

Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah

Bible Passage:

Jeremiah

Story Point:

Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.

Key Passage:

2 Chronicles 7:14- If my people, who bear my name, humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from Heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.

Big Picture Question:

How did God plan to fix what sin broke? Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.

Welcome time

Prompt kids to share something they think they'll be able to do once they're older. Could they do it while they are young? Why or why not?

Guide kids to think about a job they would love to have. Prompt them to draw a picture of themselves doing that job, list skills the job would require, and describe some of the tasks they would do.

Say • In the Bible story we will hear today, God called a man named Jeremiah to do a very important job.

Do you think he was excited? No! In fact, he told God that he didn't think he could do it. We'll find out what God said about that.

Session starter (10 minutes)

Option 1: Pass a message

Instruct kids to sit in a circle. Assign one kid to be first. Give the second kid and every other kid (fourth, sixth, and so on) a pencil and piece of paper. Whisper a message to the first kid, such as "He threw three free throws" or "Sheep should sleep in a shed."

The first kid should whisper the message to the second kid, who will write the message and pass it to the third kid. The third kid will read the message and whisper it to the fourth kid. Emphasize that kids may only whisper the message once. Continue around the circle—whispering, writing, passing, and reading—until the message reaches the end of the circle. Ask the last kid to announce the message.

Say • Did the message change? Why? Long ago, God sent important messages to His people through the prophets. Today we'll learn about a message God gave through the prophet Jeremiah.

TEACH THE STORY

Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah

When Josiah was the king of Judah, God called a priest named Jeremiah to be a prophet. God told Jeremiah, “I knew you before I made you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born, I chose you to do very special things. I chose you to be a prophet to the nations.”

“Oh no, God!” **Jeremiah said. “I don’t know how to speak in front of other people. I’m just a boy, only a youth.”**

“Don’t say that,” **God replied. “You will go where I send you and say what I tell you to say. I am with you. I will protect you.”**

For many years, Jeremiah spoke God’s message to the people of Judah. He reminded them that God had made a covenant with them: If they obeyed Him, He would bless them. But the people did not obey. Now God had to punish their sin. God said the people would lose their land, their wealth, and their freedom.

Jeremiah explained that people’s hearts fool them into thinking they are better than they actually are. They trick people into wanting things or doing things that God does not want for them. **The people did not want to listen to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah was sad.** He warned them that God’s punishment was coming, but he also said that God had a plan to change His people’s hearts. **God promised a new and better covenant so the people could be saved from their sins. God would write His law on people’s hearts. He would give His people power to obey His commands.** God said, “I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sin.”

God told Jeremiah to write God’s message on a scroll. So **Jeremiah spoke God’s words, and his friend Baruch** (BAY rook) **wrote the words on a scroll.** Baruch read from the scroll so that all the people heard God’s words. He warned that the king of Babylon would come and destroy Judah.

King Jehoiakim sent one of his officials to get the scroll. As the official read the scroll, King Jehoiakim cut off each part of the scroll and threw it into the fire. He did this until the entire scroll was burned up.

So God told Jeremiah to write another scroll with the same words as the first scroll. Jeremiah told the king, “God is going to punish you, your family, and your leaders for doing wrong things. God warned you that disaster will come to Judah but you did not listen.”

Christ Connection: Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people’s hearts. Jesus made these words come true. God forgives our sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes us and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 2 Chronicles 7:14. Provide paper and markers or crayons. Assign each kid a key word from the key passage and instruct him to draw a picture to represent the word.

Then lead kids to say the key passage, holding up the pictures for the key words. Challenge them to say the key passage from memory, referring to the pictures as prompts.

(Sample key words: *people, bear/called, pray, face, turn, hear, heaven, heal, land*)

Say • Great job! Keep working to memorize this verse on your own. This key passage reminds us of God's heart for His people. He will punish sin, but He wants people to repent, turn to Him, and receive forgiveness.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to the Book of Jeremiah. Direct kids' attention to the lists of kings from the "Kings of Israel and Judah" printable. Show the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Ask kids which kingdom Jeremiah prophesied to. (*Judah*) Remind kids that the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed about 100 years before Jeremiah's time as a prophet.

Tape the Jeremiah name tag next to the list of Judah's kings. Explain that Jeremiah lived in the last years of the kingdom of Judah. King Jehoiakim had destroyed Jeremiah's scroll, and within Jeremiah's lifetime, the people of Judah would be captured. Tape the arrow next to *Jehoiakim*.

Say • Jeremiah's message was to stop sinning and turn back to God before it was too late. **Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.**

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Jeremiah 31:33-34. Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

What did Jeremiah say would be different about the new covenant? *Remind kids that in the old covenant, the people had God's commands in writing. They disobeyed His commands and made sacrifices every year for their sin. In the new covenant, God was going to write His law on their hearts. He would give His people the power to obey His commands.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 10:16.)

How does God change our hearts today? *Guide kids to identify that Jesus came to establish the new covenant. We all sin and, just like the people of Judah, need a heart change. God changes our hearts and invites us into a relationship with Him through Jesus. He gives us power through the Holy Spirit to obey God's commands.*

(Option: Choose a kid to read Ezek. 11:19-20.)

Why should we obey God? *Invite kids to share their ideas. Help them recognize that We should obey God because He made us, He loves us, and His plans are good. We don't have to earn His love. We already have it!*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 2:8-9.)