



STORY 42

Jeremiah against Everyone

JEREMIAH 1

BEFORE THE LESSON

- *Read Jeremiah 1.*
- *Pray for God's help. Ask for the Spirit's help in understanding the passage and for the Lord to open the children's eyes to see who he is, what he has done, and how they should respond to him.*
- *Study the lesson plan below. Use these sections as suggestions. Think of ways to teach it in your own voice.*

THE BIG PICTURE

Help children see how this story connects with the other lessons. Build anticipation by introducing the setting and the significance of what is about to happen in this week's story. {5 minutes}

The Old Testament prophets can be divided into two groups: the major and the minor prophets. Were the minor prophets called “minor” because the prophets were short? No! They were called minor because the books they wrote were short. The major prophets were the opposite; they wrote big books. Isaiah wrote a big book—about 25,000 words! Ezekiel's book is big too—nearly 30,000 words. But do you know what is the biggest book in the Bible (“biggest” meaning “the most words”)? It is not the Psalms, with its 150 songs. (That is the third biggest.) It's not Genesis. (That is the second biggest.) Jeremiah is the biggest book—over 33,000 words! With his pen, Jeremiah shared some really good news. He wrote of God's faithfulness and the promise of his new covenant. But most of what he wrote and spoke about was God's coming judgment against God's unfaithful



people. This was not the news God’s people wanted to hear. Let’s put it this way: Jeremiah didn’t have a lot of friends. But God was his true and faithful friend. God’s steadfast love sustained him throughout his tough life.

TELL THE STORY

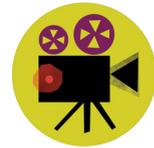
Share the story in one of these three ways. {5–10 minutes}



Read the
Bible passage
together



Read from
*The Biggest Story
Bible Storybook*



Play *The
Biggest Story*
video

TEACH THE STORY

Retell the story with an emphasis on what it says about God and about us. {10 minutes}

Big Truth
When we stand
with God, he
is for us even
when everyone
is against us.

What is the hardest job in the world? Brain surgeon? Stuntman? Spy? Prison guard? Alaskan crab fisherman? Those are all hard jobs. Being called by God to serve as a prophet was really hard too. Prophets had the best job when Israel was obeying God, because the people loved their words of encouragement and blessing. But when Israel was not obeying God, the prophets had to rebuke and warn—which the people hated.

Of all the prophets, no one had a harder job than Jeremiah. Israel was called to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood. That means they were to think and act differently than the nations around them. But in Jeremiah’s day, instead of living like special people following God’s special commands, they lived just like people who didn’t know the true and living God. They worshiped fake gods that they carved out of wood or stone! They mistreated the poor and needy! They lied, to others and to God. And worst of all, they thought it didn’t matter because they were “God’s people” and had “God’s temple.” Jeremiah’s job was to speak God’s judgments against them “for all their evil in forsaking” him (Jer. 1:16). One day, God showed Jeremiah a vision of his coming judgment. In this vision there was a boiling pot, which represented the Babylonians, their enemies. That pot was about to be pushed over and everything in its path

destroyed. God gave this vision so Jeremiah could warn the people that the Babylonians were coming to destroy the Israelites' homes in Jerusalem. He said that God would judge Jerusalem for two years by punishing them through the Babylonians—they would burn the beautiful temple and knock down the strong city walls.

This message was not well received, nor were others like it. Jeremiah was treated very badly. No one liked him. No one listened. It made Jeremiah sad! He was so sad that he was called the weeping prophet. But he should also be called the faithful prophet. What kept Jeremiah going was God's calling. Before he was even born, God made him "a prophet to the nations" (1:5). When Jeremiah was a boy, he was afraid and told God, "I do not know how to speak" (1:6), God comforted and reassured him by saying, "Do not be afraid. I will tell you what to say, protect you, and deliver you from those who fight against you" (see 1:8–9, 19). God kept his word—as he always does. And Jeremiah kept preaching the hard message of God's judgment.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Show how the story points to Jesus and his rescue mission as the Snake Crusher.
{5 minutes}

When we say that Jeremiah was treated very badly, we mean *very badly*. Once he was tossed into prison and fed only a piece of bread each day. Another time he was lowered into a deep dungeon, a deep hole in the ground. But God was with Jeremiah and rescued him. And everything Jeremiah spoke to the Israelites came true. He said the Babylonians would burn Jerusalem to ashes and capture God's people. That happened. He also said God's people would be brought home after seventy years. That also happened. He said the mighty Babylonians would fall. That happened. He spoke of a new covenant, a new promise, where God would remember his people's sins no more and write his law on their hearts (see Jer. 31:33–34). And—you guessed it—that happened too. But how? Through Jesus. While Jeremiah brought a message from God, Jesus was the message from God. He is the Word of God made flesh. And as they did to Jeremiah, God's people turned against Jesus. Through all he suffered for us—rejection, betrayal, denial, mockery, and death—Jesus made the new covenant. He rescued his people from judgment, freed them to obey, and promised to bring them to their forever home with God.

3

Engage

DISCUSS THE STORY

Discuss the story in smaller groups. {10 minutes}

1. **QUESTION:** What were some of the reasons God was angry with his people? What did he want them to do? What does he want us to do?

TAKEAWAY: God calls us to obey and do what he says.

2. **QUESTION:** Because the Israelites were disobeying, what message did God give Jeremiah for the people? Did the Israelites listen to the message and turn away from their sin? So what happened?

TAKEAWAY: There is judgment for disobeying God.

3. **QUESTION:** Since Jeremiah was young when God called him to be a prophet, how did he feel about it? What did he say to God? And how did God comfort him? When Jeremiah spoke God's word to the Israelites, how did they treat him? What did God do for Jeremiah then?

TAKEAWAY: God will be with us, even if everyone is against us.

4. **QUESTION:** Despite all the bad news about judgment for disobedience, what good news did Jeremiah share about the new covenant that would come? How did Jesus bring about this good news and rescue sinners from judgment?

TAKEAWAY: Through Jesus's death, God made a new covenant that rescues us from judgment and frees us to obey God.

ACTIVITIES

Download coloring pages and activity pages from TheBiggestStory.com, or choose from the following activity suggestions. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: Cupside Down Game

Supply List: large plastic cups (at least two per child), timer

Before Class: Gather supplies. Place large plastic cups randomly around the play area, making sure there are an equal number of cups facing up and down.

Memory Verse

Do not be
afraid of them,
for I am with
you to deliver
you, declares
the LORD.

JEREMIAH 1:8

Divide children into two teams and assign one team to be the “cup up” team and the other team to be the “cup down” team. Explain that for 3 minutes each team will work to run around the room and place the cups up or down depending on their team’s objective. After 3 minutes, players freeze while a leader counts how many cups are facing each direction. The team with the most cups in their direction wins that round. Play three rounds, and the team who wins two of the three rounds is the winner! Remind children that, like Jeremiah, we may feel everything is working against us, but we should continue doing what God commands.

Option 2: Messenger Game

Supply List: none

Have children line up shoulder to shoulder facing forward. The teacher chooses one person to be the “prophet” and that person stands facing the group about 10 feet away. Explain that they are to obey each command of the prophet. And when they hear the prophet say “Stop sinning!” they must try to run to the other side of the room without getting tagged. Then the teacher whispers a command to the prophet (e.g., do ten jumping jacks, hop in place like a bunny, act like a monkey, run in place). The prophet communicates the message to the group, and they obey. The teacher can decide how many separate commands to give, but the final message will always be “Stop sinning!” As the children run, the prophet tries to tag one person. That child is the new prophet in the next round. If no one is tagged, the previous child continues to be the prophet.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Prophet Ball

Supply List: soccer-sized rubber ball

Before Class: Gather supplies.

Have children stand in a circle, foot to foot with legs spread shoulder-width apart. Explain that the goal is to hit the ball between other players’ legs while blocking the ball from going through their own legs. They must use an open palm rather than grabbing or throwing the ball. If the ball does go through a child’s legs, that child gets the first letter of the word *obey*. The next time the ball goes through the same child’s legs, he or she gets the next letter of the word *obey*, until someone spells the entire word. When you have all four letters, you are out. The last two players remaining win the game.

Option 2: Cupside Down Game

See Above

CRAFTS

Choose from the following craft suggestions depending on time, age ranges, and group size. {10–15 minutes}

K–2nd

Option 1: “I Have Put My Words in Your Mouth” Picture

Supply List: white cardstock, washable red stamp pads or red finger paint, baby wipes, paper plates (if using red paint)

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print a large outline of a mouth/lips on cardstock with Jeremiah 1:9 printed on the bottom (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child the cardstock with the mouth outline. Set stamp pads or small paper plates with red finger paint on each table. Have children press their thumb on the stamp pad or paint and then place it on the mouth. Children continue making thumbprints until the outline of the mouth is filled. When they’re done, give children baby wipes to clean their hands. Jeremiah 1:9 says, “Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, ‘Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.’”

Option 2: Cup Telephone

Supply List: paper, paper cups, pen, string, scissors, paper clips, markers, stickers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print “Turn from sin” multiple times on paper and cut the phrase out so that it fits on a cup (one per child). Cut pieces of string about 24 inches long (one per child). Make cup telephones by using a pen to poke holes in the bottom of each cup so the ends of the string fit through. Attach string to two cups by threading through each base and tying each end of the string to a paper clip to hold it in place (one set per child). Make a sample craft.

Distribute a cup telephone and the “Turn from sin” phrase to each child. Place markers, stickers, and glue sticks on each table. Have children decorate with markers and stickers as desired. Then have them glue the “Turn from sin” paper to one of the cups. Demonstrate how to pull the string tight and talk/listen to messages with someone on the other end.

3rd–5th

Option 1: Megaphone

Supply List: paper, large paper cups (one per child), yarn, hole punchers, scissors (one per child), stickers, markers, crepe paper streamers, glue sticks

Before Class: Gather supplies. Print paper with the Big Truth and cut into a strip that will fit on a paper cup (one per child). Cut pieces of yarn about 18 inches long (one per child). Make a sample craft.

Give each child a paper cup, scissors, yarn, and Big Truth paper strip. Set stickers, markers, hole punchers, crepe paper, and glue sticks on each table. Have children glue the Big Truth to the cup. Have children cut out the bottom of the cup and punch a hole in the side of the cup. Have children thread the yarn through the hole and connect the ends with a knot so it can hang around their neck. Children should decorate the cup with markers, stickers, and crepe paper streamers. Remind children that Jeremiah was a young prophet who spoke God’s words. We, too, can speak God’s words.

Option 2: Cup Telephone

See Above



Visit TheBiggestStory.com for downloadable coloring pages, activity pages, and craft templates for this lesson.