

Accept Your Commission  
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Beginning our study of Jeremiah

Here are some rhetorical questions...not to be answered out loud but to be pondered in your heart:

- Have you ever sensed that God was calling you to to a task or ministry?
- How did you respond?
- Have people ever commented that you seem "born" to do certain things?
- Have you ever prayed about why God gave you those gifts and how he intended for you to use them for His glory?

John McCutchen, *the famous illustrator, drew a cartoon for the one-hundredth anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth. The drawing shows two men standing on the edge of a snow-covered forest in Kentucky on a cold February morning in 1809. A man in the general store asks, "What's the news around here?" The other man answers, "Nothing much. Oh, there's a new baby over at Tom Lincoln's. That's all. Nothing ever happens around here"* (Grant, *The Way of the Cross*, 137–38).

Statement: If you believe your Bible, for every child conceived God has a life's purpose to be achieved.

In other words, God had a plan for each of us before we were even conceived. That was true of the prophet Jeremiah and it is true for me and you! The question then is HOW WILL WE RESPOND TO THE PURPOSE HE HAS FOR US?

Who was Jeremiah?

- Contrary to what you've heard in the song...Jeremiah was NOT (fill in the blank)
- Jeremiah WAS a PROPHET
- A PROPHET was one of three major religious roles in ancient Israel
- The PRIEST - Taught and applied the law
- The WISE MAN - Gave counsel and educated young men
- The PROPHET's task was characterized by DECLARATION "This is what the Lord says"

(Adult Leader Guide: Pg. 20 EXPLORATION)

Easton's Bible Dictionary:

*Prophets were the immediate organs of God for the communication of his mind and will to men (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19).*

The prophet Jeremiah was called at the end of a DYING NATION, the land of Judah. It was a pretty depressing job.

Ray Stedman writes:

*Jeremiah's ministry covered about forty years, and during all this time the prophet never once saw any signs of success in his ministry. His message was one of denunciation and reform, and the people never obeyed him. The other prophets saw in some measure the impact of their message upon the nation -- but not Jeremiah. He was called to a ministry of failure, and yet he was enabled to keep going for forty long years and to be faithful to God and to accomplish God's purpose: to witness to a decayed nation*

You can see why Jeremiah was called the "weeping prophet."

Let's dive in beginning in verse 4-6 of Chapter 1.

Jeremiah 1:4-6

New International Version (NIV)

The Call of Jeremiah

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

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

Group 1 -

- Verse 4: What TWO WAYS could you interpret this verse (hint: also see verse 9)?
- God revealed to Jeremiah His plans for him
- God gave Jeremiah His words to speak in carrying out that plan.
- Verse 4: How does the "word of the LORD" come to you and me today?
- Verse 5: When did God say he knew Jeremiah?
- Before he was born.
- Verse 5: What does "knew" mean?
- A few weeks ago I made the point that there is "know about" and then there is "know" they are different.

As we said a minute ago:

Statement: If you believe your Bible, for every child conceived God has a life's purpose to be achieved.

The question is HOW WILL WE RESPOND TO THE PURPOSE HE HAS FOR US?

- Verse 6: What are the typical reasons we give when we argue with God about something he's called us to do?
- Verse 6: In light of God's power, why do our arguments seem silly?

Ray Stedman again:

*...when from a mire of depression and discouragement, the prophet is called back to the promise of God; when he is reminded that God is greater than circumstances and that no matter how depressing they may be, or how negative, the God who calls him is the God who is able to sustain him in the midst of it; when he gets his eyes off himself and back on to God (like Peter walking on the water), he begins to walk again.*

Our lesson commentary says:

*Human weakness often is a point in which God reveals His vast strength. For any ministry work to be successful, God must empower it. Too often Christians evaluate opportunities to serve the Lord based solely on their talents rather than on a reliance upon Him.*

Statement: When we compare our inadequacies to God's power we are left with no good argument.

Jeremiah 1:7-10

New International Version (NIV)

7 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. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

9 Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

Group 2 -

- Verse 7: How did God REFUTE Jeremiah's protest?
- Basically, He said CUT IT OUT...DON'T SAY THAT. I'm not taking NO for an answer.
- Verse 7: Jeremiah said he was too young. Someone with a study Bible...how old do scholars think he was?
- About 20 (a range of 16-25 years old)
- Moses protested God's call too, how was his protest compared to Jeremiah's?
- Moses said: I'm too OLD and I don't speak well.
- Verse 8: What does this verse say about what Jeremiah will be facing?
- Fearful resistance from people "do not be afraid of them".

Group 3 -

- Someone in the group look up and be ready to read to the class these verses (feel free to divide them up among several people if you like):
- Hebrews 13:5b and 13:6
- 1 Chronicles 28:20
- Psalms 37:25
- Isaiah 10:17
- Verse 9: What does this verse say about how God helps us carry out our calling.
- God equips us. He will not call us to do something without equipping us to do it.

- Verse 10: Why do you often have to "uproot" or "tear down" before you "build up"?

The point to remember: God will equip us if we'll be OBEDIENT to His call.

Next God used some real world ILLUSTRATIONS to show Jeremiah what would happen.

Jeremiah 1:11-14

New International Version (NIV)

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

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

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

- Jeremiah is walking along and when asked "What do you see?" he says "the branch of an almond tree"
- Almond trees were known for their early blossoms
- That signaled the awakening of a new season
- Something is up. Something is about to BURST FORTH.
- Play on words in verse 11: the word for "tree" in Hebrew sounds similar to the word for "watch"
- God says He was "watching to see that my word is fulfilled."

13 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."

14 The LORD said to me, "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land.

- This time Jeremiah saw a boiling pot on an open fire...tilted (opening in the rocks to stoke the fire)
- What happens if you let a pot keep boiling without taking some kind of action?
- Invasion of Judah almost had to come from the North (geography...desert on two sides and the Mediterranean Sea on the third.)
- The NORTH was Babylon...a coming JUDGEMENT because of the continuous SINFUL BEHAVIORS of the land of Judah.

Jeremiah 1:17-19

New International Version (NIV)

17 "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. 18 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. 19 They will fight against

you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

Group 4 -

- Verse 17: In YOUR WORDS, How is God BRINGING THIS DIALOG WITH JEREMIAH to a close?
- God CHALLENGES Jeremiah for a response: Get up and get ready.
- What does the second part of Verse 17 mean?

The Holman OT Commentary:

*This meant whatever attitude Jeremiah took when the enemy came against him, Yahweh would intensify and make it of an even greater degree. “Be strong and I will strengthen you more. Grovel before them, and I will make you grovel even more.” This sounded like a harsh warning, but it was realistic. If Jeremiah panicked when opposition arose, he would be totally discredited.*

- Verses 18 and 19: What do these verses tell you about what Jeremiah was facing?
- Verses 18 and 19: What do these verses say to you about how God will equip us for our calling?

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*In spite of the demands of the task and the difficulties of the times, Jeremiah accepted God's call. He knew his own deficiencies, but he also knew that God was greater and would enable him to do the job. The message God gave him was indeed dangerous, but God was watching over His word to fulfill it and would protect His faithful servant*

So What's The Takeaway?

- If you believe your Bible, for every child conceived God has a life's purpose to be achieved.
- When we compare our inadequacies to God's power we are left with no good argument.
- The question is not whether God has called us...the question is WILL WE BE OBEDIENT?
- God never calls us without equipping us through both HIS POWER and HIS PRESENCE.
- If we move in the direction of OBEDIENCE, He will equip us.

Are you and I being obedient to God's calling? What will we do this week to BE OBEDIENT?