

GOALS FOR THE GROUP LEADER

Help the group members to see:

1. what the theocracy was during the Old Testament period
2. that the prophets, priests, judges and later kings were institutions of God, through which he exercised his kingship (rule) over his people on earth

I. WORSHIP (14 min.)

1. Prayer

Pray that God will guide us through his Spirit; that we will be aware of his presence and that we will listen to what he says.

2. Meditation

Worship is to submit yourself to God's kingship (leadership and wisdom).

Theme: God is our Leader

Read the Bible verses mentioned below and the explanation. Or explain the verses in your own words.

In this lesson we are going to use the words in the Bible concerning God himself to worship him. Let each group member take a turn to read one of these Bible verses and the group leader explains the verse. After reading and explaining all the Bible verses let each group member pray a short prayer worshipping God with the words said about God (There are 8 Bible verses for 8 group members)

Psalm 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Proverbs 1:22-28

²² "How long will you simple ones (denotes one without moral direction and inclined to evil) love your simple ways?

How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?

²³ If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you.

²⁴ But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, ²⁵ since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, ²⁶ I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you- ²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. ²⁸ "Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me.

Proverbs 11:14

For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.

Isaiah 8:19-20

¹⁹ When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.

Isaiah 30:1-2

¹ "Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; ² who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge.

John 16:13

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

3. Worship

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to worship God (in one or two sentences) as his Leader.

II. INTRODUCTION THEME (1 min.)

The theme for this meeting is: **The theocracy**

Read or explain in your own words

'Theocracy' means the reign (rule) of God over his people by means of earthly servants (instituted officials) like prophets, priests, judges and later kings. These leaders were servants and they needed one another!

1. **The prophets** spoke in dependence of God who reigned in sovereignty. Their task was to reveal God's will to the kings, priests, the people and even false prophets. They spoke with God's authority and their words were recorded in the Old Testament (cf. the moral law).

2. **The kings** ruled in dependence of God who reigned in sovereignty. Their task was to rule over God's people with justice and righteousness, that is, in accordance with God's words (cf. the civil law). They especially had to combat against idolatry, corruption and oppression.

3. **The priests** served in dependence of God who reigned in sovereignty. Their task was to worship and serve God and to teach God's people how to approach, worship and serve God in accordance with God's words (cf. the ceremonial law).

III. SHARING OF QUIET TIMES (30 min.)

Let everyone in the small group take a turn to share (or read) what he has learned from one of the assigned quiet times.

Theme: The period of kings in Israel

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| Day 1 | 1 Samuel 8:1-22
Israel rejects God as King by asking for a king |
| Day 2 | 1 Samuel 12:1-25
Samuel's farewell speech as judge of Israel |
| Day 3 | 1 Chronicles 17:1-14
God's covenant promise to David |
| Day 4 | 2 Samuel 11:1 – 12:25
King David (1011 – 971 B.C.):
sin and forgiveness |
| Day 5 | 2 Chronicles 20:1-23
King Jehoshaphat (870 – 846 B.C.):
may look on how God conquers |
| Day 6 ^{BS} | 2 Chronicles 26:1-23
King Uzziah (768 – 750 B.C.):
a good beginning, but a bad end |
| Day 7 | 2 Kings 17:1-34
The end of the northern kingdom of Israel
(722 – 721 B.C.) |
| Day 8 ^{BS} | 2 Chronicles 33:1-20
King Manasseh (685 – 641 B.C.):
a bad beginning, but a good end |

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| Day 9 | 2 Kings 23:1-25
King Josiah (638 – 608 B.C.):
takes measures against idol worship |
| Day 10 | 2 Kings 24:1 – 25:26
The end of the southern kingdom of Judah
(605 – 586 B.C.) |

IV. ADDITIONAL SHARING (15 min.)

Part IV is optional.
If after sharing quiet times there is still time left over, the following may serve as subjects for conversation.

1. Discussing the study

Discuss the study with reference to the questions mentioned below:

Theme: The third continuous theme in the Old Testament: the theocracy

- What is a theocracy?
- What were the tasks of the prophets in the Old Testament theocracy?
- What were the tasks of the priests in the Old Testament theocracy?
- What were the tasks of the kings in the Old Testament theocracy?
- What was the difference between the theocratic kingdom of Saul and that of David?
- How did Jesus Christ establish the true theocracy at his first coming?

2. Commitment

Let the group members consider the following question and record their answer:

- "To what extent is Jesus Christ *your* perfect Prophet (who reveals God's words to you), your High Priest (who intercedes for you and represents you in the presence of God) and your King (who directs your daily life)?"

3. Personal sharing

Discuss personal growth and commitment. Who would like to share a difficulty or blessing in his/her personal life? What are your thoughts or feelings?

V. MEMORISATION (5 min.)

1. Review previous Bible verses

Let pairs of group members review each other's previously memorised Bible verses (the last memorised Bible verse or the last 5 memorised Bible verses).

2. Memorisation of the new Bible verse

Explain the meaning of the new Bible verse.

THE THEOCRACY Acts 13:22b

I have found David son of Jesse
a man after my own heart;
he will do everything I want him to do.

Acts 13:22b (NIV)

3. Memorisation of the Bible books

The 5 books of the Law:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy,

The 12 historical books:

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings,
1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

VI. BIBLE STUDY (45 min.)

Theme: A comparison between two kings

1. Bible Study

Make use of the 5 step Bible Study method and study:

2 Chronicles 26:1-23 and 2 Chronicles 33:1-20

2 Chronicles 26

¹ Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah (Azariah), who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah. ² He was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his fathers.

³ Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jecoliah; she was from Jerusalem. ⁴ He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear (or vision) of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.

⁶ He went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod. He then rebuilt towns near Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines.

⁷ God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabs who lived in Gur Baal and against the Meunites. ⁸ The Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful.

⁹ Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall, and he fortified them. ¹⁰ He also built towers in the desert and dug many cisterns, because he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain. He had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.

¹¹ Uzziah had a well-trained army, ready to go out by divisions according to their numbers as mustered by Jeiel the secretary and Maaseiah the officer under the direction of Hananiah, one of the royal officials. ¹² The total number of family leaders over the fighting men was 2,600. ¹³ Under their command was an army of 307,500 men trained for war, a powerful force to support the king against his enemies. ¹⁴ Uzziah provided shields, spears, helmets, coats of armour, bows and sling stones for the entire army. ¹⁵ In Jerusalem he made machines designed by skilful men for use on the towers and on the corner defences to shoot arrows and hurl large stones. His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.

¹⁶ But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. ¹⁷ Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in. ¹⁸ They confronted him and said, "It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honoured by the LORD God."

¹⁹ Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the LORD's temple, leprosy (or some kind of skin disease) broke out on his forehead. ²⁰ When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the LORD had afflicted him.

²¹ King Uzziah had leprosy until the Day he died. He lived in a separate house (or: in a house where he was relieved of his responsibilities) —leprosy, and excluded from the temple of the LORD. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.

²² The other events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

²³ Uzziah rested with his fathers and was buried near them in a field for burial that belonged to the kings, for people said, "He had leprosy." And Jotham his son succeeded him as king.

2 Chronicles 33

¹ Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. ² He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. ³ He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he also erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. ⁴ He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever." ⁵ In both courts

of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. ⁶ He sacrificed his sons in (or: he made his sons pass through) 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, provoking him to anger. ⁷ He took the carved image he had made and put it in God's temple, of which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. ⁸ I will not again make the feet of the Israelites leave the land I assigned to your forefathers, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them concerning all the laws, decrees and ordinances given through Moses." ⁹ But Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites. ¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. ¹¹ So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. ¹² In his distress he sought the favour of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ¹³ 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. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God. ¹⁴ Afterward he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah. ¹⁵ He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the LORD, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. ¹⁶ Then he restored the altar of the LORD and sacrificed fellowship offerings (traditionally *peace offerings*) and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁷ The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God. ¹⁸ The other events of Manasseh's reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel (i.e. Judah) ¹⁹ His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself—all are written in the records of the seers. ²⁰ Manasseh rested with his fathers and was buried in his palace. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

2. Emphasis

Uzziah

- 26:4. Uzziah did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done (not wholeheartedly)! (*read* 2 Chronicles 25:2)
- 26:5. Uzziah had no personal spiritual convictions, but depended on the convictions of his teacher.
- 26:15-16. Uzziah was a very successful king, as long as God helped him. But when he became powerful, he became proud and unfaithful to God.
- 26:18-19. Uzziah refused to listen to the good advice of the spiritual leaders with the result that God judged him.
- 26:20-23. Uzziah was excluded from God's house (the temple), from the community and from his life-task.

A good beginning, but a bad end

Manasseh

- 33:2-6. Manasseh did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD following the detestable practices of the Canaanite nations – idolatry and occultism.
- 33:9. Manasseh led Judah astray so that they did more evil than the Canaanite nations.
- 33:12-13. Manasseh was punished by God. In his distress he sought God, humbled himself before God and God restored his kingship.
- 33:15-16. Manasseh got rid of the foreign gods and removed the idols from the temple. He told Judah to serve the LORD. He produced fruit in keeping with his repentance.

A bad beginning, but a good end

3. Explanation for the group leader

Dates of the kings:

King Uzziah 788-737 B.C.

King Manasseh 685-641 B.C.

33:13. "The LORD was moved by his entreaty".

Compare 'God's grief' in Genesis 6:6 (lesson 5) and 'God's relenting' in Jeremiah 18:5-10. God's eternal decrees (decisions) with respect to his promises and threats takes the reactions of people to him into account.

God's relenting can mean the following:

- *God's relenting is God's merciful and gracious response to people who repent and submit to him (cf. Manasseh)*

When people repent, God in loving mercy will change his decision and not carry out his threat to destroy (Jeremiah 18:7-8). He will abandon the judgement he previously announced.

- *God's relenting is God's holy and righteous response to people who persist in sin and evil (cf. Uzziah)*

When people remain disobedient, God in holy indignation (and pain in his heart) will change his decision and not fulfil his promise to build up (Jeremiah 18:9-10). He will abandon the good he previously promised).

God' holy and righteous character and his eternal decree nevertheless hold man responsible for his actions (Jeremiah 26:3,13; cf. Ezechiel 18:21-24). God's promises and threats (to Israel and to Christians) are conditional.

VII. PRAYER (8 min.)

Pray with one another in response to what God said to you during this gathering. Let every group member take a turn to pray one or two sentences about what God taught him during this meeting.

Pray with one another for one another (Romans 15:30) and for other people (Colossians 4:12).

VIII. THE NEXT MEETING (2 min.)

Hand out the preparation for the next gathering.