

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
JULY062024

who, me?

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 1.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 34.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

God called Jeremiah to a special task—and not an easy one. Jeremiah's role as a prophet would be to warn the people of Judah that God's patience had finally run out. Like the northern kingdom of Israel just a few generations earlier, Judah would be overtaken by a foreign power and her people forced into exile. For too long the people of Judah had ignored God's calls to repentance, and now they were going to reap the consequences.

From Jeremiah's perspective, it was a daunting call. God's message would not make him popular or well liked. He would have to look forward to rejection and persecution. As a very young man, Jeremiah didn't feel able to do the task. He protested that he wasn't able to carry the responsibility God was handing him.

God assured Jeremiah that he had been set aside for this task from before his own birth. It's an awesome thought to realize that God knows us and has plans for us even before we're born, but that was what God told Jeremiah. This week's lesson asks students to consider what that knowledge means for their own lives. What is God calling them to do and to be?

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God had a special plan for Jeremiah's life. *(Know)*
- Believe that God also has a plan for their lives. *(Feel)*
- Choose to open themselves up to explore and follow God's plan for their lives. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Father, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 3

"God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. . . . (Gen. 1:1; Deut. 4:35; Ps. 110:1, 4; John 3:16; 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:28; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 4:11.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

After discussing *What Do You Think?* write the following questions on the board:

- Should Christians be popular with others?
- If we are, is it a sign that we're not standing up for what we believe?
- If we're unpopular, is it because we're being persecuted for our faith—or are we just behaving badly and turning people off?

Divide students into groups of two and three to discuss these questions for five minutes. Bring the group back together, draw everyone's attention to the questions, and ask for responses.

As you process the discussion with your students, share the following ideas with them in their own words.

Jesus told His disciples to expect persecution, but He didn't tell them to go out looking for it. Rather, He told them to live the way He lived. That will be very appealing to some people—and bring you into conflict with others.

Our goal as Christians shouldn't be to upset people. Instead, our most important goal should be to discover God's will for our lives and follow it faithfully, without worrying too much about how others will react.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

"A story is told of the death camps of World War II. At the train terminal in one of the camps the officers began separating able-bodied men from the women and children. One father, a member of a royal family, gazed on this scene and heard the fearful voices of families torn apart. He realized he might never see his young son again. He knelt down beside the boy and held him by the shoulders. 'Michael,' he said, 'no matter what happens, I want you always to remember one thing. You're special; you're the son of a king.'

"Soon father and son were separated by the soldiers and marched off to different sections of the camp. They never saw each other again. Michael learned much later that his father had perished in a gas chamber. He had to go out alone and try to make his way in the world.

"But his father's last words would always stay with him. They became a guiding beacon in his life. 'You're the son of a king.'

"Michael determined that whatever came, he would behave like the son of a king.

"Has the reality of this enormous truth hit you yet? Does it guide your actions? Does it mold your behavior? You are a child of the King of the universe. When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior, we are 'born again' into the family of God. Through Christ we are adopted into heaven's royal line. The apostle Paul states this truth eloquently: 'Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God' (Eph. 2:19).

"What a privilege! We are members of God's household. What a calling! We have a new identity.

"A portion of God's family is in heaven, but there is also a portion right here on earth. Scriptures refers to those who have accepted Jesus as a definite part of God's family. The third chapter of Ephesians makes the point plain:

" 'For the reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named' (Eph. 3:14, 15).

"Let your spirit soar. You are a part of God's family. Let your soul grasp this glorious spiritual truth today. Your heavenly Father is the Creator of the universe.

"You are the son or daughter of the King. Why not behave like the prince or princess you are?" —Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, 2003, p. 69

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Few people are actually born in royal families. But the fact is that the story of the father's last words to his son, "You are the son of a king" is really the story of each one of us. While we may think we're nobody special, each of us is a child of the King of the universe, and our heavenly Father has designed a special role for each of us to play in His work. As He told Jeremiah, He knows about us even before we are born, and He has a plan for us. While we are free to make our own choices, our lives will be so much more rewarding—and interesting!—if we choose to follow His plan for us.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story *section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

Have two students from the class (asked in advance if necessary) read the roles of Jeremiah and the Lord in Jeremiah, chapter 1. You can join in by reading the narrative parts in between the dialogue.

Then ask students to look up Isaiah 6 and Exodus 3:1-14; 4:1-17. These are two other Bible stories in which God calls people to do a special task for Him. If time permits, read through them in

the same fashion with one reader taking the part of God and the other the part of the person He is calling, reading the narrator's part yourself. If you don't have time for that, ask students to turn to each passage and read through the highlights of each scene quickly to ensure they are familiar with each story. After looking at all three stories, discuss the following questions:

- In these three stories, what do the people God is calling have in common? How are their responses to God similar?
- What tasks is God calling each person to do? How do you think they might feel about taking on these jobs?
- How do you feel knowing that God has a plan for your life and a job for you to do? Does it make you feel excited, scared, challenged, rebellious—or some other response? Can you relate to anything Jeremiah, Isaiah, or Moses said in these three passages?
- If God does have a plan for our lives, how do we discover it? How do we know that we are on track with His plan and not just following our own desires?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Psalm 139; Isaiah 6; Exodus 3; 4.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The Bible relates many stories of God calling

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Reading Scripture in Class

It's important to expose students to reading Scripture in class—perhaps more important than most of the things we do in Sabbath School, since they may not read the Bible on their own. But how do you present passages of Scripture as part of the lesson?

One option is to read aloud to students yourself. Another is to read through a passage assigning a verse at a time to different people to read. Or, as suggested in this week's *Out of the Story* section, assign different students to read the spoken words of the characters in the Bible story, while you read the narration that ties it together.

If you're doing an activity in which the literal translation of a text is important, everyone should have the same translation (have a stack of NKJV Bibles in your classroom, or make photocopies of the passage in the version you want to use). For looking at a short passage from a few different perspectives, you can ask a couple of students who have different Bible versions to read and compare theirs. The dynamic or functional equivalence translation of the Bible, such as the New International Version, focuses on the overall meaning of the text rather than on literal translation. Translations such as *The Message* or *The Clear Word* use extensive paraphrasing and elaboration of the Scriptural passages for ease of comprehension in the contemporary context.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

people to serve Him. In many cases—as in the example of Jeremiah in this week's lesson, or of Isaiah and Moses in the *Out of the Story* section above—those whom God called questioned the call at first. Moses said he was a poor speaker. Isaiah was a man of "unclean lips." Jeremiah felt he was too young. Other biblical heroes, though their "call" stories may be less dramatic, felt themselves ill-fitted for the role they were called to fill. David was the youngest and least impressive of his brothers when Samuel anointed him as the future king. Esther told Mordecai there was no way she could go before the king and defy his decree. The Bible makes it clear that the greatest heroes of faith didn't feel like heroes when they were first called.

Maybe that's the sign of someone who will make a good servant of God—someone who initially feels inadequate and unworthy. When Ellen White—a mostly uneducated teenager in poor health—received her first vision, the vision itself was exhilarating, but the idea of sharing what she had seen with others was daunting. "I went to the Lord in prayer and begged Him to lay the burden on someone else," she wrote in *Early Writings*. "It seemed to me that I could not bear it. I lay upon my face a long time, and all the light I could get was, 'Make known to others what I have revealed to you.' "

People who don't think they're ready are, in fact, the kind of people God can use. If the task God is calling us to do seems too big for us, we can be assured that His strength and power will be with us. We respond to His call not in our own strength, but in His.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

In advance, ask students to provide you with a picture of themselves as a baby or small child (or, if you have contact with the parents of all your students, ask parents to give you pictures so you can scan and print them, then return the originals, without your students even knowing you have them). At the end of the lesson, give each student a picture of him/herself as a baby. If you're not able to arrange this in advance, have students cut pictures of babies from magazines and ask each one to stick a baby picture on an index card to represent their younger selves.

Write this week's key text on the board and ask students to copy it onto the back of the picture or card. Tell them to keep it as a reminder that God has a plan for each of their lives.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Jeremiah was called by God to do a special task. He knew that it wouldn't be easy and might even involve danger and persecution. At first, Jeremiah didn't feel equal to the task. He thought he was too young and inexperienced. But with God's help and support, he became a powerful messenger for the Lord. He accepted the challenge that was given to him.

God has a challenge for each of us too. He knew you before you were born, just as He knew Jeremiah. His plan for you doesn't cancel out your own free will, but He longs for you to put your will in alignment with His so that He can use you to do great things.

Like Jeremiah's task, yours may involve challenge and difficulty. The things God asks us to do aren't always easy. But they are always rewarding and always best for us in the long run—and they can provide far more satisfaction and opportunity for growth than a safe, "ordinary" life lived without God. Take up His challenge. Trust His plan for your life.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 34.

*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Jeremiah 1.
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Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

(Jeremiah 1:5, NIV)

flashlight

"For forty years Jeremiah was to stand before the nation as a witness for truth and righteousness. . . . Despised, hated, rejected of men, he was finally to witness the literal fulfillment of his own prophecies . . . , and share in the sorrow and woe that should follow the destruction of the fated city.

"Yet amid the general ruin . . . , Jeremiah was often permitted to look beyond the distressing scenes of the present to the glorious prospects of the future, when God's people should be ransomed from the land of the enemy and planted again in Zion" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 408).

what do you think?

Jeremiah was given an unpopular job to do as God's prophet in tough times. Has being a Christian ever made you unpopular? Check any of the situations below that have applied to you:

____ People have made fun of me for religious beliefs or practices.

____ I've had to miss out on activities because they conflicted with Sabbath or church activities.

____ I've had to say no when friends were doing things I believed were wrong—drinking, trying drugs, etc.

____ I speak out when people are hurting or bullying others, even though I might get attacked myself.

did you know?

Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet to the people of Judah about the year 628 B.C. About a hundred years earlier, the northern kingdom of Israel—made up of 10 of the 12 tribes—had been overthrown by the king of Assyria. The Israelites of the northern kingdom were sent into exile, never again to return to their homeland. For centuries God's prophets had been warning the people of Israel and Judah that if they didn't remain faithful to God, destruction would come. For the kingdom of Israel, that day had finally come. Now, a hundred years later, Jeremiah was sent to warn the people of Judah that the same fate was about to happen to them.

INTO THE STORY

"The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. . . .

"The word of the LORD came to me, saying,
'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.'

" 'Alas, Sovereign LORD,' I said, 'I do not know how to speak; I am too young.'

"But the LORD said to me, 'Do not say, "I am too young." You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the LORD.

"Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over

nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.'

"The word of the LORD came to me: 'What do you see, Jeremiah?'

" 'I see the branch of an almond tree,' I replied.

"The LORD said to me, 'You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.'

"The word of the LORD came to me again: 'What do you see?'

" 'I see a pot that is boiling,' I answered. 'It is tilting toward us from the north.'

"The LORD said to me, 'From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms,' declares the LORD.
'Their kings will come and set up their thrones
in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem;
they will come against all her surrounding walls
and against all the towns of Judah.
I will pronounce my judgments on my people
because of their wickedness in forsaking me,
in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made.

" 'Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials,

its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the LORD."

(Jeremiah 1, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What was Jeremiah's first reaction when God called him to become a prophet? Why do you think he reacted this way?

_____
_____
_____
_____

How far back does God's plan for Jeremiah go? What does this tell you about God's plan for your life?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If God chose Jeremiah as a prophet before he was even born, was Jeremiah really free to say no?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What was God's special task for Jeremiah? How do you think he might have felt about being called to this kind of ministry?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What warnings does God give Jeremiah? How do God's promises match up with His warnings?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" **(Psalm 139:15, 16, NIV).**

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" **(Romans 8:29-31, NIV).**

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" **(1 Timothy 4:12, NIV).**

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" **(Matthew 5:11, 12, NIV).**

further insight

"God's purpose for you is wider, deeper, higher than your limited vision has ever imagined! God often picks reliable persons from unlikely places to witness for Him in the world's highest places. Many a young person of today . . . studying God's Word and His works, and learning lessons of responsibility, will yet stand in legislative assemblies, in courtrooms, and before royalty, as a witness for the King of kings."—Ellen G. White, *A Call to Stand Apart*, p. 100

Sabbath

Read Jeremiah 1:5, 6.

God caught Jeremiah's attention and gave him a special task to do. In Jeremiah 1:6 the prophet said he couldn't _____ because he was only a _____.

Jeremiah was probably a teenager at the time. He didn't consider himself ready for the task God had for him, but God assured Jeremiah He'd been planning this for a long time—even before Jeremiah was born!

Do you believe that God has a purpose for your life? What do you think you might say to God if He spoke to you as He did to Jeremiah (in Jeremiah 1:5)?

Sunday

Read Jeremiah 1:19.

God's call for Jeremiah was not to do an easy job that would make everyone like him. In fact, his job was to tell the people of Judah that because they had rebelled against God, He was going to punish them.

People don't usually like hearing that they're doing things wrong. God warned Jeremiah up front that his message would be unpopular and people would reject him for it. Jeremiah didn't go out of his way to make people mad—he just did what God told him to do, and got in trouble for it.

What promise did God give Jeremiah? Summarize today's Bible verse in your own words.

_____

_____

Monday

Read Psalm 139:15, 16.

Ask your parents what they remember about you from before you were born. Do they have ultrasound pictures, or pictures of your mom when she was pregnant? If you were adopted, ask your parents to tell about how you came to be part of your family. Think over what you've been told as you reread this week's *Key Text.*

Parents have hopes, dreams, and expectations for their children even before those children are born. In the same way, God has plans for us even before we're born. Does knowing that God knows all about you even before you're born make you feel: ___ loved? ___ special? ___ scared? ___ uncertain? ___ it depends!

Tuesday

Read Matthew 5:11, 12.

We all like to hear positive words. The Bible is full of hope, promises, and encouragement. But there's a time for negative words too—a time to point out sin, to warn people of the consequences of their actions.

"Prophets of doom" exist not just in the church but in the world too. Scientists warn us about the dangers of damaging the environment and predict that terrible things will happen if we don't clean up our act. Such predictions can be scary, but they can also motivate us to change our ways!

Read the *Flashlight* section. According to this passage, what did God offer to balance the negative side of Jeremiah's message?

_____

_____

Wednesday

The Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section remind us that Jeremiah's experience wasn't unique. God calls *all* believers to do a special work for Him. He knows us so well that He knows the work He has for us to do, even before we're born. And He warns us that doing His work won't always be easy. It may make us unpopular, or get us into trouble. Your mission is to learn what that job is and do it the best you can—staying true to Him even when times get tough!

Thursday

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

Many believers, like Jeremiah, see things going on in the world around them—maybe even in the church—that don't seem right. God calls us to speak out—not in condemnation but in love—against sin, injustice, and cruelty.

What things do you see going on around you that you think are wrong?

_____

_____

What would happen if you spoke out and said those things were wrong? What response might you get from people around you?

_____

_____

Friday

Read Ephesians 4:15.

Look back at your answers for yesterday's two questions. Speaking out against wrongdoing is a tricky business. It's easy to slip into being judgmental or self-righteous rather than "speaking the truth in love."

Think and pray about what you wrote yesterday. Do you think God is calling you to be a "Jeremiah" right now by drawing attention to something in your community or church that's not according to His will? If so, talk to Him and to an older Christian you trust about what would be the best way to approach the situation, so that you'll bring glory to God.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 34.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companionbooks#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.