

# Leader guide

## In this lesson:

### SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 13

### CORE BELIEF: THE BIBLE

The Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17): We believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God, and the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct. take home truth

### TAKE HOME TRUTH

"In both mercy and judgment, God's Word will stand when all else is proven false."

For more resources related to this series visit [www.ffcgroups.com](http://www.ffcgroups.com)

## The Parable of Two Prophets



### OVERVIEW

I love the show Dirty Jobs with Mike Rowe. Some of the situations Mike finds himself in make me fully appreciate the work I do.

This week, we are going to look at a deadly job in the Bible...that of a prophet. Much of the last part of the Old Testament records the words and interactions of God's prophets with the kings and people of Israel and Judah. They had a tough job. The news they brought was often not good news, and the criticism they leveled from God was both personal and painful. They were beaten, chased, hounded, and killed.

This week we will meet a young prophet simply identified as "the man of God from Judah." We don't know his name, his family, or anything else about him, except that he was sent by God to speak truth to a powerful, evil King Jeroboam of Israel.

Like many prophets, his mission of mercy sent by God ended up costing him his life, but with a twist. In his obedience, he fell for one of the oldest tricks in the book (Genesis 3:1), and listened when an old prophet caused him to question the word of God.

In this week’s lesson, we will learn the sober fact that we, too, must deal with old lying prophets in the church who seek to lead us away from the truth of the revealed Word of God. The young prophet in our text failed in the discernment test. How about us? Can we learn to be discerning when an old prophet challenges us with, “did God really say...”?

**MEMORY VERSE FOR THIS WEEK**

2 John 6 – This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Who was your most outrageous teacher in high school or college? What made that teacher different from others?**

**Did you agree with what he or she was teaching? How did you evaluate his or her material?**

**Looking back at your notes from this week’s sermon, was there anything that particularly caught your attention, challenged or confused you?**

*Make sure you ask this question this week. It gives people the opportunity to discuss questions or issues that come up beyond the written questions. People’s responses can often lead into one of the questions in the “Digging Deeper” section. Also, some weeks this question will result in a lot of discussion, other weeks, not so much.*

**READ THE TEXT**

This is the story of two prophets, one a true “man of God from Judah,” and the other, an old false prophet from Israel. This is also a sad story. In spite of knowing the word of God, the young man from Judah is deceived by the false prophet of Israel, and his disobedience cost him his life. There’s only one word that matters—God’s! And disobedience to that word carries a steep price. Read 1 Kings 13.

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**DIGGING DEEPER**

*In this section, feel free to develop your own questions to help guide your group's discussion. Below are some suggestions. Remember, if you are hearing from everyone in your group, chances are you won't have time to discuss every question. You may start with one that catches your attention so you don't run out of time. For example, it's not odd to start with Question #6, then go to Question #5 and if you have time come back to Question #4.*

**Understanding the context: what is happening in 1 Kings 13?**

*In 1 Kings 12, we learned about the division of Israel. The northern ten tribes became known as Israel and were ruled by King Jeroboam, a servant of Solomon, and the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin became known as Judah and were ruled by Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.*

*To give Israel a national identity apart from Judah, Jeroboam needed to establish a new center of worship apart from Jerusalem. He chose Bethel as the city to build a place of worship. Moreover, he altered the calendar a bit to give Israel separate religious holidays from Judah and even changed some of the religious practices so that the people of Israel could begin to establish their own traditions and customs rather than look to Judah. To give identity to these new practices, Jeroboam chose men to serve as priests in his new religion and identified two bulls, a common pagan symbol of a deity at that time, as representations of "the gods who brought you up out of Egypt" (1 Kings 12:28). He did all of this based on the advice of counselors (v. 28).*

*Politically, these were solid decisions. In God's eyes, however, Jeroboam transgressed against the word of the Lord. Over the history of Israel, we will see that the decisions Jeroboam made to give Israel a national identity apart from Judah sowed the seeds of destruction as the people of Israel slowly drifted into idolatry and false worship.*

*Before we are too quick to judge Jeroboam, we need to understand that from a human perspective, his actions make complete sense. His motivation was to give Israel a new identity apart from Judah, which required making some subtle changes to how Israel worshipped. As we will see, even today we are too quick to alter how we worship God to be politically expedient. This is called pragmatism, and pragmatism has always been an effective tool of the devil.*

**Who is the "man of God from Judah" and what is the purpose of his mission?**

*1 Kings 13 begins by introducing us to an anonymous prophet simply known as "the man of God from Judah." Keep in mind that Judah is now a different nation than Israel, and the message this man of God brings is contrary the religious reform Jeroboam has worked to establish. It is difficult at any time to speak truth to power, but in this case, he also represents a bitter foreign rival. You can imagine the reception he had when he introduced himself to Jeroboam.*

*We find ourselves at the dedication ceremony of one of the new places of worship in Israel. Jeroboam is getting ready to offer the first sacrifice on the altar to one of two bulls representing their newly minted gods. Jeroboam is ready to offer incense when the voice of the prophet cries out from the crowd. As he speaks, you can imagine the king's security guard quickly*

encircling the young prophet and the crowd backing away in fear. You know what it is like when a protester begins to yell during a political leader's rally. It raises the tension in the room to a high level.

The young prophet's words are short and to the point. Speaking to the altar, the man of God prophesies that an heir of David's not yet born will who shall be named Josiah will sacrifice the false priests of Israel on this altar and will even dig up the bones of the previous generations of false priests and burn them upon the altar. As a sign that this is the Word of the Lord, the altar will be split apart."

As he is speaking, Jeroboam gives the order to arrest the man of God. As he points to the prophet, Jeroboam's hand withers and dies in front of the crowd gathered. Sign number one.

Whoops.

Here is a simple piece of advice: if someone is sharing with you a word from the Lord, and you challenge the authenticity of that word, and a body part immediately shrivels up and dies, you might want to reconsider your gut instinct. Maybe, just maybe, this really is the word of the Lord. Unfortunately for Jeroboam, this wasn't a consideration.

To continue, seeing his hand shriveled and dead, Jeroboam does what anyone would do if they thought they were talking to a false prophet, ask him to intercede with the Lord to heal his hand. The man of God does, and immediately, Jeroboam's hand is healed. Sign number two.

**Why did the man of God not eat with Jeroboam when it a meal was offered?**

After healing his hand, Jeroboam has a change of heart and decides to invite the prophet for dinner. The prophet is in no mood to eat with the king. Why? Because the Lord specifically instructed him not to eat or drink while he is in the land of Israel.

Why? At this time, eating a meal with someone was considered a form of fellowship and even could be considered a part of creating a covenant. (Remember, the New Covenant was instituted during a meal.) The man of God was to give no ground to Jeroboam in the matter of his religious apostasy. The Lord wanted the line of separation to be clear: God's man would have no fellowship with idolaters.

**Who is the old prophet from Israel, and why is he important to the story?**

Starting in 1 Kings 13:11, the story shifts to an old prophet from Bethel. The context implies that this "certain old prophet" had at one time been a faithful spokesman for the true God. Perhaps he had been trained in one of Samuel's schools of the prophets. But now he acted as an enemy of God and of the truth.

This underscores the level of apostasy in Israel at this time. The people had drifted so far from God that he had to send a prophet from Judah to speak truth in Israel, for there were no more true prophets of God in Israel.

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

## NOTES

*It's difficult to discern the old prophet's motives. We don't know if he simply wanted fellowship with a brother prophet or if he had mischievous motives in mind. The point is, when the old prophet heard a fellow prophet had spoken in Bethel (the old prophet's hometown), he wanted to meet this guy. He saddles his donkey and takes off after the man of God from Judah.*

*When he catches up with him, he invites the young prophet home for a meal. Again, the man of God informs his potential host that he has been instructed by God to not fellowship with anyone in Israel, but the old prophet counters with a word from the Lord himself: the young prophet IS to eat with him and enjoy fellowship.*

*The text makes it clear the old prophet is lying (v. 18).*

*Unfortunately, for the young man of God, he listens to the old prophet and joins him for lunch. While he's eating, the old prophet suddenly begins to speak:*

*"Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the Lord said to you, "Eat no bread and drink no water," your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.' " - 1 Kings 13:21-22*

*Whoops.*

### **How did the man of God from Judah violate God's Word, and why is this important?**

*As we stated earlier, God had given the young prophet clear instructions to not fellowship with anyone in the land of Israel. He was to draw a clear and hard line of separation with the idolaters.*

*By accepting a meal from the old prophet, the young prophet violated God's word. The consequences for him were death.*

*The principle here is obvious: when we violate the clear, specific word of God, we sin against God. The sin of the man of God here was very much like that of Adam and Eve. In each case, the subjects knew God's will but deliberately acted contrary to it. That is sin. Jesus, on the other hand, is our example of one who knew God's words and refused to budge from them (Matthew 4:1-11).*

### **What applications can we draw from this story in the Old Testament for today's Christian?**

*One of Satan's deadliest tactics is to use the voice of a friendly prophet to deceive us. We have our guard up when it is the voice of an evil king, but when a fellow believer assures us something is God's will when we know it is not, we fall prey to the devil's deception and pay the consequences.*

*As long as there have been prophets and teachers, there have been false prophets and false teachers. We deal with the latter today.*

Some of the greatest dangers for the church today continue to come from within the church. The apostle John writes that many antichrists “went out from us, but they did not really belong to us” (1 John 2:19).

In fact, as we see illustrated in this week’s text, one of the deadliest poisons the devil can concoct is to mix political pragmatism with religious zeal. When political authorities oppose the church, persecution often has the reverse effect: to drive the church underground and make it even stronger. We have witnessed this in countries like China, where the church is blossoming under a state that openly opposes the church. A much more effective means of silencing the church is through influence. Rather than persecute the church and its leaders, simply place friendly voices of support within the church and watch the people follow.

Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in Nazi Germany. When the Nazis came to power, the church stood as a formidable opponent to their doctrine of antisemitism and mass murder. Remember, this was not the land of pagans and heathens, but a country and culture that had given us Luther and Protestantism.

The most effective instrument the Nazis used to silence the church and bring it into submission was the church itself. The German Christian movement would eventually form The German Evangelical Church, which was in lock step with the Nazis. The Reich Bishop, Ludwig Müller, moved bring “Christian” doctrine in line with Nazi doctrine, which included purifying the Christian gospel from Jewish corruption. (For a more in-depth understanding of the German Christian Movement during the Third Reich, you can read a book review on my website of Twisted Cross by Doris Bergen.



As Christians, we need to be aware that a compliant church is a treasured jewel in the crown of a corrupt leader. There is always going to be pressure to comply, but our loyalty is to the Word of God, not to man’s desire for power and influence.

This can place us in uncomfortable positions many times. The voices of compromise are all around us. Influential “Christian” writers and pastors are encouraging the church to compromise on issues ranging from homosexuality, gender identity, abortion, and even the gospel itself. Christians tend to bristle when Bernie Sanders declares a Christian man unfit for government service because the Christian insists that Jesus is the only way to salvation, but often embrace Rob Bell, one of us, who declares there is no hell, and in the end, love wins. In the end, which one does more damage to the Church? Bernie Sanders or Rob Bell?

## NOTES

One of the greatest tools in the strong, growing Christians toolbox is discernment. We must be able to tell truth from error. It is too easy to stand in strong opposition to the godless political leader who is criticizing our beliefs, then fall prey to the kind words of a fellow "prophet" inviting us to dinner to "just ask a few questions" about what the Bible says.

### How can we discern a true prophet from a false prophet?

False prophets and false teachers are not a new phenomenon in the church. The Apostles addressed the need for discernment in many of their epistles. Paul, especially, in Titus 1 gives us some clear signs to look for in a false teacher:

*10 For there are many rebellious people, full of empty talk and deception, especially those from the circumcision party. 11 It is necessary to silence them; they are ruining entire households by teaching what they shouldn't in order to get money dishonestly. 12 One of their very own prophets said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13 This testimony is true. For this reason, rebuke them sharply, so that they may be sound in the faith 14 and may not pay attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people who reject the truth. 15 To the pure, everything is pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; in fact, both their mind and conscience are defiled. 16 They claim to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work.*  
- Titus 1:10-16

What are the signs we need to look for?

- 1. They oppose the revealed truth found in the word of God (v.10-12).** Like the old prophet in our text this week, a false prophet today will "reapply" or "reinterpret" the revealed word of truth found in Scripture.
- 2. They must be rebuked (v.13-14).** Don't have fellowship with them (Eph. 5:11), instead rebuke them, so their heresy does not take root in a church. If a pedophile was approaching your son or daughter, you wouldn't approach him and say, "Kindly leave my children alone." You would take hold of your child to protect her and sternly warn the pedophile that if he ever approached your child again, you would call the police. So it is in the church. Remember, we are dealing with wolves, not misguided sheep (Matt. 7:15).
- 3. They are impure—totally (v.15).** A false teacher is an unbeliever, and they believe they have found a new way, a different, a more acceptable way to find righteousness before the Lord. They find the righteousness of Christ to be too simple, too limiting, or too hateful/discriminating. They will seek to broaden the gospel and find ways to make it more appealing to our culture. Their motivation is often self-serving, even if it is shrouded in humility and piety. They value influence and acceptance with the world more than strict adherence to the Bible.
- 4. They make a profession that they know God, but their works deny God (v.16).** This is perhaps the most revealing. They profess to know God, but their works, and often their words, deny God.

As we have learned in this lesson, a false prophet/teacher will counter what the word of God teaches. As the man of God from Judah, we know the revealed word of God as spoken in Scripture. We know what God expects from His people and what He forbids. There are many who will try and persuade us with their own interpretation that we have it all wrong, that when God's word says X, it means Y. That is a trap of the devil.

We close this week with a word of counsel from the Apostle John on this very topic. In his first epistle, John writes,

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* – 1 John 4:1-6.

## BECOMING A HOUSE OF PRAYER

*“Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices; Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” – Isaiah 56:7.*

### Prayer Focus for the Week of March 18

Close your time by praying for people in your life and community who are caught up in false teaching. Pray for God to put a hedge of protection around our church. Pray that His Word would continue to be taught and that false teaching would be handled swiftly. Pray for any specific requests your group has for family members or friends who need to escape false teaching.

## NEXT STEPS

Questions to consider as you continue to reflect on what you learned this week:

- **Take Action:** To discern truth from error, you must know the truth. Be sure to spend time every day in the word of God, even if it is just taking the time to read a single chapter. Knowing God’s word is the surest way to guard against the trickery of false teachers.
- **Take Courage:** In our day of social media and 24/7 “news,” it can seem like there is false teaching around every corner. When you feel discouraged, remember John 16:33 - “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Work to memorize this week’s memory verse: 2 John 6 - This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

This week’s Core Belief is The Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17): We believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God, and the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct.





over to the Lord’s Table center on people eating together. The prophet did not want his act of mercy to suggest that God accepted Jeroboam’s deviant worship.

Jeroboam’s invitation may have been designed to serve a twofold purpose: it may have been in the nature of an apology for attempting arrest, and it may have been a device for warding off or at least softening the judgment pronounced upon the royal household.

13:10 Returning home by a different route would have further illustrated the official nature of the prophet’s visit; this was not a pleasure trip, but he was in Bethel on business for God. So far so good: the prophet had obeyed God faithfully up to this point.

13:11 A second prophet was living in Bethel and was old. This man’s complacency is further suggested by his willingness not only to live in the territory of the apostate king but at the very center of the king’s false system of worship.

What the king, with all his riches, fame, and glory, could not accomplish in the life of the man of God, a believer obviously not having “the mind of the Spirit,” was now able to accomplish. The sons of the old prophet at Bethel told their father about the prophecy that had been made against Jeroboam.

13:18 The old prophet was clearly an apostate. He had not spoken against Jeroboam; instead, he boldly lied to the Lord’s true prophet.

This circuitous mode of speaking, instead of simply saying, “the LORD spake to me,” was adopted to hide an equivocation, to conceal a double meaning—an inferior sense given to the word “angel”—to offer a seemingly superior authority to persuade the prophet, while really the authority was secretly known to the speaker to be inferior.

The “angel,” that is, “messenger,” was his own sons, who were worshippers, perhaps priests, at Beth-el.

As this man was governed by self-interest, and wished to curry favor with the king (whose purpose to adhere to his religious polity, he feared, might be shaken by the portents that had occurred), his hastening after the prophet of Judah, the deception he practiced, and the urgent invitation by which, on the ground of a falsehood, he prevailed on the too facile man of God to accompany him back to his house in Beth-el, may have been to create an impression in the king’s mind that he was an impostor, who acted in opposition to his own statement.

A practical lesson to be learned is that the advice of other men, no matter if they are Christian friends, should not be substituted for the clear call of duty within our own hearts.

13:19 So the prophet of Judah, not suspecting that the old prophet was lying to him returned to Bethel and ate with him.

The apostasy of Jeroboam had infected even an old prophet who seems to have had the same selfish motives and practiced the same brazen disobedience as the king. The spirit of apostasy was spreading quickly and was already reaping a grim harvest in Israel.

13:20 The prophet who had been willing to assume the role of the tempter, now, by God’s urgency, assumed the more difficult role of the announcer of punishment. Even though the old prophet had sinned, the word of the

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

## NOTES

LORD came to him again, as it did to many other prophets of the Lord who sinned (e.g., Jonah, Elijah).

13:22 The severity of God's judgment on this man, compared with His dealings with the older prophet who was also disobedient, seems unfair. But the severity of God's judgment was proportionate to the importance of the younger man's mission. All Israel would have heard about his prophecy of God's judgment on Jeroboam for his disobedience to the word of the Lord through Moses. If God had not judged His own prophet for his disobedience to the word given him by God and which he had announced publicly, doubt would have been cast on his prophecy and on God's credibility. By comparison the older prophet's sins were private and were judged privately by God.

13:24 Lions still prowled the forest around Bethel and once in a while accosted an unwary traveler (cf. Judg 14:5). However, in order that it might be known that this was indeed a supernatural judgment and not simply an unfortunate accident, the lion, after slaying the prophet, did not harm or tear his body, nor did he even kill the meek donkey upon which the prophet had been riding, but calmly stood at attention, as if by divine arrest.

13:26 Though the lying prophet suffered no corporeal punishment, his pangs of conscience must have been severe when he realized that he had brought about the death of a man by urging him to pursue a course of disobedience.

13:31 The old prophet was brought back to biblical faith at the sight of the death of the true prophet from Judah. The true but disobedient prophet had paid a terrible price for his disobedience to what he knew to be the word of God (vv. 20–24).

13:32 He was convinced the prophecy about Josiah would come to pass (cf. v. 2). This story clarifies the importance of consistent and complete obedience to the Word of God, the lesson God was seeking to impress on Jeroboam and His people at that time. It also illustrates that added privilege brings increased responsibility; God dealt with the prophet who had the greater responsibility more severely than he did with the man who had less. The effects of spiritual apostasy even on God's servants can be seen too, especially in the behavior of the older prophet.

13:34 The root spiritual cause of the declension and final fall of the house of Jeroboam is given here. Various political and sociological conditions, and even international relations, might be cited as reasons for the destruction of Jeroboam's line. Nevertheless, the destruction stemmed directly from the king's disobedience to the command of the holy God. Therefore, we judge those scholars to be wrong who excuse, if not defend, Jeroboam's calf worship on the ground that he was simply worshiping the true God of Israel in another fashion..

### COMING DATES THIS SPRING

03/25/2018 - Palm Sunday

03/30/2018 - Good Friday

04/01/2018 - Easter Sunday (No Groups)

05/13/2018 - Mother's Day