

Jer 1:1-19 – The Weeping Prophet

In this first guide in this series we will be looking at Jer 1:1-19.

First Study Jer 1:1-19

Beginning the Meeting

- Begin the meeting with a check in. What have you found challenging this week? Where have you experienced God's goodness.
- Pray to God with thanks for his blessings to the group in this past week and ask him for our needs. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us to truth in our study.
- If your group has younger disciples (whether young in age or in experience of God) then try and keep prayers simple, and avoid sounding professional or overly religious, to reduce intimidation and when done as a group, it helps to shape them as a disciple.

Beginning the Study

Remember: This section's aim is not to throw facts at the group, as that relies on people knowing the right answer from the wrong, nor is it for you to sit there and dole out wisdom; the aim here is to facilitate discovery, to reinforce their understanding of the word of God, and help equip them to understand the bible themselves (not that facts aren't important, hence the occasional appendix is included).

Read Jer 1:1-19

You might also like to read it a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Now have a conversation about the passage and focus on these two big questions:

- What does this say about God?
- What does this say about people?

As people share their thoughts always feel free to ask: Where do you see that in these verses?

Passage Specific Questions:

- What do we learn about Jeremiah in this passage? How would you characterise his personality? What insights do you get into Jeremiah's motives or values in this section?
- In verse 5 we are told that God knew Jeremiah before he was born and had appointed him to a task. Are there any implications that can be taken from this for God's knowledge and plans for us?
- Do we have prophets in the same sense today as Jeremiah was? Why or why not?
- Imagine you are being told to go against the Kings of the land of Israel (note that societies are far more tyrannical than modern day Australia, think more of Iran or Russia for the severity of tyranny that pervades this time period) and are told that you must deliver to them prophecies of doom, how would you react?
- What promises and encouragements does God give to Jeremiah in this passage? How might these also encourage us?

Concluding the Session

It is important to learn new truths about each-other and about God's word, however it is equally important to find new obedience steps to help us in our journeys, remember that knowledge - focused understanding can be good, but without obedience and Godly action, it is not proper discipleship

What will you do about this?

Get everyone to come up with their own answer to the question, and let the group help if they're struggling, or let them take time to think on it. Being a small or simple task is not a bad thing, so long as they are committed to being led by the Holy Spirit. Have everyone share their commitment so you can ask next week how they are going, remembering that it is their journey and it is ok to fail.

An extra challenge could be to ask them to share what they have learned with another person, another disciple from a different group is an excellent idea – just make sure they name who they are sharing with, to help them cement their commitment to sharing in their mind.

Jer 7:1-15 – The Weeping Prophet

Introduction

- What are some things that we are tempted to trust in other than God? Make a list
- How many of the things on the list would you class as ‘religious’ things?

Read Jeremiah 7:1-15

You might also like to read it a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Passage Specific Questions:

- What wrong behaviours does God criticise the people of Judah for?
- Where are they failing to love God and love their neighbour?
- What does God want them to do in response to his criticism?
- What are the consequences for doing nothing about these things?
- The people are also challenged by God for saying ‘the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord’. Was the temple a bad thing in itself? What was the purpose of the temple?
- How had the temple become a problem for Israel?
- How does the reference to Shiloh in verses 12-15 show that history is repeating itself for the people of Israel?
 - [The precursor to the temple, the tabernacle, was located at Shiloh. In 1 Samuel 4, in an attempt to win a battle, the Israelites take the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh to use it as a sort of ‘magic token’ to ensure they win. The Ark is captured because the people don't trust and obey God but still think that he will fight on their side.]
- Jesus himself quotes Jeremiah 1:11 when he overturns the tables in the temple (see Matthew 21:12-13). As God in human flesh come to live amongst us how does Jesus replace the temple?
- What ‘religious’ things might we trust in today while persisting in unjust and sinful behaviour?
- What is the proper response where we recognise this happening?
- How do we guard ourselves against falling into this sort of ‘religious’ trap?

Going out to serve God

- What is one thing that you need to do in response to this passage?
- Pray together
 - Confessing and turning away from things that are out of step with God
 - Asking God to strengthen your trust in Jesus rather than placing it anything else
 - Empowering you to do the thing you named as a response to today's passage

Appendix 1: the Almond Tree

Through a pun based on a vision, the Lord assured the prophet that the divine message spoken through him would be fulfilled. When Jeremiah identified an almond branch (*saqed*), the Lord

punned on its name, announcing that He was “watching” (*soqed*) carefully to assure the realization of the prophetic word.¹

Appendix 2: Too Young

It is important to remember that in this age/time period, that it was a true Patriarchy, which meant that men were dominant over women, as the old were over the young. So when Jeremiah claims he is too young, he is speaking of his culture’s predilection to respecting the elderly more than his age.

Think of it as he is an intern asked to boss around the senior partners as if he had authority to speak at a board meeting (let alone be there).

¹ Chisholm, R. B. (1998). [The Major Prophets](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 294). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Jer 15:10-21 – The Weeping Prophet: When God lets you down

Introduction

- Can you think of a time when someone has let you down? How did you feel?
- Have you ever felt like God has let you down? What was this like?

Read Jeremiah 15:10-21

- This passage is a dialogue or conversation between Jeremiah and God. The best way to read it is in two parts with someone speaking Jeremiah's lines and someone speaking God's lines
 - Verse 10 = Jeremiah
 - Verses 11-14 = God
 - Verses 15-18 = Jeremiah
 - Verses 19-21 = God

You might also like to read it a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences (note that this is a very tricky passage to translate and so different versions will vary quite a bit especially in verses 11-12).

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Passage Specific Questions:

- Create a mind map together on the topic 'Jeremiah's complaint'. If mind maps aren't your thing then you can break it down with questions instead: How would you describe Jeremiah's complaint in relation to:
 - Emotionally
 - Physically
 - Other people's treatment of him
 - God's treatment of him
- What truths about God does Jeremiah cling to even amid his pain and complaining?
- What four requests/commands does Jeremiah make of God in verse 15? Are these reasonable?
- Jeremiah claims that God has deceived him (verse 18). Why might Jeremiah feel this way? Have you ever felt like this?
- Is it ok for Jeremiah to speak to God like this? Why or why not? Are there other examples of this in the bible?
- In God's responses
 - What challenges does he give to Jeremiah?
 - What promises does he make? (As part of this compare 15:20 to 1:18-19)
- How should we respond when we feel like God has let us down? Is lamenting and complaining to God a reasonable response for us?

Going out to serve God

- What is one thing that you need to do in response to this passage?
- Pray together
 - Telling God the times that you feel that he has let you down
 - Asking for God to act in situations where you are unhappy, frustrated or struggling
 - Thanking God for his intimate knowledge of you and his faithful character

Jer 15:10-21 – The Weeping Prophet: False Prophets

Introduction

Can you think of someone who has prophesied falsely?
Why do you think they did that? What consequence and impact did it have for you?

Has God ever given you a prophesy? How might you test it is from God?

Read Jeremiah 23:15-32

This passage begins mid-chapter, and it is worth reviewing what has come before verse 15 to understand the context (such as verses 9-14), note: verse 23 is a rhetorical question that changes depending on translation (the idea from the Hebrew is that God is not only close, but also far away, and that you cannot hide from God – they are two rhetorical questions with a negative answer)

You might also like to read it a second time in an alternative translation and discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Passage Specific Questions:

1. What is your understanding of a prophet, and of a false prophet?
2. Why might it have been difficult for the people of Judah to discern a false prophet? (Notice that Jeremiah was warning "repent or God will respond" and the false prophets were saying "you'll be fine, he has blessed you.")
3. Christian scholars say that God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Considering the opening passage, where God speaks of giving people bitterness and poison; do you think God is speaking literally or symbolically, if symbolically, what could he mean?
4. If God is love, how can this be seen as a loving act?
5. God says that his word is like fire and a hammer, what do you make of this?
6. One of the names of Jesus is The Living Word. Does this imagery help you understand Jesus more? Discuss.

7. God says that those who have stood before Him and listened to Him speak His words and turn His people away from their evil deeds; is this exclusive to His prophets? What does it mean for you?
8. Are there any promises, blessings or timeless principles God offers/provides, and how do they relate to you today?
9. If you knew someone who was scared to share a prophesy today because they've read how God treated false prophets, what would you say to encourage them to use this good gift? (Remember 1 Corinthians- we are encouraged to seek the good gift of prophecy).

Going out to serve God

- What is one thing that you need to do in response to this passage?
- Pray together.
- Seek Him for the gift of prophecy for those in your group.
- Practise together sharing those words with each other, in humble ways.
- Thank God for the faithfulness of his word.

Jer 31:27-34 – The Weeping Prophet: The New Covenant

Introduction

Before you get deeper into the study, ask what the term ‘the new covenant’ means to the group?

Read Jeremiah 31:27-34

This passage begins mid-chapter, and it is worth reviewing what has come before verse 27 to understand the context (refer to the verse summary if you need to).

You might also like to read it a second time in an alternative translation. Discuss major differences.

Now get the group to retell the passage using their own words in a more conversational style. This is not simply rewording the sentences. If you were telling someone who wasn't there what you had heard, how would you describe it? Is there any information you would fill in for them?

Passage Specific Questions:

- What hope does God give Judah and Israel in verses 27-28?
- Compare Jeremiah 1:10, where God first calls Jeremiah, with Jeremiah 31:28.
 - Where has uprooting, tearing down, overthrowing and destroying happened in Jeremiah?
 - What will planting and building look like?
- What are the people complaining about with the reference to sour grapes?
 - Does the promise of v.30 fill you with comfort? Why or why not?
- God says that the houses of Judah and Israel broke their covenant with him, how?
- What is meant by the following aspects of the new covenant God promises in vv.33-34:
 - God's law being written on hearts and minds
 - God being their God and they being his people
 - People knowing God
 - Forgiveness of wickedness and sin
- How has the new covenant come into reality through Jesus? You might like to reflect on the following passages to help you answer this:
 - Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25
 - Hebrews 8:7-13; 9:15; 10:11-18
 - 2 Corinthians 3:6
- How do we as followers of Jesus experience these aspects of the new covenant in our lives:
 - God's law being written on our hearts and minds

- God being our God and us being his people
- Knowing God
- Forgiveness of our sins

Going out to serve God

- What is one thing that you need to do in response to this passage?
- Pray together
- Thank God for the New Covenant.