



# Community Group Discussion Guide

October 12, 2025

2 Kings 18:1-16; 22:1-2; 23:1-3 | God's People Worshipped

## MOTIVATE

- ⇒ *Starter Question: Write the word "Worship" on a whiteboard or piece of posterboard. Challenge the group to call out other words or phrases that carry the same meaning as "worship" in our culture today, and record these responses.*
- ⇒ *As a society, what do people worship? How can we see outwardly what they worship inwardly?*

## DISCUSS

After Solomon died, Israel became two nations: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Northern Kingdom had a succession of kings, but none of them followed God. Unsurprisingly, without a godly leader, the nation moved further away from Him. Their root problem? They did not see God as Lord. The external proof? They worshiped idols. God's first two commandments had been ignored, and the Israelites paid for their sin. In His mercy, God sent prophets to call His people to repentance, but the message often fell on deaf ears. As a result, God sent the Assyrians to attack, conquer, and exile the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom. Judah witnessed this judgment, but how would they respond to their own sin?

The Assyrians also threatened the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but the Lord rescued them through a much-needed, God-fearing leader. In the declining years of Judah, the Lord gave them two faithful kings who worshiped the Lord alone. 2 Kings 18:1-6; 22:1-2; 23:1-3 introduce Hezekiah and Josiah who both relied on God's Word to lead the people of Judah.

- ⇒ *So often Israel and Judah found themselves in a spiral of sin, disobedience, and idolatry. Is this a spiral we ourselves likely are familiar with?*

### 1. Worshipping God includes removing other things we are tempted to worship.

**2 King 18:1-4:** <sup>1</sup> *In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. <sup>2</sup> He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. <sup>3</sup> And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. <sup>4</sup> He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).*

Hezekiah's reign started at a deficit in many ways. First, he was only 25 years old. At that time in Israel's history, he was hardly the youngest king to reign. There were at least eight other kings younger than him when they began their reign, including Joash, who took the throne at the age of seven (2 Chronicles 24). Even though Hezekiah wasn't the youngest king, he was nonetheless inexperienced. Hezekiah also faced a massive challenge with Assyria looming large on the horizon as an ever-present threat of invasion.

Hezekiah knew that the Lord had allowed other pagan nations to ravage Israel, so the threat posed by Assyria was legitimate. Yet Hezekiah's immaturity and the threat of invasion paled in comparison to his greatest challenge—the spiritual condition of the people. The nation was

crumbling due to the idolatry. The people's foolish hearts led them to do just what the Lord warned them against—they worshiped the pagan gods of the nations. The fact that Assyria threatened to invade was less about national politics and more about the sovereign act of God bringing judgment to His people for dishonoring His name by worshipping false gods.

- ⇒ *Why is the spiritual condition of God's people of more concern than anything else that might be going on in a nation?*
- ⇒ *Why is it challenging to accept that God is always sovereign in His judgments against His people?*

Remarkably, Hezekiah honored the Lord in the face of all these obstacles. The king did what was right in the eyes of God. Throughout the Old Testament, this phrase was used in reference to godly kings, whereas ungodly kings were those who "did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD" (2 Chronicles 28:1).

- ⇒ *How can we know we are doing right in the eyes of God? Why should this be the desire of our hearts as believers?*

The narrator also says that Hezekiah acted "according to all that David his father had done." David was used as the standard by which other kings were compared since David was one who was known as "a man after God's own heart." In Judah, some kings were like David, and many were not. Obviously, this does not mean that these "good" kings were sinless, since even David sinned. What set these good kings apart was genuine repentance and love for the Lord. They did not worship and serve false gods like the people often did.

Hezekiah was a gracious gift from God in the midst of turbulent years. Many of the kings before him did well but tolerated a form of unsanctioned worship. Hezekiah, however, walked in remarkable obedience to the Lord. Since Hezekiah was the king, he could do more than merely avoid worshiping false gods; he could make it difficult for the people to do so as well by destroying their sites of false worship. He tore down the high places where they worshiped idols and shattered the pillars and poles they raised in adoration of false gods.

- ⇒ *Discuss this statement: Hezekiah removed all objects of false worship. The act of removal is at the heart of Christian worship. In worship we direct our hearts toward God and we direct them away from false gods that we are tempted to worship in His place.*
- ⇒ *What idols or false worship do you need to remove from your own life so that you may walk with the Lord more faithfully?*

Hezekiah did not simply provide lip-service and tell the people to stay away from idols. Rather, he removed them entirely, even destroying the bronze snake that Moses raised in the wilderness. In Numbers 21:4-9, God punished the wilderness generation for their constant complaining by sending venomous snakes to kill the people. But He also provided a way of escape. God instructed Moses to fashion a bronze snake and place it on a pole. Any who were bitten could look to the snake on the pole for healing. God's people had preserved the bronze serpent from the wilderness for almost seven hundred years. No doubt it had served as a reminder of God's mercy to heal those who had been bitten by poisonous snakes because of their sin. Yet this symbol of God's mercy had become an object of false worship.

⇒ *As Hezekiah did, why is it vital to understand that even the good gifts given to us by God can lead us astray when we allow them to usurp His rightful place in our lives?*

**2 King 18:5-6:** <sup>5</sup> *He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. <sup>6</sup> For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses.*

Hezekiah eliminated idols in Judah because he trusted God alone. His reliance on God was so remarkable that no other king of Judah could compare to Hezekiah. Relying on God was a key factor missing from the evil kings—they relied on alliances with pagan nations and their worship of false gods.

Hezekiah knew the law of the Lord, and he was blessed to receive the prophet Isaiah's counsel when the Assyrians—who had just exiled the Northern Kingdom of Israel—threatened the people of Judah (2 Kings 18:13–19:37). Hezekiah understood that the people of Israel were exiled because they turned away from God. Hezekiah's faithfulness as king blessed the people of Judah (1 Kings 18:7-8) and delayed their own exile to Babylon by several decades.

- ⇒ *Who has been a faithful, godly leader in your life, and how has their leadership blessed you?*
- ⇒ *Christians today can sometimes view the historical books in the Old Testament as boring, confusing, or even discouraging with the judgment God brought upon His people. Yet it is important to remember that all of God's Word is instructive for the Christian life. What encouragement do you find to stand firm in a secular world by reading about God's faithfulness to Hezekiah?*

Hezekiah relied on the Lord, which implies an ongoing posture of reliance and not merely a one-time action. This does not mean that every action Hezekiah did in those three decades was perfect but that the general disposition of his reign was marked by ongoing dependence on the Lord. Even more, verse 6 says that he remained faithful to the Lord and he did not turn to worship other gods. This ongoing obedience commended Hezekiah as a faithful king, distinct from all the other kings of Judah who came before and after him. Taken together, the acts of reliance and remaining lie at the heart of Christian worship. One is likely a catalyst for the other.

- ⇒ *Read Proverbs 3:5. This passage implies that it's either one or the other—you either rely on God or you rely on your own strength and understanding. Why is relying on God simply a far better way to live?*
- ⇒ *Why does self-reliance always come up short?*
- ⇒ *Are you relying on yourself or on God?*

## **2. Worshiping God includes knowing His Word that we may follow it.**

**2 Kings 22:1-2:** <sup>1</sup> *Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. <sup>2</sup> And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.*

Hezekiah, a righteous king, was followed by his son, Manasseh, whose sins were abundant. Manasseh undid all the good of Hezekiah and even sacrificed his own son. The evil perpetrated during his rule was the tipping point that guaranteed God's judgment against Judah (2 Kings 23:26-

27). Manasseh did exhibit repentance under God's punishment and made some significant reforms (2 Chronicles 33:10-16), but when his son, Amon, became king, all of those reforms were undone once again in favor of idol worship. Amon's assassination led to his son, Josiah, taking the throne when he was eight years old (2 Kings 21:19-24).

During his 31 year reign, Josiah was faithful to God and did what was right. As was often the case, the author used the imagery of someone walking with the Lord in order to portray someone who remained reliant and faithful to God. Using this imagery, the author described Josiah as focused on the path ahead, not deviating from it to the right or the left.

⇒ *How would you describe your current walk with the Lord?*

The rest of 2 Kings 22 outlines the secret to Josiah's faithfulness. Apparently the Word of God was being completely ignored during this time. Not only did the people not obey God, but they also couldn't even find the written record of God's Word in the temple (2 Kings 22:8). The Word of God was missing in the house of God. No wonder the people were giving themselves in worship to false gods time and again.

⇒ *What is the relationship between the Word of God and our obedience to and worship of the Lord?*

Josiah repaired God's temple, and while doing so, the priest Hilkiah found "the book of the law." At the hearing of God's Word, Josiah tore his clothes as a sign of repentance on behalf of his people. He understood immediately the judgment that rightly would come upon Judah because they had broken covenant with God. Josiah could have walked in the wicked ways of his father and grandfather, disobeying God's Word or ignoring it altogether, but he took God's Word seriously. Josiah clearly heard God's intentions for His people, and he knew he was reigning over a kingdom that had not been faithful to God's Word. Under Josiah's leadership, the people would commit to obedience to the Word they knew, had, and understood.

⇒ *Why is the Word of God the basis for walking faithfully with the Lord (Psalm 119:105)?*

⇒ *God's Word provided guidance for David and Josiah. How does it continue to light the path for you today?*

**2 Kings 23:1-3:** <sup>1</sup> Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. <sup>2</sup> And the king went up to the house of the Lord, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord. <sup>3</sup> And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.

Josiah did more than merely recover the Word of God and move on with business as usual. His actions at the start of 2 Kings 23 show that he was concerned about the people failing the covenant again. So he rallied the messengers and gathered the elders, who would instruct all of the people in God's Word. This is a reminder of two realities:

a. Leaders are important: Numerous types of leaders are mentioned here—the king, messengers, elders, priests, and prophets. We are not told what each of them did, but the king used each of them to rally the people around Scripture and challenge them to obedience. The same is true today of leaders in the church. God uses pastors to lead His people to hear and obey God's Word (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament, God raised up leaders to point His people to know and follow Him.

⇒ *How has God used a specific leader in your spiritual journey?*

⇒ *Who are some Hezekiahs and Josiahs in your own life? How has their faith impacted yours?*

b. All of God's people matter: The leaders in Josiah's day gathered "all the people, both small and great." It was important to Josiah that everyone heard the reading of God's Word. The older members of the community obviously had much for which to repent. The fact that they had lost the Word of God was an indication that they had neglected God's Word in their heart. These older Israelites would set the example for others to follow. The youngest also were called to listen to and heed God's words. Obviously these young members were more likely to have years to hear and obey God. They would also be tempted to do just what the previous generation had done in neglecting the covenant and losing the Scriptures.

⇒ *How have you seen God use "both small and great" through His Word?*

Josiah intentionally stood by a pillar of the temple, which was the site for holy worship. He reiterated the covenant promises Israel had made with God. This was not the first time Israel pledged to obey the Lord. God made His covenant with the people, and they responded to His activity by committing to obey God wholeheartedly (Exodus 24; Joshua 24).

The same happened again under Josiah's leadership. They made a covenant promise to God that they would again keep His law. Not only would they obey, but they would do so ardently. Typically, a covenant is an agreement between two parties to uphold certain terms. The Lord had already established the Mosaic covenant with Israel, which they had broken irrevocably. Here, Josiah led the people to renew their commitment to wholehearted obedience to the Lord and His Word.

This would forestall God's judgment for a time, but the people and subsequent kings would reject the Lord and fail to uphold their covenant promises. They eventually returned to rebellion and disobeyed God's law which led to His judgment on them.

⇒ *How does the Word of God convict us of our sin and leads us to humble ourselves before the Lord?*

⇒ *What areas of your life require a renewed commitment to the covenant God has created with you in Jesus?*

## **TRANSFORM**

Godly leadership isn't being a great speaker, having a charismatic personality, or holding a seminary degree. Rather, it is the overflow of a heart and mind yielded to the Lord and committed to worshiping Him in spirit and truth. The internal heart of worship from Hezekiah and Josiah overflowed in the worshipful actions of their lives and affected their nation. That should be how we all live. We should expect to see and encourage outward worship from ourselves and others, but we

must acknowledge that God desires hearts and minds fixed on Him and lives shaped by that commitment. With true worship of the Lord that is external and flowing from what is internal, we can impact everyone around us with a true picture of our great God.

1. HEAD: Obeying God's Word is a form of worship, and Josiah led Judah by sharing God's Word with them. When Josiah heard the law and learned God's wrath was impending, he responded appropriately with humility. His response may not look like worship to us, but any time we humble ourselves and mourn sin, we are acknowledging God's holiness.

⇒ *How can the knowledge and study of God's Word inform your worship?*

2. HEART: While we commonly think of idols as statues, real idolatry was in the hearts of the people of Judah. They often placed their own desires for sin above God's desire for our holiness. The correct response to conviction regarding idolatry is repentance and obedience to God. Both Hezekiah and Josiah led the people of Judah toward a humble response to God's holiness.

⇒ *Of what sins do you need to repent, and how will you combat the idolatry present in your life and seek the Lord first?*

3. HANDS: One amazing result of Hezekiah's and Josiah's acting according to God's will was the response of the people of Judah. Their leadership and willingness to follow the commands of God encouraged Judah to do the same. Glorifying God is the most important thing anyone can do, and many will be blessed when the people of God walk in obedience.

⇒ *How can you model the beautiful gift of repentance and obedience to people in your life?*

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