

# FASCINATING STORIES OF FORGOTTEN LIVES

## STUDY TEN

### Rehoboam: The Reckless Phony

*1 Kings 12:1–16*

*Rehoboam learned to live a sham in public, all the while nurturing—behind the scenes, away from the camera—a phony, failing, dark, ungodly life.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll



To deepen your study, scan to listen.

It was the early 1970s. An illusionist and self-proclaimed psychic named Uri Geller burst onto European and American television, becoming an immediate celebrity. His fame skyrocketed. It seemed as if the laws of Newtonian physics simply didn't apply to him. With rare psychokinetic power—he claimed—he needed only intense concentration on metal objects such as spoons, nails, and keys . . . to bend them! Astounding.

What's more, Geller mesmerized onlookers with additional feats of his supposed paranormal gift. Convincing watches to run faster. Compelling clocks to stop. Duplicating hidden drawings. The world had surely discovered an unusual, hidden, human phenomenon.

His act, however, was a fake. It was fool's gold. All smoke and mirrors. Quickly met with skepticism from the scientific community and from fellow illusionists, the man was exposed as a fraud. All his amazing acts were sleight of hand, a ruse. No psychokinetic power, no suspension of the laws of gravity.

Much like Uri Geller, King Solomon's son, Rehoboam was a royal phony. He showed off his spirituality in public, yet, under the surface, he lived a reckless and godless private reality. He came by his phoniness somewhat naturally, from his father, whose own veneer of godliness hid a spiritually divided heart.

This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study details Rehoboam's hypocrisy—which led to personal, family, and public tragedy. It prompted the removal of God's protective hand over His people and set in motion a civil war that split the nation for generations.



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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

As you open the Scriptures, pray the psalmist's call to honesty in [Psalm 119:101–104](#), and express your own prayer for integrity in the space below.



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Solomon, the son of David, was wealthy beyond imagination and supremely wise. He authored most of Proverbs, which Rehoboam must have studied in his youth. But against God's better plan for him, Solomon took hundreds of foreign, *pagan women*—and their *pagan gods*—in marriage, and he built temples to their gods in Jerusalem. God warned His people not to marry Canaanites, “because they will turn your hearts to their gods” (1 Kings 11:2). Yet, Solomon married them anyway, and “they did turn his heart away from the LORD” (11:3).

Rehoboam's young eyes saw his father's decadent, compromising lifestyle. He may have been reared on the wisdom of his father's words, but, as is often the case with children, he copied his father's unwise actions. Like father, like son.

Rehoboam's mother was one of Solomon's idol-worshiping wives. Her name was “Naamah, an Ammonite woman” (14:21). The Ammonites' ancestry goes back to Sodom, where sensual cults and the pagan gods of Molech and Milcom had their roots. Worship of these deities involved abominable sexual practices and the detestable ritual of child sacrifice.

Put yourself in Rehoboam's place. What confusing messages about God was he receiving from his parents? How do you think their examples influenced his judgment later in life?

Because of Solomon's poor character, some Jews deserted him. One of his defectors was Jeroboam. Fearing Jeroboam might lead an insurrection, Solomon sought Jeroboam's life, so Jeroboam fled to Egypt. We pick up the account in 1 Kings 11 with Solomon's death and Jeroboam's return.

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## Observation: The Masks of Rehoboam's Phoiness

Upon Solomon's death and burial (1 Kings 11:43), his son Rehoboam assumed the throne as king. Israel's leaders gathered in Shechem to coronate Rehoboam as the new king, and who should show up? Jeroboam, having just returned from Egypt, determined to reveal Rehoboam's hypocrisy and tear the hearts away from their new king.

### The First Mask: Phony Counsel—1 Kings 12:1–14

Jeroboam's challenge in Shechem exposed Rehoboam's first mask. According to *1 Kings 12:1–5*, what two-fold request and promise did the nation pose? What was Rehoboam's reply?<sup>1</sup>

With which two groups did Rehoboam confer in *12:6–11*? How did their counsel differ, and what was Rehoboam's disposition toward the differing counsel?

After consultation, Rehoboam rendered a decision. According to *12:12–14*, what was his answer to the people? Compare *2 Chronicles 10:15–16*. What was Rehoboam's tone? How did the nation of Israel react to the news?

### The Second Mask: Phony Peace—2 Chronicles 11:1–5, 11–12, 18–23

Rehoboam's harsh tone and heavy burden upon the people sparked a rebellion. Once unified for over a century, the nation fractured. Refusing "to be ruled by a descendant of David" (2 Chronicles 10:19), the northern tribes crowned Jeroboam king and selected Samaria as Israel's capital. Rehoboam remained in the south, ruling the tribes of Judah and Benjamin with Jerusalem as its capital.

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Rehoboam foolishly “mobilized the men of Judah and Benjamin . . . to fight against Israel and to restore the kingdom to himself” (2 Chronicles 11:1). But the Lord stepped in and saved Rehoboam from igniting a bloody civil war. What was God’s counsel in *2 Chronicles 11:2–4*?

Rehoboam, however, only halfway obeyed God’s counsel. Instead, what did he do, according to *11:5, 11–12*?

Rehoboam learned some lessons about life from his father, but not the better ones. Summarize your observations of Rehoboam’s lifestyle, according to *11:18–23*.

## **The Third Mask: Phony Faith—1 Kings 14:21–23, 31**

Rehoboam held in his hands the jewel of Jerusalem, the temple. He enjoyed every opportunity to honor, worship, and obey the Lord God. What was special about Rehoboam’s privilege of reigning in Jerusalem, according to *1 Kings 14:21*?

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However, Rehoboam foolishly let his inheritance slip through his fingers like sand. What did he do, according to *1 Kings 14:22–23*, and how did the Lord respond?

In the summary of Rehoboam's rule in *14:21, 31*, Rehoboam's mother is mentioned twice. Why? Perhaps the writer was hinting at an important insight into Rehoboam's heart. What do you think the references to "Naamah, an Ammonite woman" signified?

## **The Fourth Mask: Phony Image—2 Chronicles 12:1–4, 9–11**

Rehoboam's fourth mask was revealed by Judah's enemies. According to *2 Chronicles 12:1–4*, who attacked Judah, why did they attack, and what was the outcome of the attack?

After conquering Judah, the Egyptian king then captured Jerusalem. According to *12:9–10*, what was stolen from the Lord's temple and from the king's palace, and what did Rehoboam do in response?

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Attempting to save face and to cover-up the ransacking, what was Rehoboam's practice, as seen in *2 Chronicles 12:11*?

*Before the camera, Rehoboam looked solid gold, but behind the scenes, he was a godless mishmash of sensuality and the worship of Molech.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



## **Interpretation: Parental Patterns on Display**

Rehoboam not only inherited a splendid kingdom but also his father's spiritual compromise and his mother's Ammonite practices. What evidence do you see of his parents' influence in the events you observed in Rehoboam's reign?

Under Rehoboam's example, "all Israel followed him in this sin" (2 Chronicles 12:1), and "because they were unfaithful to the LORD, King Shishak of Egypt . . . attacked" (12:2). Rehoboam, however, was not destined to follow his parents' negative example and lead the nation into idolatry and judgment. What could Rehoboam have done differently? What lesson was God teaching His people?

*Rehoboam learned it from his dad. You see that over and over and over again. Like produces like. Unfaithfulness produces unfaithfulness. A wandering eye produces children with wandering eyes.* —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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## Correlation: God Hates Hypocrisy

God despises phoniness and hypocrisy! “But don’t just listen to God’s word,” James writes. “You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves” (James 1:22).

In *Ezekiel 33:30–33*, whom did the prophet address, and what was the concern?

Who spoke in *Matthew 23:27–28*, to whom, and what prompted His angry words?

James, the Lord’s half-brother, echoed a similar caution. Whom did he address in *James 1:5–8*, and what was his exhortation?

Thankfully, believers have Rehoboam’s example, abundant biblical teaching, and the Holy Spirit’s guidance and empowerment to be authentic doers of the Word.

*It isn’t the mask for the camera that God honors and that God will judge. It’s what’s really there. It isn’t the shining bronze that we replace those golden shields with that impresses God. It’s the genuine item. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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## **Application: Fusing the Inward Reality with the Outward Appearance**

Phonies still abound. To see them, we must not just admire the glossy paint on the surface but look under the hood as well. The subtle sin of hypocrisy is a temptation for everyone, even us.

Take a moment for self-examination and ask yourself some tough questions. Am I honest with myself? With others? With God? Do I sometimes wear masks to appear more pious than I really am? What would it be like to reveal my true self?

These are not questions for the fainthearted. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any masks that might need removing and write down what He's showing you.

In what situations are you most tempted to “put on a show”? How will you approach those circumstances differently in the future?

Have you been hurt by the phoniness or hypocrisy of someone close to you? How did that make you feel? Has this person removed his or her mask, and what is your relationship like now? Invite God into the situation.

Close your Bible study with an intention to live mask-free. With God's Spirit filling you with His light and grace, you don't need to hide who He made you to be. Model your life after Christ and be devoted to Him in word and deed. Let your God-given qualities and personality characteristics be the channel of God's grace to others. Be yourself and let the Lord shine through!

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## A FINAL PRAYER

*Lord, You've told me that if I cover my sins I will not prosper. But if I confess and forsake them, You will have mercy. As I understand, Lord, if there's no forsaking my sins, then there cannot be mercy. It is my desire that there be pruning so that my life matches what my lips say, and that my lips convey what my heart truly reveals. Be to me not only Father but Brother, Friend, and Reprover, so that Your Word will not return void. I pray in Jesus' great name. Amen.*

## ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1973, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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