



# THE STORY *continues...*

*Join us each week as God weaves His Story into the fabric  
of our daily lives.*

Chapter 17 The Kingdom's Fall

## **L**isten to *The Story*

### **Read Chapter 17 of The Story**

722 BC was a terrible year for the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Assyria, after many years of pressuring the north, finally moved into the capital city of Samaria, destroying any remaining defenses. Under the reign of Sargon, the Assyrians began an efficient and effective deportation of those who remained, effectively eliminating the 10 northern tribes of Israel.

586 BC was yet another infamous year. God's people in the Southern Kingdom would never forget. As you read the final years leading up to Jerusalem's fall, ask yourself:

- How is God's idea of the "kingdom" different than ours?

What hope is there for God's people both then and now?(See pages 246-247)

## **L**earn *The Story*

*Look for ways in which God's story and your story  
connect this week.*

There is a radical moment in the story of King Josiah. At the end of his reign, a reign marked by service to God and the people, Josiah is confronted with God's voice coming from an unforeseen place, the mouth of his enemy, Pharaoh Neco.

We get so focused on *The Story* being about Israel that we forget God's bigger story is to bless all those whom Israel encounters. This means God's plan for redemption is for all people. God isn't only willing to save *all* people, He's willing *to use all* people as His instruments to bring about His will. In the case of Pharaoh Neco, God uses an enemy of Israel to bring about His will in Josiah, even though Josiah doesn't want to listen.

- What is God teaching you through those around you who are not yet part of God's family?
- How does God regularly teach and shape His Church through the positive things we see in the world around us, even though many of our friends and neighbors don't yet believe in God?

Can you find other times in scripture that God uses the "unbeliever" to shape and guide His people?

## **L**ove *The Story*

*Intentionally take a step forward in faith.*

Lesson 17 introduces us to Ezekiel and Jeremiah. The writings of the prophets are never easy to understand. Even when the point seems plain, it's often presented in a way that makes us wonder if we truly understand. This week:

Commit yourself to understanding one of the many significant passages found in Jeremiah or Ezekiel.

Seek conversation with a fellow Christian in order to better understand those passages you have come across.

## Luther's Explanation

The book of Lamentations has been attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, who is articulating the pain experienced in response to the catastrophe of the collapse of Judah (the Southern Kingdom.)

Lamentations contains five poems that weep over the destruction of Jerusalem and her people in 587 B.C.E. Lamentations demonstrates that, for the believer, things like sadness, mourning, and grief, as well as a sense of abandonment by God, coupled with a trusting hope in God are all in the range of normal.

Martin Luther reminds us that "God stands hidden among the sufferings which would separate us from him like a wall... And yet he looks upon me and does not forsake me. He stands there and is ready to help me in grace, and through the window of dim faith he permits himself to be seen."



When the apostles cried out to Jesus, "Increase our faith," Jesus assured them that even the tiniest faith can accomplish remarkable things. Like the author of Lamentations, and like the apostles, we might feel like our faith in the power of God through Jesus Christ is weak. But God's presence in our lives is anything but weak. God will grant us the strength we need.

Gracious and loving God, I believe! Help my unbelief! Increase my faith in you, in Jesus' name, Amen.

## PROMISE

This week, cling to God's promise for you:

"My love for you cannot be measured.  
It has no beginning, and it never ends."

## The EXTRA Mile



Look for symbols around your house that show that your faith is an important part of your life. Where did you find the symbols and why are they important to your household? When you step outside your home...how do others know your faith is an important part of your life?