern Kingdom's destruction and exile at the hands of the Assyrians. The Israelites learned the hard way: though God is merciful, sin has dreadful consequences. While He is "slow to anger," there will come a time when He will not leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:6-7).

- ⇒ *Can you give some Old Testament examples when Israel had opportunity to learn about the consequences of their unfaithfulness to God? How well did they learn from their mistakes?*

1. When we worship other gods, disaster happens.

2 King 17:1-5: ¹ *In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel, and he reigned nine years. ² And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him. ³ Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria. And Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute. ⁴ But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea, for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. ⁵ Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it.*

Ruling from Samaria, Hoshea was the last king over the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Though not as bad as the kings before him, Hoshea still did what was evil in God's sight. God disciplined the Northern Kingdom by allowing Assyria to attack and force them to pay tribute as a vassal state. Later, Hoshea reneged on the agreement with Assyria and appealed to the king of Egypt for help in wresting itself of Assyria's dominance. God's judgment finally came due as Assyria invaded the Northern Kingdom of Israel, taking Hoshea captive and besieging Samaria for three years.

Reading only verses 3-6 would make it seem Hoshea's poor political maneuverings cost Israel their freedom and land. But the Lord made it clear the reason the Israelites suffered—they sinned against Him. Sin always ends in destruction. Since the garden of Eden, sin has wrought painful and deadly

consequences upon humankind (Genesis 3:16-23). Sin not only results in pain, but it requires God's discipline. Sin is the core problem of all humanity, residing in our very hearts, and apart from the intervention of the Lord, we can do nothing about it on our own.

- ⇒ *How would you explain sin to someone who has no Bible background?*
- ⇒ *Why is it important that we define sin in terms of defiance, rebellion, and willful disobedience to God?*

The Northern Kingdom was doomed to fall because of its idolatry, and history reveals the nation's landslide

into depravity, from bad to worse. The only question was when that destruction would happen. In the Northern Kingdom's history, there was no true repentance, no mass turning to the Lord, and no godly kings to lead the nation to faithful loyalty to God.

- ⇒ *Israel had become thoroughly rotten, thoroughly pagan, and the fabric of their society was decayed and fraying. Why must we remember that Israel's apostasy was not a recent development; it was there from their very founding as the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12)?*
- ⇒ *Why is it vital we understand that sin always ends in discipline from God?*

2 King 17:6-12: ⁶ *In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. ⁷ And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods ⁸ and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. ⁹ And the people of Israel did secretly against the Lord their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. ¹⁰ They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, ¹¹ and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the Lord carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the Lord to anger, ¹² and they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, "You shall not do this."*

- ⇒ *As a group, make a list of Israel's sins. Record your findings on a piece of paper or on the board in your group's room. Consider this: Is it any wonder God was angry with them?*

God had promised to provide for every need of His people, but Israel habitually sinned against Him. They were continually wicked, rebellious, and disobedient despite God's gifts and His warnings. Because of this, God allowed them to be besieged, conquered, captured, and deported by Assyria. The Assyrians spread them anywhere from 400 to 1,000 miles from home. The Lord had repeatedly shown that He is merciful, but sin has consequences. Israel's unfaithfulness to God resulted in the disaster they now experienced.

The Israelites were exiled because they were rebellious and disobedient. Though God had brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, they were unfaithful to Him. Though God had conquered and given them the promised land, they worshiped other gods. Though God sees and knows all, His people thought their wickedness and idolatry went unnoticed. But they were wrong.

- ⇒ *Why do we sometimes think and act as though God either cannot see or does not care about*

our sin?

The foundational law for Israel begins with “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery” (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6). Before God gave His covenant law, He reminded the Israelites of His amazing grace in saving them. In fact, every expectation God gave His people Israel was couched in the context of His saving grace, just as every command we receive as Christians is grounded in the saving work of Jesus on our behalf.

Right after the statement of God’s grace to Israel, the first two commandments are “Do not have other gods besides me” and “Do not make an idol for yourself” (Exodus 20:3-4). Israel was to have only one God—the Lord alone. When Israel started worshiping other gods, they were rejecting their covenant with God. They chose to participate in the pagan practices of their neighbors and tried to become like Canaanites rather than God’s holy people. The Canaanites were driven out of the promised land because of their wicked practices, and Israel was warned that they would suffer the same fate by practicing the same (Leviticus 18:24-28). Led in the ways of idolatry by Jeroboam and every king who followed him, the people acted wickedly toward the Lord. The people were as guilty as their leadership was.

The writer cataloged the blatant sins committed by the people, piling them on top of each other. Jeroboam’s two golden calves were quite public and likely were an attempt to represent the Lord, but recalling the commandments, this was rebellion against God. And this tip of the iceberg revealed the presence of a much more sinister rebellion going on in private—the Israelites “secretly did things against the Lord.” Everywhere they could think of, the Israelites began to set up worship to false gods and to carry out the same perverted practices and worship of the very neighbors who had been driven out of the land. But however secret they thought they were being, they couldn’t hide from the all-knowing God of the universe.

⇒ *What causes us to believe we can somehow keep secrets from God?*

The ten northern tribes were slaughtered, exiled, and their land was taken by the Assyrians, events all witnessed by their brothers in the south. If the lessons displayed by the example of God’s judgment on the people in the north were properly discerned, then God’s people in the south might repent of their wicked ways and be spared God’s judgment.

⇒ *How does this narrative show God’s longsuffering nature? His mercy?*

⇒ *Why are we not inclined to learn from other’s mistakes?*

Similarly, people today are responsible for their actions, and sin is rebellion against God. In Galatians 6:7-8, Paul warned Christians to walk in obedience to God: “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” When we worship other gods, even ourselves, disaster happens.

⇒ *Discuss this statement: Because we are in Christ by faith and have been given the Holy*

Spirit, sin no longer rules over those who have been born again. Yet because we are still in the flesh, we will still struggle and succumb to sin, leading to consequences and discipline. But the Lord promises that His grace is greater than all our sins (Romans 5:20-21).

2. God warns of the danger of disobedience, allowing us to choose.

2 Kings 17:13: *Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets."*

God had chosen the Israelites as His people, had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, had given them His law, and had given them the promised land. But from Exodus to Judges to 1–2 Kings, a pattern developed that described hundreds of years of the history of God's people: The people sinned and rebelled, turning from God to wickedness.

- ⇒ *What is your history of obedience to God?*
- ⇒ *Why do we so often fail to see the cause and effect of our disobedience?*

Though God had sent Elijah, Elisha, and Hosea, among other prophets, to warn the people of upcoming judgment and to call the people to repentance, unfortunately the Israelites had a problem with stubbornness and pride like their ancestors. Of God's prophets calling them back to faithfulness to Him, none were truly heeded. Their false worship of false gods had so marked them that they became worthless like the idols they worshiped. God's intended purpose for Israel had been rejected, and now discipline for their rebellion would be the most severe.

- ⇒ *Today, how does God ensure His people are clearly informed about the way we are to live our lives? How does He warn us to turn from evil and to keep His commands?*
- ⇒ *Can you describe a time when you failed to heed a warning from God about an area of sin in your life? What were the consequences?*

2 Kings 17:14-18: *¹⁴ But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God. ¹⁵ They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them that they should not do like them. ¹⁶ And they abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. ¹⁷ And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. ¹⁸ Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only.*

- ⇒ *Why is verse 14 an incredibly sad statement about the spiritual state of Israel?*
- ⇒ *Has this ever been an accurate description of you? Explain your answer.*
- ⇒ *As a group, add to your list of Israel's sins. Again: Is it any wonder God was angry with them?*

As the Lord had foretold in His law, He would keep His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and lead the Israelites into the promised land, but if they rebelled, He would send them away from it and from His presence (Deuteronomy 28:58-68). Israel did rebel, they did reject God's covenant, they did

resist God's prophets, so "the Lord was very angry with Israel," and He "he cast them out of his sight." Israel had already cut themselves off from the temple of God through their counterfeit idolatry, but now they were cut off from their land and from the patient grace of the Lord. They chose their idols, so they also chose disaster, exile, and death.

- ⇒ *What idols might you be choosing today instead of listening to the Lord?*
- ⇒ *Discuss this statement: We become like what we worship.*

2 Kings 17:19-20: ¹⁹ *Judah also did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced.* ²⁰ *And the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight.*

Israel was driven out from the promised land just as the Canaanites had been. Because of God's covenant with David, and because of a few good kings, Judah would be given the chance to learn the lesson from their brothers to the north, if they would only listen.

- ⇒ *Why is Amos 3:7 an important verse in the context of the passage being studied today? ("For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.")*

Israel and Judah were largely guilty of the same sins for most of their existence as independent nations. Here, Israel paid the price for their rebellion—exile at the hands of the Assyrians. Yet Judah was just as guilty as Israel. Why weren't they swept away by the Assyrians? Because when the Assyrians invaded and threatened Judah, good King Hezekiah listened to the prophet Isaiah and relied on the Lord for Judah's rescue (2 Kings 18–19).

But for the most part, Judah too refused to learn the lessons and come back in faithfulness to the Lord, so they fared no better than Israel: "Judah also did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced." In less than two centuries, Judah would be destroyed by Babylon and driven from their own end of the promised land.

- ⇒ *A holy God will judge sin. How can we see both God's holiness and His mercy in the consequences He brings?*
- ⇒ *Why does it seem that everyone is pleased to have a loving God, but not everyone is pleased to have a holy God?*

Despite the exiles, mercifully God did not leave His people without hope. Both the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied that one day the Lord would gather all the scattered remnants of Israel and bring them together (Isaiah 11:11-12). The Messiah—Jesus Christ—would bring a message of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, not just for the people of Israel but for the Samaritans and Gentiles as well. This time, the new covenant He would make with them all would be paid with His own blood, and His Spirit would never leave them ever again.

- ⇒ *In God's Word we receive stories of good examples to follow and bad examples to avoid. The apostle Paul said that the stories from the Old Testament were "written for our instruction" (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11). How is the example of Israel a warning to you?*
- ⇒ *How does the fall of Israel demonstrate our need for a Savior?*

TRANSFORM

When the Israelites broke God's commands, He mercifully sent prophets to call them back to Him. But when they rejected His mercy, He justly gave them the consequences of their actions. God's mercy cannot be taken as a license to ignore God's holiness. God is merciful, as we see repeatedly throughout the history of the Israelites, from the first golden calf in Exodus to the cycle of the judges to King David's sin to practically all of the events in 1–2 Kings. To understand and fully worship the Lord as we were created to do, we must understand that God's mercy does not negate His holiness and justice, and vice versa. Rather, they complement each other, helping us to see the fullness of God's glory in both His holiness and mercy.

1. HEAD: Generation after generation, the Israelites were unfaithful to God's covenant, perpetuating a cycle of sin that invited God's retribution. They became obstinate, refusing to turn from their sin and back to God. Recognizing sin patterns in our own lives provides us an opportunity to refuse stubbornness and to ask the Lord for strength to do His will.

⇒ *What "sin cycles" have you seen emerge in your own life?*

2. HEART: In Scripture, God is ascribed different durations to His mercy and retribution. God's mercy is described as new every morning and having no end (Lamentations 3:22-23). God's discipline or retribution lasts for a specific time and purpose: "only a moment (Psalm 30:5). Consequences for His people's sin may be severe and lasting from our perspective, but they are temporary and outshined by the glorious purpose of His grace, mercy, and faithful love (Exodus 20:5-6).

⇒ *How do you need to reevaluate your perspective and feelings toward God's holiness and discipline?*

3. HANDS: Understanding God's just retribution for sin leads us to fear Him, but this should not prompt us to enact retribution or vengeance in our own lives. The Bible is clear that vengeance belongs to God (Deuteronomy 32:35). His perfect holiness and mercy means He can and will make all things right in His perfect timing. We, on the other hand, are to focus on mercy and to pray for and seek God's justice (Romans 12:17-21).

⇒ *How will you reflect God's holiness and mercy in your interactions with others this week?*

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