

Unit 15 • Session 3// K-1st //March 15

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.

The **BIBLE** Story

Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah

Jeremiah

Welcome time

Prompt kids to talk about growing up. What things about getting older are exciting? Is anything about growing up scary?

Say • Growing up can be very exciting. However, sometimes growing up can mean more responsibility, which can be a bit scary. Today we will learn about a prophet of God who feared he was too young to share God's messages with God's people.

Session starter (10 minutes)

Option 1: When you were young

Invite the kids to take turns acting out something they did as a baby but no longer do. Whoever guesses correctly will take the next turn.

Say • At different ages, we have different things expected of us. When a baby throws a fit, it's very different than if an adult does the same thing. But there are also many things you cannot do until you get older, like voting or driving. Today we will learn about a prophet who was concerned about his age.

Transition to teach the story

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

Bring in old electronic devices. Show each item to the kids, and allow them to pass the items around and examine them. Then discuss ways that newer items have replaced the old. Discuss what the kids think similar devices may be capable of in the future.

Suggested items:

Pre-touchscreen cell phone

cassette tape player

film camera

video camera

Say • It's hard to believe that technology has changed as much as it has! Every year designers and engineers find new ways to upgrade our world. Today we will learn about a time God promised to upgrade His people to a new covenant.

That actually reminds me of the Bible story I was just reading. It's also about something that is both new and better. The Bible is kind of like a letter from God to people. It tells us about His love for us and the way He wants us to live for Him. But more than that, it tells us about Jesus! Let me tell you about the new covenant.

Big picture question (1 minute)

Leader • We have been learning about God's plan. Who remembers our big picture question and answer?

[Allow responses.] Great job! ***How did God plan to fix what sin broke? Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.*** That means that God knew we would choose to disobey Him, and yet He still chose to create us, give us the freedom to make choices, and send Jesus to rescue us when we chose sin. What a good and loving God He is!

Leader • Speaking of people choosing to sin, God's people were again living in sin. They had rejected God and were living as two separate kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah to the south. Despite Judah's sin, God sent prophets to call them back to God. **The prophet Isaiah told about the Messiah.** And not all the kings were bad. **Hezekiah and Josiah led the people back to God.** But the occasional good kings were not enough to save God's people. The people could not obey God's law perfectly, and God's covenant with them required perfect obedience. That's where our story picks up.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

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.

Leader • The covenant God made with Israel meant that God would bless them as long as they obeyed Him. If they did not, He would punish their sin. Even though God's rules were clear, the people did not listen to Him or obey the law. They deserved death because of their sin.

They sinned and sinned, and God showed them mercy, giving many warnings and multiple chances to repent. But they still disobeyed. Jeremiah told the people to expect punishment. But Jeremiah also offered the people hope. **Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.**

In the old covenant, the people obeyed God to gain His blessings, but in the new covenant, God would pour out blessings so that people could obey. Instead of having the law on scrolls, God would put the law in their hearts. God would even give them the power they needed to be able to obey. The new covenant would be amazing—much better than the old one. And do you know what? The new covenant is already here!

Christ connection

Leader • 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.

Jesus brought about the new covenant. He lived a perfect life with no sin, obeying the law perfectly. Then Jesus died on the cross for our sin and rose again on the third day to defeat death. After Jesus went back to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit, who lives in believers to help us love and obey God.

Pray (2 minutes)

Leader • God, thank You for loving us despite our sin and brokenness. Help us love You more each day. Help us obey You and live joyfully in the freedom that You have given us through the new covenant and Your Son. Amen.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Say the key passage multiple times. Use the motions developed in the first session, or use the suggested motions below:

[If] my people [*Hold arms as though placing them around friends' shoulders.*]

pray and seek my face [*Fold hands as in prayer.*]

and turn from their evil ways [*Face left, then turn to face right.*]

hear from heaven [*Cup one hand over your ear.*]

forgive their sin and heal their land. [*Place hands on heart, move hands downward to gesture to the earth.*]

Say • God spoke these words to describe how He feels about sinners. He loves all people and wants what is best for us. That means He wants us to repent of sin and obey Him. He loves to forgive those who repent and believe in Jesus.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find the Book of Jeremiah. Discuss which Bible division it is in, and ask kids to name other books in the Major Prophets. (*Isaiah–Daniel*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

Who was king of Judah when Jeremiah was called as a prophet? (*Josiah, Jer. 1:2*)

What did God tell Jeremiah to say about peoples' hearts? (*They are sick and trick us to sin, Jer. 17:9*)

What did King Jehoiakim do with the scroll Jeremiah and Baruch wrote? (*burned it up bit by bit, Jer. 36:23*)

What are some ways our hearts are tricky? *Guide kids to discuss the things like money, power, or fame that we may chase after. Help the kids see that those things cannot satisfy us and often lead us away from God. When we worship anything—even a good thing—besides God, it is sin. Only God deserves worship. Discuss the idea that sin isn't just wanting or doing bad things, but also wanting or doing things in ways that don't honor God's plans.*

Why is the new covenant better? *Guide kids to see that under the new covenant, God not only gives the commands to the people, but writes them on their hearts. Remind kids that under the new covenant, God promised not to remember our sin, but forgive it.*

When did the new covenant start? *Guide kids to discuss the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the beginning of the new covenant. Explain that Jesus' perfect and complete sacrifice undid the curse of sin and made it so that believers no longer need to offer sacrifices for forgiveness. Explain how the Holy Spirit, who lives in the hearts of believers, helps us remember and obey God's teachings.*

Say • **Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.** Jesus brought about the start of the new covenant.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

Option 1: Water bottle gifts

Provide each kid with an unopened bottle of water and an index card. Direct the kids to write *Jesus loves you* or draw a picture on the index card that represents God's love. Instruct the kids to give the bottle of water and card to a friend or family member this week.

Say • In Baltimore, Coach Sean uses football to spread the truth of Jesus. No matter what sport you play, drinking water is important to be healthy and active. You can use these bottles of water and cards to help tell people about Jesus and the new and better covenant He has brought. Jesus is God's plan for the world. ***How did God plan to fix what sin broke? Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.***

Option 2: Telephone

Instruct the kids to sit in a line. Whisper a message to the first kid in line. He will whisper what he heard to the kid behind him, who will whisper that message to the next kid, and so forth down the line. The last kid will then say aloud the message she heard. Allow the last kid to move to the front of the line and play again. Continue playing as time allows.

Say • Hearing a message when it's whispered only once is hard. Passing on messages in that way can lead to some silly or confusing results. Thankfully, God does much more than whisper His messages to us. God told His message to people and the Holy Spirit helped them write down exactly what God said. **Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.** We have the Word of God written in the Bible so we can know His truth for certain, and the Holy Spirit lives in believers to help us know and obey God's Word.

PASS THE BALL PRAYER (5 minutes)

Have kids sit in a circle and ask them to name something they are thankful for that happened this past week. When you pass the ball to them they can try to shoot a basket. Continue until everyone has had a turn.