God Called Jeremiah

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Jeremiah 1

**MAIN POINT:** God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Ezekiel 11:19-20

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

“"I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born.” These words from Jeremiah 1:5 reveal a Creator who is sovereign, working out everything in agreement with the decision of His will. (Eph. 1:11)

Jeremiah 1:5 ends with a specific call for a man named Jeremiah: “I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah the priest. He lived just north of Jerusalem. Jeremiah’s ministry began when God called him. At that time, Josiah was king of Judah. Whom else did God call in the Old Testament? God called Noah to build an ark (Gen. 6); He called Abram to leave his home...
(Gen. 12:1-4); He called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt (Ex. 3).

Each time God calls someone, He equips him or her to do His work. Like Moses, Jeremiah was hesitant: “Oh no, Lord, God! Look, I don’t know how to speak since I am only a youth” (Jer. 1:6). God assured Jeremiah: “I will be with you” (Jer. 1:8).

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to Judah. Judah was deep in idol worship and other sins. God’s judgment was coming. Jeremiah’s job was to warn them. God gave Jeremiah two visions. The first—a branch of an almond tree—was a sign that God would keep His promise to send judgment, and He would do it soon. The second vision—a boiling pot—meant that God’s judgment was coming from the north. God would bring the Babylonians from the north as judgment on His people. Then God sent Jeremiah out to announce God’s declaration.

As you teach kids, help them connect Jeremiah’s ministry to the ministry of Jesus. God called Jeremiah to warn the people of the judgment for their sin. Jesus also came to tell people to turn from their sin. He didn’t just tell them about the punishment, He took the punishment on Himself.

Additional resources for each session are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.
God Called Jeremiah
Jeremiah 1

The people of Judah were afraid. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by the Assyrians. The people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah were not sure they would survive. God called a priest named Jeremiah to speak to His people. At this time, Josiah was the king of Judah.

God said to 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.”

Being a prophet meant listening to what God said and telling the people God’s message. Jeremiah said, “Oh no, God! I don’t know how to speak in front of other people. I’m just a boy, only a youth.”

God replied, “Don’t say that. You will go where I send you and say what I tell you to say. You do not need to be afraid because I am with you. I will protect you.”

Then God reached out His hand and touched Jeremiah’s mouth. God said, “I am putting you over nations and kingdoms. You will give the people My message. It is a message of destruction, of bad things happening because of their sin. It is also a message of reconstruction. After I tear down the people, I will rebuild them.”

God gave Jeremiah two visions. Visions are like dreams, except Jeremiah was awake. God said, “What do you see, Jeremiah?”

Jeremiah said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.”

“You are right,” God said. The almond branch was a
sign for Jeremiah so he would know that God would do what He said He would, and He would do it soon.

Then Jeremiah saw a second vision. He saw a boiling pot. The pot was overflowing from the north! God told Jeremiah that this vision meant trouble was coming from the north. Trouble would come for everyone in Judah.

God told Jeremiah that the rulers in the north were going to come and set up their kingdoms outside the city gates of Jerusalem. They were going to attack cities in Judah. God was going to judge the people of Judah for their sin. They had walked away from God and worshiped their own man-made gods.

Jeremiah had a big job to do, and God was ready to send him on his way. “Get ready! Tell the people everything I say. Do not be afraid. I am making you strong against the people. They will fight you, but they’ll never win. I’m here to protect you and to rescue you.”

Christ Connection: God had a plan for Jeremiah before Jeremiah was born. God called Jeremiah to share God’s message about sin. In a similar way, God had planned all along to send His Son, Jesus, to show people what God is like and to rescue them from sin.

Want to discover God’s Word? Get Bible Express!

Invite kids to check out this week’s devotionals to discover God gave Jeremiah a difficult job, but He promised to be with him. Later, God promised to give us His Spirit to be with us forever. (Ezek. 11:19–20)

Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/devotionals.
Welcome time
Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Invite kids to share about a time they did not obey instructions given to them by an adult. What happened?

SAY • Today we will discover why we should obey God. Does anyone have any ideas? [Let kids respond.]

Activity page (5 minutes)
Challenge kids to complete “Called by God” on the activity page. Kids should look up each Scripture reference and match the reference to the person whom God called for a special purpose.

As you review the answers, allow kids to share details they know about each person. (1. Abraham, Gen. 12:1-4; 2. Moses, Ex. 3:4-10; 3. Gideon, Judg. 6:11-14; 4. Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:1-8; 5. Jeremiah, Jer. 1:4-5)

SAY • You might remember some of these people from Bible stories we have already learned. Today’s story is about Jeremiah. We will hear how God called him and what God told Jeremiah to do.
Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Silent messages
Write a variety of activities on strips of paper. Prepare one strip of paper for every two kids. (Suggestions: *ride a carousel, wash a car, build a block tower*, and so on)

Guide kids to form pairs. Allow each pair to draw one strip of paper. Explain that the kids should imagine they have important instructions for the rest of the group. The kids should try to figure out what action they should take.

Direct the pairs to take turns performing the action written on the paper. One partner will silently act it out and the other will narrate or provide sound effects. The partners may not say the words on the paper. The rest of the kids should guess what instructions the pair is performing.

**SAY** • Each of you had a message to communicate to the group. These were silent messages, but today we will hear a story from the Bible about a clear message that the prophet Jeremiah gave to God’s people.

OPTION 2: Careful instructions
Form groups of three to five kids. Give each group a set of 20 cards and challenge them to build the tallest tower when you say “go.” Tell the kids to start, being careful not to say the word *go*.

When kids finish, ask if they followed your instructions. As kids realize you never said “go,” gently knock down each of their towers.

**SAY** • You did not completely follow my instructions. In today’s Bible story, whole nations of people refused to obey God. What do you think God did?

Transition to large group

*Jeremiah and Captivity*

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LOW PREP

- strips of paper
- pen or pencil

• playing cards or index cards, 20 per group
SESSION TITLE: God Called Jeremiah
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Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Decorate the room to resemble a children’s museum. Position a desk at the front of the room and hang directional signs pointing to various exhibits, such as Arctic Animals or Medieval Times.

- Cut animal footprints from construction paper and arrange them along a path across the floor.
- Choose to project the theme background slide.

Countdown
Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)
[Large Group Leader enters wearing a security officer’s uniform—black pants and a blue shirt. Leader carries a large set of keys and a flashlight, carefully scanning the room as he or she enters. Leader is surprised to see the kids.]

LEADER • Whoa! Well, hello! I was not expecting you. What are you doing here, anyway? Don’t you know that the museum closed an hour ago? I am just going around locking up.

[Stare at kids suspiciously.] Seriously, why are you
here? Did you hear something about our new Bible exhibits? You know, these exhibits aren’t supposed to open until next month, but since you’re here … and since it’s kind of lonely around here after closing … [excitedly] Would you like to see them? You would? Great! We have time to check out one exhibit. It’s about a guy named Jeremiah. God had a big plan for Jeremiah, and He gave Jeremiah visions. You won’t believe the things Jeremiah saw in his visions! Let’s get going.

**Giant timeline (1 minute)**

Move to the giant timeline to point out today’s Bible story.

**LEADER** • Here is today’s Bible story. It’s called “God Called Jeremiah.” Jeremiah’s story is found in the Bible in the Book of Jeremiah. Imagine that!

The Book of Jeremiah is in the division of the Major Prophets. Now, that doesn’t mean Jeremiah was more important than the minor prophets like Hosea, Jonah, and Joel. That just means the Book of Jeremiah is longer than the books of the Minor Prophets.

**Big picture question (1 minute)**

**LEADER** • As we go through the exhibit, pay attention to see if you can figure out the answer to the big picture question. Our question is, *Why should we obey God?*

Now that is a very good question. Let’s listen carefully to Jeremiah’s story and see if we can find the answer.
Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Jeremiah 1. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video “God Called Jeremiah.”

LEADER • This was a scary time for God’s people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by its enemies, the Assyrians. The people of Judah were probably afraid that they were next!

   God called Jeremiah to give a message to the people. Jeremiah was a priest, and now he would be a prophet of God. **God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.**

   Jeremiah wasn’t sure God had made the right choice. Jeremiah was young. What if people didn’t listen to him? But God promised to be with Jeremiah and to give him the words to say.

   God gave Jeremiah two visions. What did Jeremiah see in the first vision? (a branch of an almond tree) The almond branch was a sign for Jeremiah so he would know that God would do what He said He would, and He would do it soon.

   What did Jeremiah see in the second vision? (a boiling pot) The pot was overflowing from the north. God told Jeremiah that this vision meant trouble was coming from the north. Trouble would come for everyone in Judah because they had sinned.

   God had a plan for Jeremiah before Jeremiah was born. God called Jeremiah to share God’s message about sin. In a similar way, God had planned all along to send His Son, Jesus, to show people what God is like and to rescue them from sin.
Because of their disobedience and sin, Judah faced destruction and needed God to forgive them and rescue them. We are like Judah. Our sin separates us from God, and we need to be forgiven and rescued from our sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from our sin.

**The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me (optional)**

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

**Key passage (5 minutes)**

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Ezekiel 11:19-20.

Invite kids to help you make up motions for the verse so they can memorize the key passage more quickly. Practice saying the verse with motions several times. Then play the key passage song “One Heart.”

**LEADER • Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.** God wants us to turn from sin. He will forgive us and change our hearts.

**Discussion starter video (4 minutes)**

**LEADER • Did you notice in the Bible story that God said that He chose Jeremiah before Jeremiah was even born? God had a purpose for Jeremiah’s life. Did you know we all have a purpose too? Think about that as you watch this video.**
Show the “Unit 15, Session 1” discussion starter video. Guide kids to discuss what they think their purpose in life might be. Allow them to share their thoughts.

**LEADER** • Have you ever thought about your purpose? Did you know that God has a plan for your life? God had a plan for Jeremiah, and He has a plan for you too.

God planned all along to send Jesus to rescue people from sin. This is great news! God created us to give Him glory. We can do this by telling others about Jesus. How might God use you to tell others about His Son?

**Sing (4 minutes)**

**LEADER** • God gave His people a message through the prophet Jeremiah. God has a message for each of us: the gospel, or good news about Jesus. God loves us so much He sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from our sin. Let’s worship God together by singing.

Lead boys and girls to sing “A Way for Us.”

**Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

**LEADER** • God, we thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus. Through Him we know we can have a relationship with You. Give us ears to hear when You call us. Give us courage to obey so that others may hear of Your great love. We love You, Lord. Amen.

**Dismiss to small groups**
The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

**God rules.** Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

**We sinned.** Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

**God provided.** Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

**Jesus gives.** Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

**We respond.** Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He’s already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus. Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.
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Key passage activity (5 minutes)
Before small group, write the words or phrases of the key passage on separate index cards so each kid has one card.

Show the key passage poster where all the kids can see it. Lead the kids to say the key passage with you several times until they are comfortable with the words.

Distribute the key passage cards and challenge kids to arrange themselves in the correct order. Then collect the cards, mix them up, and play again.

SAY • Our key passage is a message that God gave to His people through the prophet Ezekiel. God sent prophets to warn His people what would happen if they disobeyed Him, but He also gave His people wonderful promises for their future.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)
Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Jeremiah 1. Remind them that Jeremiah is in the Old Testament in the division of Major Prophets. If kids need help, encourage them to use the table of contents.

SAY • In today’s Bible story, we learned that God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations. Let’s see what
Ask the following review questions. Encourage kids to look for the answers in Jeremiah 1. If needed, provide the verse number where kids can find the answer.

1. When did God choose Jeremiah? (before he was born, Jer. 1:5)
2. Why was Jeremiah hesitant to obey God’s call? (Jeremiah said he did not know how to speak and he was only a youth, Jer. 1:6)
3. How did God reassure Jeremiah? (God told Jeremiah that he would go to everyone God sent him to and say whatever God told him, Jer. 1:7)
4. What did Jeremiah see in the first vision? (a branch of an almond tree, Jer. 1:11)
5. What did the almond branch mean? (God would do what He said He would do, Jer. 1:12)
6. What did Jeremiah see in the second vision? (a boiling pot overflowing from the north, Jer. 1:13)
7. What did the boiling pot mean? (Disaster would come from the north, Jer. 1:14)

SAY • Even though they had been warned over and over again, the people of Judah would not stop sinning against God. So God told Jeremiah to write His words down on a scroll. Maybe if the people heard about how God was planning to use Babylon—who would attack from the north—to punish them, they would turn back to Him.

God had a plan to bless His people. He had promised to bless the whole world through Abraham’s family. God wanted His people to obey Him. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.
**Activity choice (10 minutes)**

**OPTION 1:** No excuses!

Form teams of three or four kids. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil. Explain that you will call out a request. Kids will have two minutes to list as many excuses as they can think of for not doing the requested action.

Sample requests:
1. Please clean all the church bathrooms.
2. Please copy by hand the entire Book of Psalms.
3. Please do 100 push-ups.

Set a timer and allow kids to write. When kids finish, invite them to share their excuses. Award a point for each excuse not also used by another team. Play additional rounds as time allows.

**SAY** • Do you remember what excuse Jeremiah made when God called him to be a prophet? (“I am only a youth,” Jer. 1:6) Did God accept Jeremiah’s excuse? (no) God told Jeremiah that He would be with him.

God wants us to obey Him and the people He has chosen to take care of us. **Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.**

**OPTION 2:** Write to missionaries

Give each kid a piece of paper and a pen or marker. Provide a list of local or international missionaries your church supports. If you have information about the missionaries or the area in which they are serving, share with the kids.

Encourage kids to write letters or draw pictures to encourage the missionaries in their work of sharing the gospel. Suggest kids tell the missionaries something they learned today about God’s plan for the prophet Jeremiah.

When kids finish, collect the letters and send them to...
the appropriate addresses or organizations.

SAY • Thank you for taking the time to encourage these missionaries. We call all answer God’s call to tell others the good news about Jesus, here or far away!

        God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah’s message for the people was to stop sinning and turn back to God before it was too late. Hundreds of years later, Jesus brought the same message. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the way for sinners to come back to Him and be forgiven.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Instruct the kids to write about what God might be calling them to do for Him. As kids work, talk about the times in the Bible where God used children or teenagers for His purposes. (Examples: Isaac, Gen. 22; Samuel, 1 Sam. 3; Jonathan, 1 Sam. 18; Naaman’s servant, 2 Kings 5; Daniel, Dan. 1)

SAY • We see from the example of Jeremiah today that when God calls, being young is not an excuse to disobey Him. God can use you even when you are young. Ask Him to show you His plan for you.

        Let’s pray. God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to rescue us and for giving us great news to share with others. Please give us courage to do whatever You call us to do. Amen.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Jeremiah Acrostic” on the activity page. Invite kids to open their Bibles to Jeremiah 1 to review the story and list details beginning with the letters in Jeremiah’s name.

        (Sample responses: Jeremiah was a youth; Expected to do a big job; Received visions from God; and so forth)