



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Daily Discipleship Guide

Summer 2023 | CSB



...il-
...neir
...tree,
...e, saith
...n, saith the
...you: and I will
...two of a family,
...en the LORD their
...aiding children, and
...slidings. Behold, we
...r thou art the LORD our
...ain is salvation hoped for
...s, and from the multitude of
...truly in the LORD our God is
...ion of Israel.
...r shame hath devoured the labour
...fathers from our youth; their flocks
...their herds, their sons and their daugh-
...ts.
...²⁵ We lie down in our shame, and our
...confusion covereth us: 'for we have sinned
...against the LORD our God, we and our fa-
...thers, from our youth even unto this day,
...and 'have not obeyed the voice of the LORD
...our God.
THE RETURN TO THE LORD
4 If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the
...LORD, 'return unto me: and if thou
...wilt put away thine abominations out of
...my sight, then shalt thou not remove.
...²⁷ And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth,
...in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;
...^{ac}and the nations shall bless themselves in
...him, and in him shall they ^{ab}glory.
3 For thus saith the LORD to the men of
...Judah and Jerusalem, ^{ac}Break up your fal-
...low ground, and ^{ad}sow not among thorns.
...^{4ae}Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
...and take away the foreskins of your heart,
...ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusa-

U N D E R S T A N D | E X P L O R E | A P P L Y

Jeremiah; Lamentations



בני
שנה
בעצם
שמריס
זה ליהוה
זה ואהרן
איש מקנת
אכל בו
חוצה ועצם
הוא וכי יגור
כל זכר ואין
ערל לא יאכל
ויטשו כל בני

KEEPING IT REAL

It's called the imposter syndrome; and, if you've ever experienced it, you know the struggle is real. It's that knot in your stomach that suggests you're in over your head. It's the voice you hear saying that you'll never be good enough. It's the fear that soon everyone will discover you're an unqualified fraud—and, even worse, they'll find out in the most embarrassing way imaginable. It's the lie that convinces you to wear a mask instead of being all you were created to be.

Chances are, we've all come face to face with imposter syndrome at one time or another. If so, we can relate to how the prophet Jeremiah felt when God called him to ministry. Jeremiah had a laundry list of reasons why he wasn't the man for the job. God had only one simple response: *I will be with you*. Once Jeremiah plugged into God's presence and power, he tore off the mask and overcome his fears. That allowed him to share a difficult message with an unreceptive audience. He warned the residents of Judah to forsake their sin. He urged them to avoid God's judgment by rejecting false gods and false security. But they ignored his message and experienced all the chaos that sin inevitably produces.

It would be easy to point a finger at the ancient Jews and talk about the mistakes they made. Truth is, though, all of us have rejected God. We all have turned our back on Him. Since Eden, the human race has worn a mask and been less than God created us to be.

That's why Jesus had to die on the cross. He sacrificed Himself so we could find salvation in Him. In fact, He's our only hope. He's the only One who can remove our mask and help us see ourselves as He sees us. If you're ready to accept the salvation that only He can provide, here's what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God's Son and accept Jesus' gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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THE WEEK OF

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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FROM THE TEAM LEADER

Warning lights are immensely valuable. The symbols on the dashboard of our vehicles let us know if we have missed a regular maintenance task or have an immediate problem that needs attention. When we see a red temperature gauge or “check engine” symbol light up, we know it’s time to take a closer look or take it to a mechanic. It’s never a good idea to ignore a warning light.

Jeremiah was a seventh-century prophet tasked with proclaiming God’s message to the people of Judah. His words were a warning—they were to turn from their sinful ways and toward God. God had seen their idolatry and willingness to turn to other gods, and as a result He would bring judgment. We get a glimpse of that judgment in the book of Jeremiah and Lamentations. Still, Jeremiah’s message offered a word of hope. God would one day bring restoration to His people. The One who restores brokenness, would faithfully do so.

If experience has taught me anything, it’s to pay attention to warnings. Jeremiah’s words for the people of Judah contain a message for us today and call us to act upon it. God desires our wholehearted devotion. Our sin should not be ignored or downplayed. Instead, we can turn to Him knowing He will deliver on all of His promises.

In Him,

Amber Vaden

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BIBLE READING PLAN

JUNE

- ☐ 1. Jeremiah 1:1-19
- ☐ 2. Jeremiah 2:1-13
- ☐ 3. Jeremiah 2:14-28
- ☐ 4. Jeremiah 2:29-37
- ☐ 5. Jeremiah 3:1-18
- ☐ 6. Jeremiah 3:19-25
- ☐ 7. Jeremiah 4:1-18
- ☐ 8. Jeremiah 4:19-31
- ☐ 9. Jeremiah 5:1-17
- ☐ 10. Jeremiah 5:18-31
- ☐ 11. Jeremiah 6:1-15
- ☐ 12. Jeremiah 6:16-30
- ☐ 13. Jeremiah 7:1-15
- ☐ 14. Jeremiah 7:16-34
- ☐ 15. Jeremiah 8:1-22
- ☐ 16. Jeremiah 9:1-11
- ☐ 17. Jeremiah 9:12-26
- ☐ 18. Jeremiah 10:1-16
- ☐ 19. Jeremiah 10:17-25
- ☐ 20. Jeremiah 11:1-23
- ☐ 21. Jeremiah 12:1-17
- ☐ 22. Jeremiah 13:1-14
- ☐ 23. Jeremiah 13:15-27
- ☐ 24. Jeremiah 14:1-22
- ☐ 25. Jeremiah 15:1-21
- ☐ 26. Jeremiah 16:1-13
- ☐ 27. Jeremiah 16:14-21
- ☐ 28. Jeremiah 17:1-13
- ☐ 29. Jeremiah 17:14-27
- ☐ 30. Jeremiah 18:1-23

JULY

- ☐ 1. Jeremiah 19:1-15
- ☐ 2. Jeremiah 20:1-18
- ☐ 3. Jeremiah 21:1-14
- ☐ 4. Jeremiah 22:1-12
- ☐ 5. Jeremiah 22:13-30
- ☐ 6. Jeremiah 23:1-22
- ☐ 7. Jeremiah 23:23-40
- ☐ 8. Jeremiah 24:1-10
- ☐ 9. Jeremiah 25:1-14
- ☐ 10. Jeremiah 25:15-38
- ☐ 11. Jeremiah 26:1-15
- ☐ 12. Jeremiah 26:16-24
- ☐ 13. Jeremiah 27:1-11
- ☐ 14. Jeremiah 27:12-22
- ☐ 15. Jeremiah 28:1-17
- ☐ 16. Jeremiah 29:1-19
- ☐ 17. Jeremiah 29:20-32
- ☐ 18. Jeremiah 30:1-11
- ☐ 19. Jeremiah 30:12-24
- ☐ 20. Jeremiah 31:1-20
- ☐ 21. Jeremiah 31:21-40
- ☐ 22. Jeremiah 32:1-25
- ☐ 23. Jeremiah 32:26-44
- ☐ 24. Jeremiah 33:1-13
- ☐ 25. Jeremiah 33:14-26
- ☐ 26. Jeremiah 34:1-22
- ☐ 27. Jeremiah 35:1-19
- ☐ 28. Jeremiah 36:1-18
- ☐ 29. Jeremiah 36:19-32
- ☐ 30. Jeremiah 37:1-21
- ☐ 31. Jeremiah 38:1-13

AUGUST

- ☐ 1. Jeremiah 38:19-28
- ☐ 2. Jeremiah 39:1-18
- ☐ 3. Jeremiah 40:1-16
- ☐ 4. Jeremiah 41:1-18
- ☐ 5. Jeremiah 42:1-22
- ☐ 6. Jeremiah 43:1-13
- ☐ 7. Jeremiah 44:1-14
- ☐ 8. Jeremiah 44:15-30
- ☐ 9. Jeremiah 45:1-5
- ☐ 10. Jeremiah 46:1-12
- ☐ 11. Jeremiah 46:13-28
- ☐ 12. Jeremiah 47:1-7
- ☐ 13. Jeremiah 48:1-13
- ☐ 14. Jeremiah 48:14-33
- ☐ 15. Jeremiah 48:34-47
- ☐ 16. Jeremiah 49:1-22
- ☐ 17. Jeremiah 49:23-39
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- ☐ 19. Jeremiah 50:21-32
- ☐ 20. Jeremiah 50:33-46
- ☐ 21. Jeremiah 51:1-23
- ☐ 22. Jeremiah 51:24-44
- ☐ 23. Jeremiah 51:45-64
- ☐ 24. Jeremiah 52:1-19
- ☐ 25. Jeremiah 52:20-34
- ☐ 26. Lamentations 1:1-22
- ☐ 27. Lamentations 2:1-22
- ☐ 28. Lamentations 3:1-30
- ☐ 29. Lamentations 3:31-66
- ☐ 30. Lamentations 4:1-22
- ☐ 31. Lamentations 5:1-22

MEMORY VERSES

Session 1:

The word of the LORD came to me.
- Jeremiah 1:4

Session 2:

Why do you bring a case against me? All of you have rebelled against me. This is the LORD's declaration. - Jeremiah 2:29

Session 3:

However, I did give them this command: "Obey me, and then I will be your God, and you will be my people. Follow every way I command you so that it may go well with you." - Jeremiah 7:23

Session 4:

The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it? I, the LORD, examine the mind, I test the heart to give to each according to his way, according to what his actions deserve.
- Jeremiah 17:9-10

Session 5:

"House of Israel, can I not treat you as this potter treats his clay?"—this is the LORD's declaration. "Just like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, house of Israel." - Jeremiah 18:6

Session 6:

"Look, the days are coming"—this is the LORD's declaration—"when I will raise up a Righteous Branch for David. He will reign wisely as king and administer justice and righteousness in the land." - Jeremiah 23:5

Session 7:

"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the LORD's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." - Jeremiah 29:11

Session 8:

"Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days"—the LORD's declaration. "I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." - Jeremiah 31:33

Session 9:

Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know. - Jeremiah 33:3

Session 10:

"Take a scroll, and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah, and all the nations from the time I first spoke to you during Josiah's reign until today." - Jeremiah 36:2

Session 11:

"Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will obey the LORD our God to whom we are sending you so that it may go well with us. We will certainly obey the LORD our God!"
- Jeremiah 42:6

Session 12:

Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of Armies is his name. He will fervently champion their cause so that he might bring rest to the earth but turmoil to those who live in Babylon. - Jeremiah 50:34

Session 13:

Because of the LORD's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness! - Lamentations 3:22-23

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah the priest, is the writer of the book bearing his name. The book of Jeremiah is the longest prophetic book of the Bible and more is revealed about the life of Jeremiah than any of the other prophets. He was from Anathoth, a town about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. Though he came from a priestly family, it appears Jeremiah never entered the priesthood himself. Beginning his ministry during the reign of Josiah and concluding it a few years after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 BC, Jeremiah's ministry spanned nearly sixty years from about 640 BC to 580 BC. He commenced his ministry just before the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to Assyria in 722 BC, but along with his contemporaries, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and possibly Obadiah, Jeremiah's prophetic ministry was primarily focused on the people of Jerusalem and Judah. Given that the Lord called him to be a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5), on a few occasions Jeremiah also proclaimed words of judgment on the nations (46:1–51:64).

Jeremiah's primary message to Judah was to repent in light of the coming judgment of God. The Lord was about to exact judgment for their idolatry, the greed of their religious leaders, their false prophets and the people's willingness to listen to them, and looking to Egypt to save them instead of trusting in the Lord. God was about to use the Babylonians as His instrument of judgment upon Judah and that it would go better for them if they would submit to the Babylonians. There would be no escaping God's judgment.

If the people of Judah chose to flee to Egypt to try to escape God's judgment, it would be to no avail. His judgment would follow them there. Nonetheless, Jeremiah also delivered a message of hope and of future restoration for Israel and Judah, along with the house of David (30:1–33:26).

Jeremiah witnessed the fall of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem along with the temple. Given tradition and the literary links between the book of Jeremiah and the book of Lamentations, it is reasonable to conclude that Jeremiah wrote both books. Lamentations contains five poems of lament describing the suffering that Jeremiah and his people experienced with the fall of Jerusalem. Therefore, it is probable he wrote this book sometime late in 586 BC or in early 585 BC. Lamentations focuses on God's faithfulness to His covenant with Israel, both to bring about judgment for sin and then to bring about the restoration of His covenant people in keeping with His unfailing love for them. The poems focus on the people's sins and suffering, the Lord's faithfulness both to judge and restore, and on Jeremiah's hope in the Lord even in the midst of his distress.

OUTLINES

JEREMIAH

- I. Prologue: Jeremiah's Call and Vision (1:1-19)
- II. Jeremiah Calls for Repentance (2:1-25:38)
- III. Jeremiah Stands Firm Despite Harassment (26:1-36:32)
- IV. Jeremiah Sees Destruction Ahead (37:1-45:5)
- V. Prophecies Against the Nations (46:1-51:64)
- VI. Epilogue: The Fall of Jerusalem (52:1-34)

LAMENTATIONS

- I. The City (An Outside View; 1:1-22)
- II. The Wrath of God (An Inside View; 2:1-22)
- III. The Compassions of God (An Upward View; 3:1-66)
- IV. The Sins of All Classes (An Overall View; 4:1-22)
- V. The Prayer (A Future View; 5:1-22)



ON THE COVER

Located adjacent to the Euphrates River in modern Iraq, partial ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace in ancient Babylon. Famed archaeologist A.H. Layard conducted excavations on the site beginning in the 1850s.


USING THE **DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE**

A person's spiritual growth hinges on daily Bible engagement. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Our spiritual training should be no different since we need spiritual nourishment every day. The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, as long as God's Word is the final word on the matter. Engagement carries the idea of participation and involvement. *Engagement* is active, requiring us to read, study, and reflect.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you engage with God's Word. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

- Use this resource when studying with a group. The first four pages of each session help the group examine a Bible passage and moves us toward acting on the truths discovered as a group and an individual.
- Use the **Talk It Out** page to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study while working to memorize a Bible verse.
- Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.
- Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook at goExploreTheBible.com or at Lifeway.com/digitalstudies.



Getting the most from Talk It Out

Talk It Out supports groups of three or four people who come together weekly to encourage, share, and sharpen each other. While other issues may be addressed, the Talk It Out section focusses on the weekly memory verse. The questions and comments provide a means for encouraging each other to memorize Scripture while reflecting on the main point of that week's lesson.

These groups are made up of three to four people...

- Participants should be of the same gender.
- These groups should be smaller on purpose.
- These groups can meet at almost any location.
- These groups can easily accommodate each other's schedules.

Some married couples may choose to use the Talk It Out section for a weekly family devotional activity.

...Who meet weekly...

- We were created to relate, so meeting weekly is important.
- In some cases, your smaller group may need to meet using virtually. You may find it best to meet face-to-face every other week or once a month and use virtual tools the other weeks.

...To hold each other accountable and encourage each other in their spiritual growth.

- Review the questions and comments in Talk It Out.
- Look for ways the memory verse relates to the main point of the lesson.
- Include time to pray for each other.

Prepares

God prepares His people to represent Him in this world.

JEREMIAH 1:4-19



9

In what ways does God prepare His people for His service?

Preparation or the lack thereof impacts whether we will be successful when undertaking an endeavor. The more important the task, the more we will prepare for it. A pre-med student trying to get into medical school will spend more time in preparation for that exam than for a daily quiz in a freshman English class. Since God desires to make Himself known to all the nations through His people, He takes special care in preparing them for this vital mission.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry in the thirteenth year of the reign of Judah's King Josiah, about 627 BC. This was a turbulent time in the ancient Near East overall and for Judah in particular. The Assyrian Empire was the dominant world power. When King Ashurbanipal of Assyria died, the Babylonians (also called Chaldeans) declared independence from Assyria. They began pushing north against the Assyrians, and the cities of Assyria began to fall to the Babylonians.

Fearing the Babylonians and Medes, Pharaoh Neco II of Egypt decided to fight alongside the Assyrians. On his way to them, Josiah of Judah intercepted Pharaoh's army. Josiah wanted to prevent Egypt's ability to help the Assyrians who had brought such devastation upon Judah. Josiah was mortally wounded in the battle, and his son, Jehoahaz, became king (2 Kings 23:28-31). After unsuccessfully trying to help the Assyrians retake Haran, Neco decided to return home. On his way back to Egypt, he stopped in Jerusalem and took King Jehoahaz captive and made Jehoiakim king of Judah.

In 605 BC, the Babylonians and Medes, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, decidedly defeated the Egyptians and Assyrians. The Assyrians were annihilated, but some of the Egyptians were able to retreat. Nebuchadnezzar pursued the fleeing Egyptians. When he reached Jerusalem, he received word of his father's death and returned to Babylon. Before leaving Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar forced Jehoiakim to swear allegiance to Babylon and implemented the first of three deportations of exiles to Babylon. Judah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar twice which led to two more deportations in 597 BC and 586 BC. In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. God called Jeremiah to prophesy to His people in a tumultuous time.

JEREMIAH 1:4-19

4 The word of the LORD ^A came to me: **5** I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born. I appointed you a **prophet** ^B to the nations. **6** But I protested, “Oh no, Lord GOD! Look, I don’t know how to speak since I am only a youth.” **7** Then the LORD said to me: Do not say, “I am only a youth,” for you will go to everyone I send you to and speak whatever I tell you. **8** Do not be afraid of anyone, for I will be with you to rescue you. This is the LORD’s declaration. **9** Then the LORD reached out his hand, **touched** ^C my mouth, and told me: I have now filled your mouth with my words. **10** See, I have appointed you today over nations and kingdoms to **uproot and tear down, to destroy and demolish,** ^D to **build and plant.** ^E **11** Then the word of the LORD came to me, asking, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I replied, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” **12** The LORD said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I watch over my word to accomplish it.” **13** Again the word of the LORD came to me asking, “What do you see?” And I replied, “I see a boiling pot, its lip tilted from the **north to the south.**” ^F **14** Then the LORD said to me, “Disaster will be poured out from the north on all who live in the land. **15** Indeed, I am about to summon all the clans and kingdoms of the north.” This is the LORD’s declaration. They will come, and each king will set up his throne at the entrance to Jerusalem’s gates. They will attack all her surrounding walls and all the other cities of Judah. **16** “I will pronounce my judgments against them for all the evil they did when they abandoned me to burn incense to other gods and to worship the works of their own hands. **17** “Now, get ready. Stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not be intimidated by them or I will cause you to cower before them. **18** Today, I am the one who has made you a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land — against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the population. **19** They will fight against you but never prevail over you, since I am with you to rescue you.” This is the LORD’s declaration.

Key Words

- A. The Hebrew “word” (*dabar*) implies more than a spoken or written word. Rather, it offers assurance that what is predicted will happen.
- B. A messenger/associate of God. Prophets saw things from God’s perspective, while also feeling the condition of their people.
- C. An act of purification so Jeremiah could speak with God’s authority (see also Isa. 6:7). Prophets needed God’s help with atonement just like the people.
- D. Four negative aspects of Jeremiah’s ministry. Each captures the judgment that God would bring upon the people, using images of destruction and warfare. These words will reappear throughout the book.
- E. Two positive aspects of Jeremiah’s ministry that reflect the restoration of what was lost following God’s judgment. See also Jer. 24:6.
- F. Except for Egypt, all invasions of Israel and Judah came from the north. Eastern kingdoms circled north around a desert and descended on the Jews.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. CREATED

(Jeremiah 1:4-10)

God creates people with a purpose to be fulfilled.

What excuses have you made not to obey God? According to God's declaration to Jeremiah, why are those excuses irrelevant?

How were the limits perceived by Jeremiah an asset from God's perspective?

How does God's presence override any deficiencies we might have?

2. WATCHED

(Jeremiah 1:11-16)

God declares through His Word the promise of judgment on those who ignore Him.

In what ways did God prepare Jeremiah to serve Him?

How has God prepared you to serve Him?

How does God's communication with Jeremiah compare to the way God communicates His warnings today?

3. CHARGED

(Jeremiah 1:17-19)

God promises His presence when believers faithfully deliver His message.

How does knowing God is present when sharing His Word instill confidence?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss the role the group plays in helping one another discern God's call and purpose for their lives.

How can group members encourage each other to live out God's calling for their lives faithfully?

KEY DOCTRINE: Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. (See Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 1:8.)

BIBLE SKILL: Read, reflect on, and react emotionally to a Bible verse.

Read aloud slowly and reflectively Jeremiah 1:4-8. Try to imagine how you would feel if you were in Jeremiah's situation. Consider God's calling on your life, and share honestly with Him any fears or concerns you may have about pursuing it. How does God's reply to Jeremiah's concern (Jer. 1:7-8) give you courage to represent God in the world.

TALK IT OUT

Read Jeremiah 1:4-5 together. When someone says, “I was born for this,” what do they usually mean?

In the Bible we read about many prophets whom God called into service. Each call was different, no two prophets or circumstances were alike. One thing each had in common, however, was that no prophet ever initiated his own call. Rather, God initiated each one. The Lord set apart Jeremiah to be a prophet even before he was born.

Describe God’s purpose for your life. How would you describe your specific calling?

Jeremiah’s initial reaction was, *Why would God want to use someone like me?* (see v. 6). He wasn’t refusing to obey; rather, he was pointing out the reasons he was inadequate to serve. God’s choosing someone to serve Him is always followed by His empowering (vv. 7-9). Jeremiah’s call reminds us that it’s not about our worthiness or ability; it’s about simple obedience.

Share about times when you hesitated to serve God because you felt inadequate. How can we help each other be open to God’s call to serve?

Memorize Jeremiah 1:4-5, considering God’s call on your lives.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Jeremiah 1:4-5

Highlight the actions of God in verse 5.

The Lord calls individuals to fulfill what He wants accomplished, and here it is made clear that the Lord called Jeremiah. It was important for the people to know this and essential for Jeremiah to remember this. He would face harsh opposition (Jer. 37:12-16). Having the assurance that the word of the Lord came to him would help the prophet not lose heart in the days ahead, even when he would be tempted to quit (20:9).

The phrase “I chose you” emphasizes God’s sovereignty and wisdom. God always chooses the right person for the task, even if that person or anyone else might think differently. Also, God was emphasizing His commitment to Jeremiah. Since God is committed to fulfilling His purposes, God is committed to those He has chosen to fulfill them. Before Jeremiah was even born, God set him apart as “a prophet to the nations.” Jeremiah existed for this purpose. Furthermore, the fact that God did all of this before Jeremiah was conceived points to the grace of God and not to anything Jeremiah did to deserve it.

How can you know God’s plans for you?

Day 2: Jeremiah 1:6-10

Notice how God replied to Jeremiah’s excuses.

Jeremiah offered up two reasons why he should not be God’s prophet. These were not the excuses of one who did not want to obey the Lord but rather the concerns of one who could not fathom God using him for this task. When we focus on our abilities and not God’s abilities, it is easy to do what Jeremiah did. Jeremiah appears to have been speaking the truth when he said that he was an inexperienced speaker and only a youth. Most likely, he was in his teens when this occurred.

Jeremiah’s concerns may have been true but were irrelevant. Instead of rebuking Jeremiah, the Lord gave him three reasons he should not be reluctant to do what God had called him to do. First, God promised to direct Jeremiah where he should go. Second, God promised Jeremiah He would instruct him in what to say. Third, the Lord promised Jeremiah His presence and protection. This does not mean Jeremiah would not have troubles. God’s promise to rescue Jeremiah suggests that there would be times when Jeremiah would need to be rescued. It is the privileged responsibility of each of God’s servants to go wherever He sends us and to proclaim His Word faithfully, while trusting in His presence and protection.

What excuses have you made not to obey God?

According to God’s declaration to Jeremiah, why are those excuses irrelevant?

How does God’s presence override any deficiencies you might have?

Day 3: Jeremiah 1:11-12

Identify the meaning of the almond branch.

The word of the Lord continued to come to Jeremiah as God confirmed His will for His prophet. God showed him the branch of an almond tree and asked: “What do you see?” When Jeremiah gave his answer, “an almond tree,” the Lord said he was correct and used a play on words to give the meaning of the vision. The Hebrew word for almond branch (*saged*) and the Hebrew verb meaning “to watch” (*soqed*) sound almost exactly alike and thus constitute a play on words. When Jeremiah said, “I see a *saged*,” God said “*soqed* is what I am doing—watching to make sure my word is fulfilled.” God used this play on words to confirm to His prophet that He was watching His word to fulfill it.

Almond trees were the first to bloom in this region—typically around January. So, when people saw its bloom, they were reminded spring was on its way. God’s promise to fulfill His word was even more certain than spring following the blossoming of the almond tree. Jeremiah could depend on God’s message. Every time he saw an almond tree, he could be reminded that God keeps His Word. God also equips His servants today. As we respond to His call, we have His assurance that He stands behind His promises.

In what ways did God prepare Jeremiah to serve Him?

How has God prepared you to serve Him?

Day 4: Jeremiah 1:13-16

Note the meaning of the boiling pot.

The second vision God showed Jeremiah was a boiling pot about to run over. The pot was tilted toward the south. This meant God was going to use an enemy invasion from the north and inflict pain like that of the overflow of a scalding pot. Babylon was located to the east. However, to avoid travel through the Arabian Desert, the Babylonians would attack Judah from the north by way of Syria.

Verse 15 describes how kings would come to Jerusalem and lay siege on the city along with all the other cities of Judah. Multiple kings would join the attack because the Babylonians would bring with them the armies of kingdoms they had subdued. The point is that the Lord would be the one to “summon all the clans and kingdoms” to invade Judah and lay siege to its cities. He would use these foreign nations as His instrument of judgment. In verse 16, God gave the reason He was going to do this. They abandoned the Lord to worship other gods they had made with their own hands. When Israel entered into their covenant with the Lord at Mount Sinai, they agreed to worship no other gods besides the Lord (Ex. 20:3). What’s more, the Lord warned them of the consequences of turning to other gods (Deut. 11:26-28).

How does God’s communication with Jeremiah compare to the way He communicates His warnings today?

Day 5: Jeremiah 1:17-19

Consider the promises God made to Jeremiah.

The time for talking about what God wanted Jeremiah to do was done. Now was the time for Jeremiah to stand up and get to the task to which God called him. Similar to what He said in verse 8, God told Jeremiah not to be intimidated by the people. Then the Lord added a new warning. If Jeremiah allowed mere people to intimidate him, then the Lord Himself would terrify Jeremiah, embarrass him, and make him contemptible in their eyes.

God added the promise that He would make His prophet like an impregnable fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls. Iron and bronze were two of the hardest metals known to people in ancient times. The kings, officials, priests, and population of Judah would oppose Jeremiah and fight against him, but they would never prevail over him because God would give him, what we might say in our vernacular, tough skin. Jeremiah would be a tower of strength. Moreover, Jeremiah would not be alone. God would be with him every step of the way.

How does knowing God is present when sharing His Word instill confidence?

APPLY THE TEXT

What impact does it make on your life when you realize God created you with a purpose? What role does Scripture play in your carrying out the tasks God has called you to do?



LEADER **HELPS**

Using the Daily Discipleship Guide to Lead a Bible Study Group

The *Daily Discipleship Guide* was created for the purpose of building disciples. As the leader of the group, you play a major role. You can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, facilitating smaller groups, and apprenticing future leaders.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will build disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, challenge the group to act on that passage, and encourage them to reflect more deeply in the week that follows. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Read the Bible passage for the coming session, and review Understand the Context and Key Words.

Through the Week

- Ask God to use the Daily Explorations to help you understand and apply the lesson to your life.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text sections for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.
- Start gathering items you may use in the group time.



The Day before Group Study Time

- Ask God to direct the creation of a group plan.
- Review the group plan in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Review the first four pages of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for that session and the commentary provided in the Leader Helps for that session.
- Review your responses and notes from the completed Daily Explorations.
- Listen to the weekly podcast at goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training.
- Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
Note: You can create custom plans using the DOC file provided in the Digital Download for the Leader Pack—it's the same content printed in the Leader Helps.
- Consult *QuickSource* for additional insights and ideas.
- Review the weekly Adult Extra idea on the Explore the Bible blog (goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).
- Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional insight.
- Pull needed posters from the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (or create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161).
- Make sure you have all your resources gathered including extra copies of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for guests.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early. The group time begins when the first person arrives so make sure that is you.
- Pray for the study and the group.
- Adjust the room as needed.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact the group, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests and other appropriate information.
- Record insights gained about teaching, individuals in the group, and Scripture.
- Pray for specific needs of people in the group.
- Do it all again, asking God to open you mind and heart to His Word this week.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.

- **Visit them.** Deliver a copy of the Daily Discipleship Guide to every person in your group.
- **Ask them.** That seems simple, but the simple is not always easy. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement instead of a question, such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.” It’s a question disguised as a statement, so it’s not as threatening.
- **Tell them.** Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- **Show them.** Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- **Invite them.** Call on pre-enlisted volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they are using the Daily Exploration section.

As teachers, we have taken on the responsibility of encouraging everyone on our ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. We can’t make them do it, but we can provide them with a tool and encourage them to use it.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

Talk It Out is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly. The goal of the smaller groups is simple: holding ourselves and others accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Explain the importance of the smaller groups, emphasizing the goal.
- Allow the group to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups). This tends to work better than assigning groups.
- Allow the smaller groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
- You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
- Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new people and guests.
- As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
- Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
- Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
- Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.

Be in a smaller group:

- Meet with two or three other Bible study leaders as part of your weekly preparation.
- Be part of a smaller group within your class.
- Host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

Continued on next page — — — — —

Building Disciples by Apprenticing Other Leaders

Starting new groups is critical to the life of your church and the lives of the individuals in your group. People in your group need to be challenged to take on a greater role in your church. Providing the opportunity to do so helps them grow and removes the largest barrier to starting new Bible study groups—finding a leader. You can make a difference in the growth of individuals and in the future growth of your church by apprenticing potential group leaders. Here's how you can use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to make this happen.

- **Step 1:** Prior to group time, ask a potential leader to follow along in the Leader Helps for that session as you lead the group. Tell him or her to note what you did and what you adjusted. You're just coaching your apprentice to use the book he or she has in a different way.
- **Step 2:** After that group experience, spend time with the group member going over what you did and how you adjusted the leader material for the group.
- **Step 3:** Invite him or her to do this again in a few weeks.
- **Step 4:** Ask him or her to lead a group time or part of one using the suggestions in the Leader Helps for that session. You may be away that week, or you can simply observe as a group member. Offer to help him or her prepare if needed.
- **Step 5:** As your apprentice gains confidence, allow him or her to teach more in the near future.
- **Step 6:** As a need for a new group surfaces, prepare to move on to lead the new group, with the apprentice becoming the leader of the current group (which tends to work best), or commission the apprentice and a few others from the group to start a new group.
- **Step 7:** Do it all again.

Not everyone in the group will become a Bible study leader. For those who do, you can become a mentor to potential leaders, extending your teaching ministry and demonstrating discipleship.

Prepares

ENGAGE

BEGIN: On the board or a large sheet of paper, write: *How do you prepare yourself for an upcoming exam? Planning a family reunion picnic? Tackling a new assignment at work? Moving to a new home?*

INTRODUCE: As the group arrives, direct their attention to the question on the board.

ASK: *When you tackle a big task, like some of the examples listed on the board, how do you prepare yourself for the job? (Examples: make to-do lists, study, create a deadline schedule, talk to experienced people)*

READ: Allow a volunteer to read the introductory paragraph on page 13.

EXPLAIN: *No matter what the task may be, we have steps we can take to prepare ourselves to accomplish the job. As believers, we are called to represent God in our world. So, let's think about ways we can prepare for that job.*

DISCUSS: *In what ways does God prepare His people for His service?* (p. 13)

TRANSITION: *Today we begin a study of the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. We will see how God prepared Jeremiah for the big job of being a prophet and then sent him out to accomplish the task. As we move through this*

study, let's watch for how God was working in his life and among His people.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

PREPARE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Prophets of the Seventh Century*) to the group. Allow time for the group to briefly review the information before setting the context for the study.

CONTEXT: Use *Understand the Context* (p. 13) and **Pack Item 1** (*Map: Nebuchadnezzar's Campaigns*) to briefly describe Babylon's rule around the time Jeremiah's ministry was starting. Provide an overview of the study, using **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of Jeremiah; Lamentations*).

OVERVIEW: Explain that the prophet Jeremiah was living in Judah at a time when Babylon dominated the ancient Near East. Share copies of **Pack Item 7** (*Handout: Jeremiah and Lamentations Time Line*) and direct attention to **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: The Fall of Jerusalem*) to highlight events that led to Babylon defeating Assyria and becoming a world power. Note that all the upheaval left the citizens of Judah wondering where they should place their trust—with Babylon, with Egypt, or with God. Yet into this time of turmoil, God called Jeremiah to be His "prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5).

MEMORIZE: Direct attention to Jeremiah 1:4, noting that as we examine Jeremiah's words and actions in the coming weeks, everything that would happen was connected to God's call on his life. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*). Point out that Jeremiah 1:4 is the memory verse for today's session and encourage the group to commit it to memory.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Jeremiah 1:4-10, as the group listens for God's words and Jeremiah's protests.

LIST: Write these two headings on the board: *God's Call* and *Jeremiah's Excuses*. Guide the group to name the specific things God called Jeremiah to do. List these under the *God's Call* heading. Guide the group to name Jeremiah's reasons for why he was not the right person for the job. List these reasons under *Jeremiah's Excuses*.

GUIDE: Focus on the fact that God chose Jeremiah. Use page 17 to help the group better understand the significance of God's choosing Jeremiah.

- **(1:5)** God had known Jeremiah and chose him as a prophet even before Jeremiah's conception. Knowing that God had a plan for our lives long before we were born should motivate us to embrace that plan and follow it faithfully. The word *appointed* may also be translated as "gave." The Lord gave Jeremiah the responsibility of being a prophet to the nations.
- **(1:6)** Jeremiah suggested he was not qualified to serve as God's prophet because

he could not speak eloquently and was only a youth. Bible interpreters generally believe Jeremiah was about twenty years old when God called him.

DISCUSS: *What excuses have you made not to obey God? According to God's declaration to Jeremiah, why are those excuses irrelevant?* (p. 15)

EMPHASIZE: Point out that God often calls people to accomplish tasks that are beyond their abilities. Share that when He does, He also equips and empowers individuals to do what He commands. *God never sets us up for failure when we obey His plans.*

DISCUSS: *How were the limits perceived by Jeremiah an asset from God's perspective? How does God's presence override any deficiencies we might have?* (p. 15)

TRANSITION: *When Jeremiah focused on his youth and inexperience, God promised His presence and His help.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Jeremiah 1:11-16, directing the group to listen for the two visions God gave Jeremiah and God's interpretation of those visions.

ASK: *In what ways did God prepare Jeremiah to serve Him? How has God prepared you to serve Him?* (p. 15)

- **(1:11-12)** Almond trees were the first to bloom in that region—typically around January. So when people saw it, they were reminded spring was on its way. God used the lesson of the almond tree to confirm to

His prophet that He would watch over His word to accomplish it. His promise to keep His word was even more certain than spring following the blossoming of the almond tree.

- **(1:13-14)** The second confirming vision showed Jeremiah a boiling pot. The pot's lip was tilted from the north so that its contents could pour out on the south. The expression indicated the direction from which disaster would strike God's people. The highway leading from Mesopotamia came from the north of Israel and entered the land above the Sea of Galilee. Armies such as Assyria and Babylon came from that direction.

SHARE: *Through the two visions, God communicated to Jeremiah that He was watching over him and that invading foreign armies would bring God's judgment against His people. God always promises judgment for those who ignore Him.*

DISCUSS: *How does God's communication with Jeremiah compare to the way God communicates His warnings today?* (p. 15)

TRANSITION: *God's presence would have been a great encouragement to Jeremiah. In addition, understanding God's purposes would have helped the prophet. God was making it impossible for Jeremiah to deny his calling.*

READ: Call for the group to read silently **Jeremiah 1:17-19**, looking for God's instructions to Jeremiah.

IDENTIFY: Lead the group to name the three things God instructed Jeremiah to do in verse 17. List these three things on the board. Read verses 18-19 aloud again. Lead a brief

discussion on how those verses indicate that God really was preparing Jeremiah for the task at hand.

DISCUSS: *How does knowing God is with us when we are sharing His Word give us confidence?* (p. 15)

TRANSITION: *God gave Jeremiah the big job of proclaiming His message to the leaders of Judah. Then He promised to be with Jeremiah, giving him protection, as he did the job.*

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Call for a volunteer to read the bulleted statements under Apply the Text (p. 15). Discuss what other insights we might gain through today's study.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to discuss the Apply the Text questions on page 15: ***Discuss the role the group plays in helping one another discern God's call and purpose for their lives. How can group members encourage each other to live out God's calling for their lives faithfully?***

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for all the ways He prepares us to represent Him in our world today.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by contacting the group to remind them a new unit is beginning that will help them to understand how God is at work in and through the lives of His people.