

A Bible Study by

Melissa Spoelstra

Jeremiah

Daring to Hope
in an Unstable World

Unstable



Jeremiah

Daring to Hope
in an Unstable World



A Bible Study by
Melissa Spoelstra

JEREMIAH: DARING TO HOPE IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

Copyright © 2014 Abingdon Press

All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission can be addressed to Permissions, The United Methodist Publishing House, P.O. Box 801, 201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37202-0801, or e-mailed to permissions@umpublishing.org.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

ISBN 978-1-4267-8887-1

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Those marked NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com.

Those marked HCSB are from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

Those marked NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



Contents

Introduction..... 5

Week 1: Raising the White Flag
Surrender..... 10

Week 2: Recognizing Counterfeits and the Real Deal
Idolatry..... 40

Week 3: Opening Our Ears
Listening 72

Week 4: Staying Spiritually Sensitive
Heart Issues..... 100

Week 5: Quitting the Blame Game
Personal Responsibility 134

Week 6: Finding the Source of Our Hope
The Promised Messiah 168

Notes 198

Memory Verses 201





About the Author

Melissa Spoelstra is a popular women's conference speaker, Bible teacher, and writer who is madly in love with Jesus and passionate about studying God's Word and helping women of all ages to seek Christ and know Him more intimately through serious Bible study. Having a degree in Bible theology, she enjoys teaching God's Word to the body of Christ, traveling to diverse groups and churches across the nation and recently to Nairobi, Kenya, for a women's prayer conference. Melissa has published articles in *ParentLife*, *Women's Spectrum*, and *Just Between Us* and writes a regular blog in which she shares her musings about what God is teaching her on any given day. She lives in Dublin, Ohio, with her pastor husband, Sean, and their four kids: Zach, Abby, Sara, and Rachel.

Follow Melissa:

Twitter	@MelSpoelstra
Instagram	@Daring2Hope
Facebook	@AuthorMelissaSpoelstra
Her blog	MelissaSpoelstra.com (check here also for event dates and booking information)





Introduction

When we look around at today's world, *hope* usually isn't the first word that comes to mind. In many ways we live in an age of uncertainty. If we allow our thoughts to linger on things such as the national debt, the pesticide-covered food supply, the condition of the environment, the increase in violence toward even our most innocent, and the looming moral bankruptcy of our culture, we can get pretty discouraged. The situation only compounds when we add our personal issues to these corporate ones. Life can be rough. When marriages fail, bank accounts run low, friendships end, or the everyday demands of a fast-paced life get us down, we sometimes feel the ground shaking beneath our feet.

Living in such an unstable world, we tend to have a propensity to worry. Other choices of fear, doubt, and bitterness call us to select their posture when life gets overwhelming. Yet God offers us another choice. Through Him we can dare to hope—not in the government, our family, a job, or even the church. God calls us to surrender our wills to His and rest our hope in Him alone.

Sometimes I get moving through life at a breakneck pace and forget to be daring with hope. I command the calendar, devote time to work, drive the kids around, do some laundry, take care of other chores and errands, make plans for dinner, check in with friends, and then get up tomorrow and start all over again. I need a caution light as I'm racing through life to wake me up and say, "Slow down and pay attention!"

I got one of these wake-up calls recently while driving. Instead of a caution light, I got a caution bump. I had just dropped my girls off at a school activity and was on my way home. Earlier I had dumped out my purse on the passenger seat, frantically looking for something I needed at a moment's notice. Now I was

stopped at a red light, and I leaned over to put things back in my purse. Suddenly I felt a huge jolt as my van bumped into the minivan in front of me. I slammed the brake down hard, backed up, and went to talk to the woman in front of me. Thankfully, there was no damage to either car, but as I finished the short drive home, I was a little shaken. How could my foot have let up on the brake without me even realizing it? I was so caught up in my task that I slowly let the car slide forward without even being aware of what I was doing.

I laughed with God as I thought about what He has been teaching me through the Book of Jeremiah: I need to pay attention to really important things (like keeping my foot on the brake) instead of letting a small distraction (like my purse contents) put me in danger of hurting myself and others. This is so true in my spiritual life. The minutia of day-to-day life as well as the trials that so frequently present themselves put me in danger of missing the hope in God's plans for me.

Other wake-up calls come in my life as I study and understand God's Word better. Lately, I've found the words of the prophet Jeremiah echoing into my life and culture with great relevance. This prophet also found himself in a nation known for materialism, economic crisis, political globalization, and religious plurality. Sound familiar? Francis Schaeffer said it this way,

What, then should be our message in such a world—to the world, to the church, and to ourselves?

We do not have to guess what God would say about this because there was a period of history, biblical history, which greatly parallels our day. That is the day of Jeremiah. The book of Jeremiah and the book of Lamentations show how God looks at a culture which knew Him and deliberately turned away.¹

As we delve into the Book of Jeremiah together, we'll find God calling out to His people. He continually asks them to place their hope in Him instead of political alliances, material possessions, and people. Jeremiah gets his reputation as the "weeping prophet" honestly as he delivers weighty messages full of bad news and cautions for living. Yet if we are willing to delve beneath the surface of God's warnings to His heart of love behind them, we find the underlying message: that hope-filled living is possible even in an unstable world. How do we do this? Where do we start?



Six hope-inspiring themes lift right off the pages of Jeremiah's manuscript. Rather than go through the book chapter by chapter, we will explore these themes that are consistent in many verses throughout the chapters. Jeremiah writes about:

Raising the White Flag (Surrender)
Recognizing Counterfeits and the Real Deal (Idolatry)
Opening Our Ears (Listening)
Staying Spiritually Sensitive (Heart Issues)
Quitting the Blame Game (Personal Responsibility)
Finding the Source of Our Hope (The Promised Messiah)

These themes or guidelines for living will be the focus of our six weeks together in Jeremiah's book.

Options for Study

Over the years I've found that what I put into a Bible study directly correlates to what I get out of it. When I take time to do the homework daily instead of cramming it all into one sitting, God's truths sink deeper as I have more time to reflect and meditate on what God is teaching me. When I am intentional about getting together with other women to watch videos and have discussion, I find that this helps keep me from falling off the Bible study wagon midway. Also, making a point to memorize verses and dig deeper through commentaries greatly benefits my soul.

At other times, however, I have bitten off more than I can chew. When our faith is new, our children are small, or there are great demands on our time because of difficult circumstances, ailing parents, or other challenges, we need to be realistic about what we will be able to finish. So this study is designed with options that enable you to tailor it for your particular circumstances and needs.

1. Basic Study. The basic study includes five days of homework for each week and a weekly group session in which you watch a video and discuss what you are learning together. Each day's homework can be completed in about 20-30 minutes. **Boldface purple** type indicates write-in-the-book questions and activities.

2. Deeper Study. If you want an even deeper study, there is an optional "Read Through Jeremiah" challenge that will take you through the entire Book of Jeremiah in order, providing both context and continuity for your study of the prophet's writings. Watch for the prompts in the margins. Additional Digging Deeper articles are also available online (see AbingdonWomen.com/Jeremiah) for those who would like deeper historical context that will take you to the next level in understanding the days of Jeremiah and their connections to our



modern world. Finally, memory verses are provided for each week of study so that you may meditate on and memorize key truths from God's Word.

3. Lighter Commitment. If you are in a season of life in which you need a lighter commitment, I encourage you to give yourself permission to do what you can do. God will bless your efforts and speak to you through this study at every level of participation.

Take some time right now to pray and decide which study option is right for you. Then fill in the circles next to the aspects of the study God is calling you to complete. Be realistic, but also allow yourself to be stretched and challenged as the Holy Spirit directs.

- Make the group sessions a priority. Watch the video and engage in discussion and group learning.**
- Complete as much of the homework as you can between sessions.**
- Complete all five days of homework between sessions.**
- Memorize the memory verse(s) (1-2 verses for each week of lessons).**
- Take the "Read Through Jeremiah" challenge, which will guide you in reading through the entire book over the course of the study.**
- Read the additional Digging Deeper articles found online that give additional insights and information on related topics.**

Be sure to let someone in your group know which parts of the study you plan to do so that you have some accountability and encouragement.

A Final Word

Jeremiah's message was not a popular one. Unfortunately, the people of Judah did not see the hope in God's plans for them, and they did not heed Jeremiah's warnings. Their failure to make life changes in light of God's call to hope in Him led to exile. My prayer is that we will not be like them. I pray that God's timeless truths from this ancient book will help us take a careful look at our lives as we slow down and examine where we might be off course and how we can get back on track.

In the ninth chapter of Jeremiah, we find God calling specifically to women with His truth:

*Listen, you women, to the words of the Lord;
open your ears to what he has to say.
Teach your daughters to wail;
teach one another how to lament.*

God is calling us to open our ears to Him as well. He knows life can throw us curveballs, and He knows how easy it is to get swept away with the cultural current of despair. Jeremiah dared to hope—even when his family rejected him. He lost his home and was mocked, imprisoned, and unjustly accused. He lost friends and finances. His circumstances remained bitter, but he learned to keep his heart soft and hopeful in the midst of tough stuff. As we study together, may we be able to say with Jeremiah:

*Yet I still dare to hope
when I remember this:*

*The faithful love of the Lord never ends!
His mercies never cease.
Great is his faithfulness;
his mercies begin afresh each morning.*

Lamentations 3:21-23

Are you in need of fresh mercies today? Then get ready to embark on a journey to find God's promise of hope for your life and your circumstances. I dare you to hope!

Melissa



*"For I know the plans I have for you,"
says the LORD. "They are plans for good
and not for disaster, to give you a
future and a hope."*

Jeremiah 29:11

Week 1

RAISING THE WHITE FLAG

Surrender



Memory Verse

*“When I discovered your words, I devoured them.
They are my joy and my heart’s delight,
for I bear your name,
O LORD God of Heaven’s Armies.”*

Jeremiah 15:16

Fun Fact:

Jeremiah is the longest of the sixty-six books of the Bible.

Day 1: No Excuses

As we meet Jeremiah in this study, we’ll find out why he is called the most “psychological of the prophets and at the same time the most interesting as a man.”¹ He was a lot like you and me. He got depressed, made excuses, and even did some whining occasionally. However, what sets him apart from most of us is his unrelenting commitment to communicate God’s message.

Although Jeremiah’s words resound from over 2,600 years ago, they echo into our day with uncanny relevance. As I noted in the introduction, Francis Schaeffer agreed. Recognizing in the 1960s that our world was entering a “post-Christian” era, he made an observation that bears repeating:

What, then should be our message in such a world—to the world, to the church, and to ourselves?

We do not have to guess what God would say about this because there was a period of history, biblical history, which greatly parallels our day. That is the day of Jeremiah. The book of Jeremiah and the book of Lamentations show how God looks at a culture which knew Him and deliberately turned away.²

Since the time that Schaeffer wrote those words, how much further do you think we have come as a nation from living in close fellowship with our Creator? What are some indicators in our society that reveal a divergence from God’s ways?

Digging Deeper

When did Jeremiah’s ministry take place? Who were his contemporaries? Which kings ruled during his forty years of prophesying? To get a grasp of where his account fits in God’s larger story of hope, go to AbingdonWomen.com/Jeremiah and read Digging Deeper Week 1: “Where Does Jeremiah Fit in the Biblical Timeline?”



The changing of a culture starts with the individuals who are living within it. If we long to see a turning back to God in our land, then we need to recognize that it starts with you and me. Not only does Jeremiah's prophecy matter today; God Himself gives us some direct instructions regarding it.

Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts.

Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God

2 Peter 1:19-21

Read 2 Peter 1:19-21 in the margin. What must we do to the writings of the prophets?

Jesus also "weighed in" on the study of prophecy. Read Matthew 5:17-19. What did Jesus say that He came to do in regard to the messages of Jeremiah?

As we embark on a journey into the longest and what most consider to be one of the most disorganized books (chronologically speaking) in Scripture, we will be tempted to make excuses about our biblical illiteracy. We are not alone. The Book of Jeremiah begins with a glimpse into his own tendency to excuse his ability to obey God's call. Jeremiah was the son of a priest living in the small town of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, the least significant of the twelve tribes of Israel. He emerged during a time of great political upheaval. Babylon, Egypt, and Assyria rivaled for world domination, and the land of Judah was shuffled back and forth between them as vassals paying tribute to keep from being destroyed. God called Jeremiah to deliver His messages during the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign in the land of Judah.

As we look at God's calling on Jeremiah's life in Chapter 1, what encouragement did God give him in verses 4-5?

God assured Jeremiah that He knew him even in the womb. Psalm 139 gives a similar picture from David's pen.

Read Psalm 139:13-14 in the margin. What does David say to the Lord?

If Jeremiah and King David were known and called even *in utero*, what does that tell us about how early and intimately God has known you?

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!

Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.

Psalm 139:13-14

Now, Jeremiah did not hear God's precious words and say, "Yes, sign me up." He had some reservations about speaking God's messages to the people of Judah. Remember the small town and the least tribe that he came from? He had even more concerns about his ability to be used by God, set apart from the womb or not.

What excuses did Jeremiah make in verse 6 of Chapter 1?

We, too, make our fair share of excuses when it comes to obeying God. I know I have come up with some good ones: I'm both too old and too young, I don't have time, and I am not qualified. These are just a few of the excuses I made to the Lord when I felt Him calling me to write this study. At other times I've felt nudges to do something big for God and then talked myself out of it. In Christian circles, ambition to do something big can be labeled as pride or self-promotion. Somehow we convince ourselves that humility means staying under the radar and not attempting anything great for God. Like Jeremiah, we want an "out" to disobey.

What are some excuses you've made when God has called you?

You may be thinking, *I'm not sure God has ever called me to do anything*; but God has a calling on each of our lives. Let's look at what He asked of Jeremiah.



God's mission for us as followers of Jesus is very similar to Jeremiah's call. God wants us to go when and where He sends, speak His words, and prepare for action without fear.

What instructions did God give Jeremiah in verses 7-10 and 17 of Chapter 1?

God asked Jeremiah to speak His messages. God's mission for us as followers of Jesus is very similar to Jeremiah's call. God wants us to go when and where He sends, speak His words, and prepare for action without fear. How many people do you know who live like this? Often we are prone to give up with the least amount of resistance. Insecurity and fear of failure can keep us from trying new things. We wonder if others will think we are prideful. We question if we really heard God correctly. God knows following Him can be scary for us in our humanness. He told Jeremiah twice, in verses 8 and 17, "Do not be afraid." He wants us to face our fears and trust Him.

Dr. Jennifer Degler, co-author of the book *No More Christian Nice Girl*, says, "Many times we find that women get a pass on not being courageous. . . . We want to call that 'having a gentle and kind spirit,' but really it can be timidity or fear that's holding us back."³ We also fail to encourage others to step out in faith with bold moves. The success of another—or even the potential that another might be greatly used of God—threatens our own worth, so we talk each other down. Instead we should be encouraging each other to listen to God and then step out in obedience.

God knows His callings can be scary. He doesn't give us marching orders and a slap on the back and then fling us out to figure things out on our own.

What did God do and say to encourage Jeremiah in verses 9 and 17-19 of Chapter 1?

Wow! God makes us strong. He will be with us and take care of us. Even when the task seems too big for us, God assures us that He will not leave us without His help.

As we close today, take some time to reflect and ask God what He is calling you to do in this season of your life (family, career,



ministry, evangelism, using your gifts and talents). Make some notes below:

Think also about your big dreams or aspirations that surface in your thoughts from time to time. List some of them below:

Read Through Jeremiah:

Read Jeremiah 1.

Talk with God

God has a purpose for each of our lives. He has big plans for us. Sadly we often miss it because of our own fear, insecurity, and excuses. Craig Groeschel says in *The Christian Atheist* that “before you can tap into God’s life-changing power, you have to eliminate the excuses.”⁴ Take some time before our Lord. Lay your excuses at His feet and ask Him to make the next steps of obedience to His calling in your life clear right now. Make some brief notes in the margin if you like to share with the group about what you hear from God.

Day 2: Surrender and Popularity

When I was in junior high, my mom told me not to worry about popularity because once you leave high school, no one cares about that stuff anymore. She was wrong. I see it in the neighborhood. I see it at PTO meetings. I see it in the church. Women size each other up all the time. A blend of confidence, money, career success (your own or your husband’s), appearance, education, and experience (even in ministry) all contribute to your “status” in whatever social circles you run. If anything, it gets more complicated as you grow older. We are still trying to find the right “lunch table” at every stage of life.

As we continue in our study of Jeremiah, we quickly discover that God is not as concerned about our popularity as He is with our faithfulness to His message. In Numbers, the people of Israel were told to go in and take the Promised Land, but they chose to wander instead. In Jeremiah, we see that God gave a very different message: admit defeat without a fight. Jeremiah’s words fail to win him popularity. We can understand why.

Imagine the day the twin towers of the World Trade Center fell. Now

Fun Fact:

“Jeremiah’s name, not uncommon in Israel, is of disputed meaning. It has been rendered ‘Yahweh [The LORD] hurls’ (cf. Exod. 15:1), ‘the LORD founds,’ ‘the LORD establishes,’ or ‘the LORD exalts.’”⁵

attack upon our land. Suppose one of the great Christian leaders of our day began preaching that we should admit defeat without a fight.

What would your initial response be to such a person and message?

Now, remember that Jeremiah was the young, unknown son of a priest from a small town and tribe. No wonder he didn't jump up and down at the task set before Him. His message foretold the destruction of their communities. Yet Jeremiah faithfully proclaimed God's words over and over, and he began to get a reputation as a prophet of doom and gloom. This didn't go over well with the government officials.

Read Jeremiah 38:2-3 in the margin and fill in the statements below:

Everyone who stayed in the city to defend their land would _____.

Everyone who surrendered to the enemy would _____.

Babylon was nipping at Judah's heels, demanding tribute, taking their best people (like Daniel), and threatening total destruction. Jeremiah's suggestion to fully give in didn't sit well with a government that was trying to rally its fighting men and boost morale.

In our lives as well, the message of surrender is not as popular as the message of victory. We want God to fix our circumstances and tell us everything is going to work out fine. We want our money problems solved, our physical illnesses healed, our relationships simplified. While sometimes God chooses to intervene in those ways, other times He calls us to surrender. Ultimately He gives us victory through that surrender. He teaches us things, develops our character, and draws us close to Him through our struggles.

These prophecies in Jeremiah give us much more than just a history of how Judah rebelled against God and faced punishment. While their story warns us to live righteous lives in obedience to God, it is so much more. Its great significance is clearly stated in the last pages of the canonical Word.



"This is what the LORD says: 'Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who surrender to the Babylonians will live. Their reward will be life. They will live!'"

The LORD also says: 'The city of Jerusalem will certainly be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it.'"

Jeremiah 38:2-3

Read Revelation 19:10 in the margin. What does this verse tell us is the essence of all prophecy?

We cannot miss this truth: God's intent in prophecy is to give us a clear picture of our Messiah. Jesus is all over the pages of Jeremiah from start to finish. Although it may come in whispers, hints, foreshadowing, and messianic prophecies, we now have the fullness of God's Word and the hindsight to connect the spiritual dots. How I praise God for allowing me to live at a time in history with access to so much of His truth at my fingertips.

The New Testament sheds further light on how the gospel carries a message of surrender.

Read Luke 9:23 in the margin. What does Christ say that we must do? How often must we do it?

This message of surrender is not a "one-time" salvation experience. It is a daily message for believers.

Just last week I was asking God to lead me in whether to help a single mom on welfare by taking her to lunch and giving her a gift card. My close friend who had a connection with her before I did felt that we should demonstrate tough love and not enable her because of some particular choices she had made recently. I struggled. I prayed. I read Scripture to look for guidance. I asked God to confirm His leading. As a consummate people-pleaser, it was hard to surrender to God's call to help the woman even when I knew my friend might not be happy with my decision. She truly wanted to help the woman as well but felt that God was calling her to keep her distance. (My friend ended up being totally fine with my decision; the battle was more in my insecurity than in reality.)

Just as God called John the Baptist to fast and Jesus to feast, He sometimes has us follow different directions for His purposes. We need to stay close to Him so that we can hear. While

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said, "No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus. Worship only God. For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus."

Revelation 19:10



Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me."

Luke 9:23

God led His people to go in and conquer the land with Joshua, through Jeremiah His message was “surrender.”

In what area(s) of your life is God calling you to surrender? Check all that apply:

- making amends with anyone you are at odds with
- tithing to your church
- getting up earlier so you can pray / setting aside another time to pray
- obeying Christ in an area that you know won't be popular
- becoming involved in or stepping down from a ministry because God says to
- other:

Delivering and obeying God's message of surrender takes faith and obedience. And once we've taken that step, it is often tested by fire.

Turn to Jeremiah 38:4-6 to see what happened to Jeremiah as a result of his faithfulness to the message. Where did he end up?



Sometimes even when we obey completely, we end up in a pit.

Sometimes even when we obey completely, we end up in a pit. The pit, or cistern, was literal for Jeremiah. One source explains, “A cistern was a large pit cut into rock and covered with plaster. It was used to gather rainwater in the winter for use during the dry summer (cf. 2:13). This cistern was so deep that they had to lower Jeremiah into it by ropes. Possibly because of the prolonged drought (cf. 14:1-4) the cistern had no water in it. All it contained was the mud that collected in the bottom of the pit from the dirt carried there by the rain.”⁶ He could starve or freeze waiting for death in this solitary place.

When you have followed God, have your trials ever seemed to increase? Try to think of a specific incident to share with the group, and make notes below:

Read Through Jeremiah:

Read Jeremiah 2.

Even when we commit to God's message, life still happens. Friends betray us. Husbands leave. Jobs are lost. Health declines instead of improves. These are the times when we must trust God's greater plan even though our circumstances are screaming foul. Obedience should be rewarded, right? Jeremiah honestly dialogued with God over questions such as this, as we will see in the next few days. However, he ultimately surrendered to God's way even when it made no human sense. Thankfully, Jeremiah's story doesn't end in the bottom of a cistern.

What does Jeremiah 38:7-13 reveal about God's commitment to take care of Jeremiah (made in Chapter 1)?

When we are in the pit because of our obedience, we must continue to surrender to God. God even says we have cause to be happy about it.

Read Matthew 5:11-12 in the margin. What is our cause to be happy?

When you are experiencing difficulty because of your obedience to God, remember Jeremiah's unpopular message and rough times. Then recall God's faithfulness to take care of him.

Jeremiah told the people that God was calling them to surrender completely. God wanted to save and rescue them, but first they had to surrender. Similarly, we need to yield completely to Christ. He wants to give us rich, satisfying, abundant life (John 10:10). And He knows we won't find it apart from Him.

"God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.

Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way."

Matthew 5:11-12

Talk with God

Jeremiah learned that surrendering to God brings peace and purpose even in the midst of terrifying circumstances. Write a personal prayer of surrender in the margin.

Day 3: Confirmation

As I read through Jeremiah's book, I am amazed at how clearly and boldly he proclaimed God's call to surrender. Over and over he said things like, "Then the LORD spoke to me again," "The LORD gave me another message," "Then the LORD said to me," "This is what the LORD says."

Did God speak to Jeremiah with an audible voice? Were the words written out for him like the Ten Commandments carved in stone? Was it just an inner voice saying, "Jeremiah, I have another message for you"?

Jeremiah seemed to hear God's voice so clearly; he consistently spoke a bold message straight from God. He was chosen as God's anointed prophet and spent a lifetime writing the words contained in this book of Scripture. In total the book contains around ninety separate revelations from God over the span of forty years.

When in your life have you thought God was telling you something, but you weren't sure it was His voice?

Fun Fact:

Jeremiah was a contemporary of these prophets:

*Zephaniah
Obadiah*

*Huldah (prophetess)
Daniel (Babylon)
Ezekiel (Babylon)*

Jeremiah spoke with assurance because he allowed God to confirm His messages. Let's glimpse into Jeremiah's intimate prayer life and look for specific ways he knew God was speaking to him. We see in Jeremiah 20 that the priest in charge of the Temple, Pashhur, had just learned of Jeremiah's prophecy calling for surrender and defeat. He arrested Jeremiah and had him whipped and put in stocks. Although Jeremiah was released the next day and continued to preach destruction, he had some heavy questions for his Lord.

In Jeremiah 20:7-18, we find a conflicted man. On the next page, list his statements of hope versus despair.

Hope

Despair

What does Jeremiah's dialogue with his God reveal about their relationship?

Jeremiah talked with God from a very honest place. When he was confused, he asked questions. When he didn't understand, he rehearsed the character of God.

Think about the time you identified when you weren't sure about God's instructions in your life. What do you learn from Jeremiah's example that you could practically implement when God's messages seem unclear or confusing?

Read Jeremiah 20:9 in the margin. Jeremiah reminded himself that he knew these messages did not originate with him. What did he compare them to?



*But if I say I'll never mention the LORD
or speak in his name,
his word burns in my heart like a fire.
It's like a fire in my bones!
I am worn out trying to hold it in!
I can't do it!*

Jeremiah 20:9

When God asks me to do things I don't want to do (confront people, take bold steps that could be misunderstood, write Bible studies on difficult topics, and so on), I usually resist at first. When I finish making excuses and arguing with Him and finally surrender to His voice, I have a peace in my soul that literally feels like a weight has been lifted. I smile when I should frown. He holds me together when I should be falling apart.



Has God ever given you instructions and you could get no peace until you followed through?

If so, think of an example to share with the group. What did God ask you to do? Why did you resist? What did you experience when you obeyed?

When God tells us something specific, it should happen.

God confirms His voice to us as we honestly wrestle with Him and rehearse His character and Word to combat our conflicted emotions. Then we experience God's peace when we follow His leading.

There is one other important element that we need to explore in looking for confirmation. Read the next statement out loud: *When God tells us something specific, it should happen.*

I can think of times in my life that I clearly heard God's voice. All four of my children struggle with asthma. Many nights I have sat up listening to them breathe, trying to discern whether to call 911 or wait it out until morning. One particular night my five-year-old daughter had a horrible night exchanging air in her wheezy lungs and also felt an intense pain in her side. By morning I drove to the emergency room, unsure whether something was seriously wrong or this would be just another day of asthma breathing treatments.

After X-rays, blood tests, and a visit from a surgeon, there still were no clear answers; and my "momma radar" told me my lethargic daughter was very ill. Shortly after a CAT scan revealed double pneumonia and a lung full of fluid, her organs began to shut down as she went into septic shock. We later found out that the fluid had been infected with a strep virus that had become more than her body could fight off. However, while doctors rushed around her room hooking her body up to machines and calling out medications and dosages, I stood in the midst of what seemed like a medical TV show episode and heard God speak these words very clearly to me: "She will not die." I thought He said it audibly because it was so clear, and so I looked around at the many doctors and nurses flooding the room to see if they had heard it, too. It was unmistakable. For those hours when I should have fallen apart, I felt God's peace and lightness.

When our pastor arrived with my husband, Sean, to pray with us, I was embarrassed that I laughed when Sean tried to warn me that she might not make it through the night. I knew what God had said so clearly and believed it with all my heart. Of course, in the weeks to follow, I allowed myself to worry over her health during much smaller setbacks in her recovery. But in that moment I definitely heard God's voice, and He confirmed it with a miraculous healing of my daughter.

Other times God's voice has not been so clear. A dear friend of mine was struggling with infertility. I prayed almost every day for her, and when I read Scripture that spoke of the blessing of children, I would write her name in the margin of my Bible. One day I thought I heard God say in my spirit that she would get pregnant. "Do you mean this month, Lord? What are you saying?" I asked. When she didn't get pregnant that month, I wondered if I had heard incorrectly. I was concerned about telling my friend what I thought I had heard and giving her false hope. Several months later she underwent a medical procedure, and thankfully, she now has a beautiful baby boy. She did become pregnant, but it was on God's timetable.

How can we tell if God is speaking to us in that still, small voice as we seek Him in prayer or if we are hearing things we want to hear to give ourselves permission to do what we want to do? Did God say our church would grow, or do I just want that to be true? Did God bring that friend to mind because I need to call and check on her, or is that just my crazy brain in overdrive? Does God want me to buy these things, or does He have a different plan for this money He has entrusted to me?

What are you seeking guidance from the Lord about right now?

Have you heard Him speak any words of direction?

In Jeremiah 32, God gives us an example of one way we can know we are on the right track.

Read Jeremiah 32:6-15. What confirmation does verse 8 provide?



Fun Fact:

Jeremiah was a prophet in Judah. Israel had already fallen into captivity by Assyria in 722 B.C., which was over a hundred years before Jeremiah came on the scene.

What was God trying to tell His people who were headed into captivity through this message? (v. 15)

God wanted the people to know that even though He was going to allow them to suffer, there was still hope for future generations. His desire was not for them to be destroyed but for them to turn from their sin. God's message for His people was hope through surrender. One day God would bring the people back, and they would buy and sell houses again. And the proof would be that what God had said would come to pass.

God told Jeremiah his cousin would come, and he did. The Lord offered proof that His Words would come true. He said the confirmation would come through the events He prophesied through Jeremiah actually happening.

How do 2 Chronicles 36:17-21 and Ezra 1:1-4 validate two of Jeremiah's messages or prophecies?

When God says something will happen, it does—100 percent of the time.

Many voices shout at us that they have the words of God. When people claim they have heard God say something, it should happen. When God says something will happen, it does—100 percent of the time.

My friend didn't get pregnant the month I thought she might. I had not heard God's voice clearly; I had heard what I desperately wanted to be true.

As followers of Christ there are some messages we don't have to question. We don't have to walk into a store and say, "God, should I steal today?" He has given us His Word with directions and examples for how to live. The message of His gospel does not have to be questioned—God's love, humanity's sin, Christ's death on the cross, and our need to receive Christ personally are clear through Scripture (read Romans for a non-Cliff notes version). Our commission to tell others the good news is also clear. Yet we need the Spirit's clear leading on how and when to invest in others to be able to share that message.

Read Through Jeremiah:

Read Jeremiah 3.

As we listen to God's voice about how we should spend our time, what job we should take, whether we should have another baby, what ministry He is calling us to, or what kind of education is right for our children, we need to look for God to confirm His messages in our lives.

Most often in my life God uses His Word to bring confirmation. Whether I receive a confirming word in a sermon, through a friend, or in my personal daily readings, it is always too clear to be a coincidence. Other times God uses circumstances to confirm His Word. When my daughter was healed from septic shock, it revealed the truth of God's promise. Another time my husband and I heard God say He would provide for a need, and we received a gift for the exact amount the next day. Our God loves to show Himself real to us as we listen for His voice. When we seek Him for confirmation, we will find Him faithful.

Talk with God

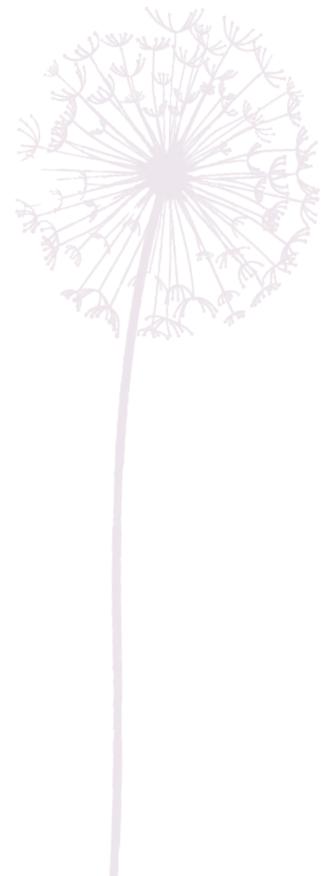
Ask God to give you clear leading in whatever area of your life you are seeking answers. Bring Him all your questions and complaints, and then rehearse back to yourself what you know to be true about Him. Be sure to ask Him to give you the mercy of confirmation so that you may know you are on the right track of obedience.

Day 4: Defining Success

In Western Christianity, "success" in ministry is often measured by how many people attend your church or event, how many dedicated themselves to Christ, and how cool and trendy you go about it. We want to see results from the work we do for God. If we don't, then we think we must be doing something wrong.

Of course, we want our lives to have meaning and purpose. God created us with vision, drive, a work ethic, and dreams. These things are not inherently bad. However, we need to evaluate our measuring rod for what constitutes success.

Whether we're aware of it or not, this is where a version of the prosperity gospel sometimes subtly infiltrates the church. I find this thinking creeping into my own soul at times: I follow God = everything should go well for me. But this is not biblical. The list is long of those who followed God and found hardship and difficulty. Job is a classic example. David lived in caves. Joseph was thrown in a pit and wrongly accused. Jesus ended His ministry with exponentially fewer followers than He had at one time and



a gruesome death on a cross. Jeremiah also followed God and encountered difficulty.

Throughout Jeremiah's writings, we see his emotions and an example of what he was thinking as he struggled to pursue God radically.

Read the following passages and indicate whether each statement about Jeremiah's emotional state and circumstances is true (T) or false (F):

Jeremiah 8:18–9:2

- His heart was broken.
- He was overcome with grief because of the hurt of his people.
- He questioned God's lack of healing.
- He expressed excitement about learning from his trials.
- He wished he could run away and live in a traveler's shack in the desert.

Jeremiah 11:18–12:3

- God told him people from his own hometown were plotting his murder.
- He asked God for vengeance against these people.
- Jeremiah brought complaints to God about why the wicked prosper.
- Jeremiah was trusting of all people and didn't judge them.
- He rehearsed the truth that God knows everyone's heart including his own.

Jeremiah related his responses to real-life fears and threats with gut-wrenching honesty. He didn't stuff his feelings about what he was going through.

Are you currently struggling with frustration or depression in your life? If so, what are some underlying causes you can identify?



Write a few sentences below, pouring out any frustrations you have over the results of your attempts to follow God in your current circumstances.

As you evaluate your life, remember that some circumstances are just difficult. God didn't expect Jeremiah to celebrate the sin of his people, death threats, or rumors spread about him. He doesn't want you to pretend your own problems are of no consequence. He created you with emotions that respond to circumstances.

In a recent trial over a broken friendship, I lost my appetite and struggled to sleep. I cried all the time. I questioned whether I was trusting God because my physical and emotional reactions were so strong.

Jeremiah, however, shows us that even the most faithful followers can feel anxiety and depression and struggle to believe God through rough circumstances. God invites us to come to Him and wrestle through our personal battles. These struggles don't mean we are unsuccessful Christians. Instead, they give us an opportunity to take our thoughts and emotions to God. We must resist the urge to numb ourselves with food, television, and any other distraction that keeps us from dealing with our pain. As we live in a world marred by sin, we need prayer, God's Word, and sometimes a good counselor to help us sort out the very real trials that ravage our lives.

As you think about Jeremiah's responses to the difficulties he encountered, what steps do you need to take in order to deal with the pain in your own life in a healthier, biblical way?



Even the most faithful followers can feel anxiety and depression and struggle to believe God through rough circumstances. God invites us to come to Him and wrestle through our personal battles. These struggles don't mean we are unsuccessful Christians. Instead, they give us an opportunity to take our thoughts and emotions to God.

Our trials are often seasonal and temporary. However, Jeremiah's ministry did not have a happily-ever-after ending like the stories of many other great Bible heroes. David lived in caves but eventually was crowned king. Joseph labored in prison but was elevated to second in command over all Egypt. Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet because the message God gave him was difficult. It wasn't fun to deliver. People didn't listen.

Jeremiah was imprisoned, mocked, put in a cistern, and eventually taken to Egypt against his will. He didn't end up on top with a great life after a few years of difficulty. Though he seemed unsuccessful according to the world's standards, he was very accomplished in God's economy. He lived for God's kingdom, followed God's instructions, and stayed true to the words God gave Him to speak. He was successful in God's eyes because He was faithful and obedient. In eternity Jeremiah can look back on his rough road in life knowing that He lived it well even though it wasn't easy.

"Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.

But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then."

Mark 10:29-31

Read Mark 10:29-31 in the margin. How do Jesus' words encourage us to allow Him to stamp eternity in our eyes instead of living for the fleeting pleasures of today?

What does He say about the greatest and the least?

How have you been defining success in your life recently?

Fill in the blank:

**If I could just _____,
then I would be happy with my life.**

In the Western church and culture, we tend to want instant gratification and to measure success by immediate results. Did it "work"? What did/do people think? Do my kids behave, get good grades, and excel in sports? Are others impressed with my nice home? Do I have enough status in my job? When will I get a promotion? These are the outward measures of doing it right in our culture.

God's standards of success, on the other hand, are not the same as ours. We might follow God wholeheartedly and still lose our job, get sick, or face financial ruin. We may not look to others like the greatest now, but God says that those who sacrifice their wills for His will be great in heaven.

Do you tend to see trials and problems as punishment and good circumstances as reward? Why or why not?

If so, ask God to reveal where your way of thinking might be out of line with His. Write your thoughts below.

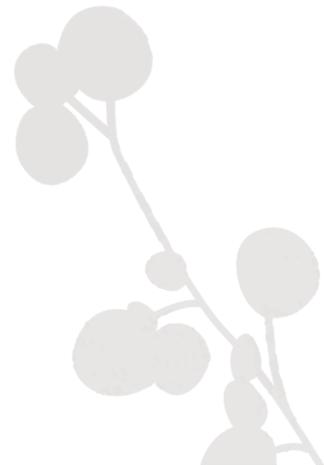
Read Matthew 5:1-12. How does God describe the blessed life or individual, and how does this differ from our culture's definition of success?

Our culture says "blessed are those who are rich, happy, proud, selfish, self-indulgent, critical, promiscuous, demanding, and rewarded." Jesus says "blessed are the pure" (v. 8 NIV). Our world says to mix in a little "bad girl." God's standards starkly contrast what our media and culture label as desirable. He blesses those who are poor, sorrowful, humble, hungry for what is right, merciful, pure, peaceable, and persecuted.

What does Matthew 5:12 say about those who are like the persecuted prophets?

Fun Fact:

The Book of Jeremiah is not arranged chronologically.



God's standards starkly contrast what our media and culture label as desirable.

Read Through Jeremiah:

Read Jeremiah 4.

What does this tell us about Jeremiah?

What can help us walk in faith and obedience despite trials and a lack of worldly success, waiting for eternal rewards and results?

Today has been a heavy day as we have looked at the world's definition of success versus God's definition of success. Tomorrow we will end this week on a hopeful note, focusing on the truth that even though God allows us to experience trials, He promises to be with us and take care of us through them. Though Jeremiah's life was difficult, may we not forget that it was truly blessed.

Talk with God

Think now about some recent experiences that haven't seemed "successful" by our culture's standards. Talk with God about how these difficulties have impacted your relationship with Him and others. Give thanks for at least one or more good things that have come out of those circumstances. Make notes in the margin.

Day 5: White Flag Anxiety

I felt sick to my stomach with fear and anxiety. I had just found out that the school district where our church and four other church plants hold services is doubling the rental rates. This came at the same time when support from our sending church ended and offerings were down. I was freaking out. *Where does a church planter's wife go to resign?* I wondered. *Can you quit a job that has no monetary compensation?*

Then, as I lay on my face asking God what He was doing, He told me to think about what I was going to be writing for this week of study. He never promises easy circumstances, as we witnessed yesterday. Jeremiah faced one difficult situation after another. He struggled with depression. He was left in a cistern to die. He knew that according to God's messages, the people of Israel were facing seventy years of captivity. Yet in the midst of it all, he clung to the Lord. He trusted in God to take care of him.



Read Jeremiah 15:10-18 and write some of Jeremiah's complaints below. (See vv. 10, 15, and 18.)

*Jeremiah didn't try to sugarcoat his pain. . . .
He held nothing back.*

Jeremiah didn't try to sugarcoat his pain. He boldly told God that he wished he were never born. He called God's help uncertain and blamed Him for the suffering he endured. He held nothing back.

What are your current complaints before your God? Keep it real. God already knows what you really feel; He invites you to tell Him and ask hard questions.

After Jeremiah brought his complaints, he waited for God to respond. Read Jeremiah 15:11-14 again, and look also at verses 19-21. What do verses 11 and 21 say that God would do for Jeremiah?

How do these promises from God bring you comfort and faith regarding your own current complaints?

Even though our circumstances may range anywhere from puzzling to downright depressing, we can know that God is the One who will take care of us. He doesn't leave us as orphans in a sea of questions, trials, and difficulties. He promises to walk with us.

Read Jeremiah 15:16-17. As God answered Jeremiah's complaints, what are the two active steps Jeremiah took?

- 1.
- 2.

Even though our circumstances may range anywhere from puzzling to downright depressing, we can know that God is the One who will take care of us.



The first thing Jeremiah did was devour God's Word. Though he didn't have access to the entire biblical canon that we are privileged to possess in great abundance, we know he came in contact with the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. These scrolls were rediscovered by King Josiah early in Jeremiah's ministry. The prophets Isaiah and Hosea wrote one hundred years before Jeremiah began to dictate his messages from God to the scribe named Baruch. Glimpses of their influence on Jeremiah evidence themselves in his messages. Word pictures from the psalmists also echo into the pages of his prophecy. Jeremiah devoured God's inspired words like food.

Take a minute to bring this a little closer to home. Jeremiah didn't consume God's Word accidentally. It was an intentional act of his will, not his emotions. (We've seen firsthand that his emotions were much like ours—flittering from despair to hope from one moment to another.) Jeremiah set his will to study God's Word, and his emotions followed truth as he argued and experienced the living Word.

Check at least one action step in the list below that you can act on this week:

___ **Begin attending a church regularly that faithfully preaches God's Word.**

___ **Set a goal of where and when you will meet with God in His Word each day and for how long—put it on the calendar you live from whether it's your phone, BlackBerry, planner, or home calendar.**

___ **Ask someone to keep you accountable and check in with you weekly about how your time in God's Word is going.**

___ **Find a partner and begin memorizing God's Word.**

___ **Begin a family practice of reading God's Word together—mornings, mealtimes, or bedtimes are great times to read and discuss a short passage, psalm, or proverb.**

___ **This is another way God is calling me to intentionally "devour" His Word: _____**

The second practical step Jeremiah took was to stand alone. Verse 17 says he chose the unpopular route of nonconformity. At the end of verse 19, God clearly called Jeremiah with a powerful passage. I want to write the New Living Translation of this verse on my children's school backpacks!



In each of these translations of Jeremiah 15:19, underline the word that is repeated:

*“It is they who must return to you;
you must not return to them.” (HCSB)*

*“Let this people turn to you,
but you must not turn to them.” (NIV)*

*“You must influence them;
do not let them influence you!” (NLT)*

*If we want our children or
loved ones to be influencers,
we must give them an
example to follow in our lives.*

Though translators used words like *return*, *turn*, and *influence*, the Hebrew word is *shuwb*. It means “to turn back, to lead away.”⁷ We should be women who draw others to our God rather than women who are pulled away from Him by our culture. God called Jeremiah to be the influencer. I pray this for my four children who attend public schools where there are all kinds of stimuli.

In order to be the influencer instead of the influenced, Jeremiah devoured God’s Word and chose to stand alone. If we want our children or loved ones to be influencers, we must give them an example to follow in our lives. Unfortunately, the tendency to fall in with the crowd didn’t end in middle school for any of us. Have you joined in with the crowd regarding media choices, gossip, spending habits, or some other area of life where taking a stand could be unpopular? Where are you being dragged down instead of being a spokeswoman with God’s message?

Ask God to bring to mind an area where He needs to shine His light of nonconformity into your life. Name it here:

We have one more passage to consider before we close this week about surrendering to God’s message. Don’t worry—we’re going to end this week on a hopeful note! Let’s look at this incredible picture of blessing for those who place their hope in God. He is so worth it. Every trial, frustration, and battle with flesh and sin that leaves us ready to call it quits fades in



comparison with the blessing that comes from fully yielding to our Creator God. He paints a picture so that His people won't miss the joy of a life fully yielded to His message. God so desperately doesn't want us to miss this truth about His care for us in the midst of life's trials that He gives us two visuals. We're going to create some labels for these visuals to help these truths stick with us and sink deep into our souls.

The first picture, found in Jeremiah 17:5-8, is the dry shrub for those who trust in human strength. The Hebrew word for trust in this passage is *batach*, which means "a place of refuge" or "safe place."⁸ When we make people or anything wrought of human effort our safe place, God lets us know what we have to look forward to. The people in Jeremiah's day chose to trust in political alliances and idolatry. They lost faith in the God of their ancestors. They even looked to Egypt for help—the same country who held them captive as slaves for over four hundred years in the days of Moses. God called them to trust Him and let them know clearly what the results of human help would be.

Read Jeremiah 17:5-8 (in the New Living Translation, if possible). See if you can identify four results described in verse 6 and write them below. Look for the key words shown and choose a word to describe each condition.



1. _____
(key word: stunted)

2. _____
(key words: no hope)

3. _____
(key words: live in barren
wilderness, uninhabited)

4. _____
(key words: live in salty land)

God doesn't leave us to wonder what will happen if we make our safe place the government, our jobs, our friendships, or even our families. People die, children grow up, and regimes change. He tells us that we will find ourselves in the condition of being 1) unproductive, 2) hopeless, 3) isolated, and 4) bitter if we place our ultimate trust in anything but Him alone (the words you chose may differ slightly). He says that we will live in a barren wilderness, an uninhabited salty land. But He graciously will do whatever it takes to "wake us up" from this state. God allowed the people of Judah to face destruction and captivity in order to help them see their "barrenness" and how far they had drifted from Him.

Next, God gives us a picture of the other alternative.

Now look at verse 8 and list below the benefits of those who make the Lord their hope and confidence. Again, look for the key words below and choose a word to describe each benefit.

1. _____

(key words: deep roots)

2. _____

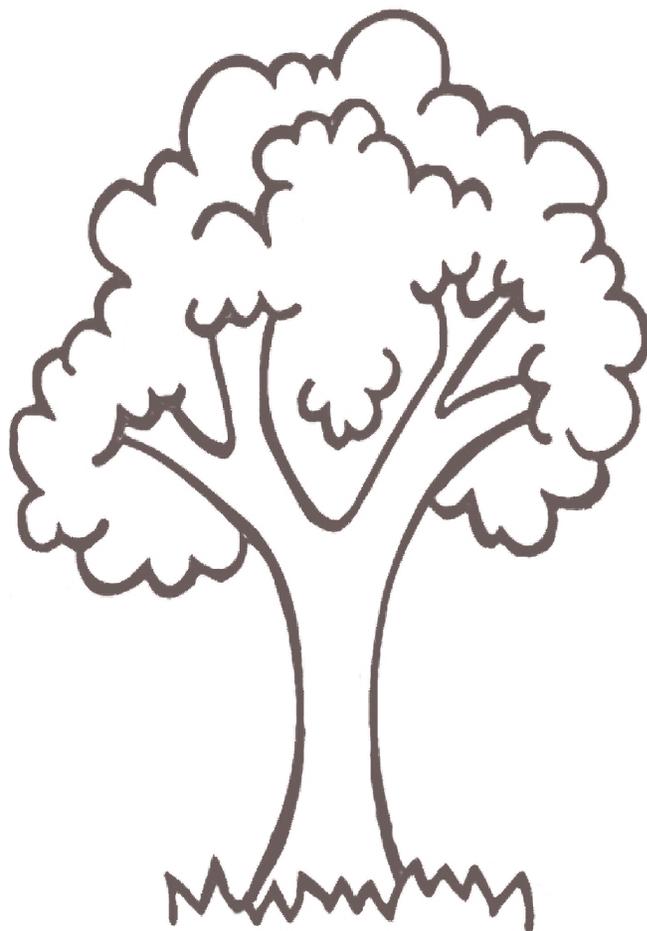
(key words: not bothered
by heat/drought)

3. _____

(key words: leaves stay green)

4. _____

(key words: never stop producing fruit)



God tells us that we will be 1) stable, 2) nourished, 3) vibrant/growing, and 4) productive (the words you chose may differ slightly). First we read that deep roots will make us stable. This blessed life will not be problem-free. He honestly tells us we may still encounter heat and long months of drought. However, we won't dry up because His water from the river will nourish us. He promises to keep our leaves green and still produce fruit in our lives.

Fruit trees of all kinds will grow along both sides of the river. The leaves of these trees will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, for they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing.

Ezekiel 47:12

Read Ezekiel 47:12 in the margin. In Ezekiel's vision of heaven, what additional insight do we get into the purpose of the fruit and the leaves?

What a contrast to the salty shrub is the sweet fruit of the Spirit in our lives, nourishing those around us. Not only will the one who makes the Lord her hope and confidence produce fruit, she also will get to be part of God's plan for healing in this broken world. When we make God our safe place, He will take care of us and use us for His Kingdom work.

As we've seen, Jeremiah's life was not one of comfort, status, and material wealth; but he had great treasure—not only in the next life, but also in his life on earth through blessings, even despite trials.

The blessed life is far better than the circumstantially happy life because it is not dependent on anything but the Lord. Only He is unchanging. Only He is secure. Only He can be fully trusted. The most secure of careers can end tomorrow. The most stable family can be quickly interrupted by divorce or tragedy. When we trust in human resources, we are like a shrub in the desert that dries up and dies. However, when we make the Lord our confidence, we can weather the times of drought and heat.

We need one more artistic moment before we end today. Whether you choose to draw a simple sketch or a gallery-worthy portrait, draw a tree representing your life in the space provided at the top of the next page. Is it close to the river, in the desert, or somewhere in between?

***Read Through
Jeremiah:***
Read Jeremiah 5–6.



We are God's messengers, and He promises to take care of us. He gives us His Word to build our faith and encourage us to trust Him even when it seems like He doesn't care. As a loving Father, He longs to be close to His children. He never forces us to come near, but He calls to us through His Word to put our hope and confidence in Him alone.

Next week we'll take a deeper look into the things that lured the Israelites away from this deep connection with God and see what hope-filled words God might want to speak over us.

Talk with God

Take a few moments with God now and ask Him to show you anything that might be hindering deep connection with Him. Below or beside your tree drawing, write the answer to this question: *What needs to change in your life to move your tree closer to the riverbank?*

Take time to ask God how He wants you to answer this question. Don't skip over it. Remember how Jeremiah brought his complaints and then waited for God to respond? Ask God your hard questions, listen for His voice when He answers you, and then respond to that voice with obedience.

Digging Deeper

What did it mean to be a prophet of God? To learn some of the distinctive marks of a prophet and see a comparison chart, go to AbingdonWomen.com/Jeremiah and read *Digging Deeper Week 1: "The Profile of a Prophet."*

Video Viewer Guide

WEEK 1: RAISING THE WHITE FLAG

Surrender

We can dare to _____ because our God is _____.

Jeremiah 17:5-8 – Stunted shrub in the desert vs. tree planted along the riverbank

Trust – Hebrew *batach*

It means _____.

When God is not our safe place, we are like the shrub in the desert.

When we choose to turn to _____
instead of God . . . we will be _____.

When we make human strength our “thing” [safe place],
we’ll get _____.

When we get hopeless and down and negative,
we become _____.

It was a salty land. A little bit of salt tastes good;
a lot of salt [is] _____.

VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE: WEEK 1

When we're planted by the riverbank, God is our hope and our confidence.

God says if we'll plant ourselves next to Him,
He's going to make us _____.

_____ is the woman or man who makes the Lord
their hope and their confidence.

God says that we can be _____ when He is the water
flowing up through us.

"Fruit trees of all kinds will grow along both sides of the river. The leaves of these trees will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, for they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for _____."

Ezekiel 47:12 NLT

Meet Our Abingdon Women Authors



Jessica LaGrone is Dean of the Chapel at Asbury Theological Seminary and an acclaimed pastor, teacher, and speaker who enjoys leading retreats and events throughout the United States. She previously served as Pastor of Creative Ministries at The Woodlands UMC in Houston, Texas. She is the author of *Namesake: When God Rewrites Your Story* and *Broken and Blessed: How God Changed the World Through One Imperfect Family*. She and her husband, Jim, have two young children. For speaking and booking information and to follow her blog, Reverend Mother, visit jessicalagrone.com.



Babbie Mason is an award-winning singer and songwriter; a women's conference speaker; a leader of worship celebration-concerts for women; adjunct professor of songwriting at Lee University; and television talk-show host of *Babbie's House*. She has led worship for national and international events hosted by Billy Graham, Charles Stanley, Anne Graham Lotz, Women of Faith, and others. She is the author of *Embraced by God* and *This I Know for Sure*. For information about speaking and events, visit babbie.com.



Kimberly Dunnam Reisman is known for her effective and engaging preaching and teaching. Kim serves as the Executive Director of Next Step Evangelism Ministries and Adjunct Professor at United Theological Seminary. Kim is the author or co-author of numerous books and studies, including *The Christ-Centered Woman: Finding Balance in a World of Extremes*. The mother of three adult children, Kim and her husband live in West Lafayette, Indiana. For information about speaking and events, visit kimberlyreisman.com.

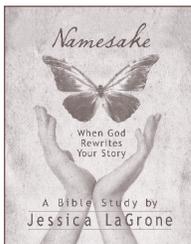


Melissa Spoelstra is a popular women's conference speaker, Bible teacher, and writer who is passionate about helping other women to seek Christ and know Him more intimately through serious Bible study. Melissa is the author of *Jeremiah: Daring to Hope in an Unstable World* and the upcoming 2015 study, *Joseph*. She lives in Dublin, Ohio, with her pastor husband and four kids. For events and booking information and to follow her blog, visit MelissaSpoelstra.com.



Cindi Wood is a sought-after speaker and Bible teacher with events throughout the United States and abroad. Through biblically-based teaching coupled with humor from daily experience, Cindi offers hope and encouragement to women of all ages and walks of life. She is the author of numerous books and Bible studies, including *Anonymous: Discovering the Somebody You Are to God* and the *Frazzled Female Series*. Cindi lives in Kings Mountain, North Carolina with her husband, Larry. For events and booking information, visit FrazzledFemale.com.

More Abingdon Women Bible Studies

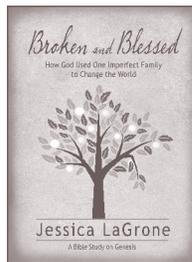


Namesake

Explore the transformational power of God through biblical characters who met God and whose lives and names were changed forever. As you meet

Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, and more, you will discover that God wants to be just as intimately involved in your story.

978-1-4267-7804-9

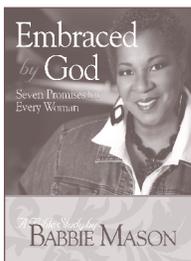


Broken and Blessed

Traces the story of the Genesis family from Adam and Eve to Joseph and uncovers how God brings blessing from brokenness. This study allows us to explore how God can use

our own imperfect families to bring blessing in a hurting and broken world.

978-1-4267-7841-4

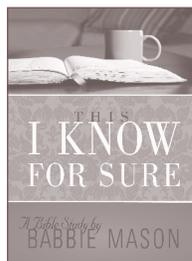


Embraced by God

Every woman longs to know she is loved, accepted, and valued. Drawing upon her own personal journey as God's beloved daughter, contemporary gospel singer Babbie Mason equips

women to accept God's unfailing love.

978-1-4267-7794-3

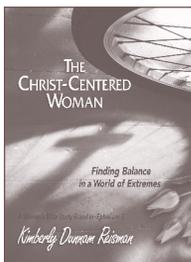


This I Know For Sure

Examine your personal relationship with God, make up your mind to believe God's Word, regardless of your feelings or circumstances, and take hold of some

non-negotiable principles of the faith.

978-1-4267-7569-7

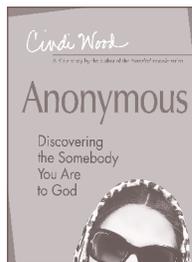


The Christ-Centered Woman

Help women discover balance at every age and stage of life by confronting the daily chaos of competing demands from a new perspective. Explore what

the Bible teaches about Christ-centered living.

978-1-4267-7568-0



Anonymous

Helps women discover their uniqueness and significance to Christ by exploring some of the "anonymous" women of the Bible. Though we do not know their names,

they all were known and loved by God.

978-1-4267-9218-2

Kit Box available on all Abingdon Women's studies.

Contents include one each of the following: participant book, leader guide, DVD, and a preview book. Each piece can also be purchased individually.
