

# **JEREMIAH**

**BY MICHAEL KASTING**

**LIVING WAY**

**BIBLE STUDY**

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*“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our  
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”*

*2 Peter 3:18*

# STUDY STRUCTURE

## LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY SUGGESTS THIS FOUR-STEP METHOD

1. **PERSONAL** – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
2. **SMALL GROUPS** – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
3. **THE MESSAGE** – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author’s comments.
4. **THE NARRATIVE** – The author’s comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author’s comments of the last lesson and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author’s narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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Bright, John. *Jeremiah*. Volume 21 (The Anchor Bible) (Doubleday: Garden City, New York, 1965).

Bright offers an excellent introduction to the historical setting of Jeremiah.  
Overall, designed for clergy use.

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The notes on Jeremiah by Ronald Youngblood are insightful with NIV text.

Habel, Norman. *Are You Joking, Jeremiah?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967).

Though dated, this short play contemporizes Jeremiah and his world.

Habel, Norman. *Jeremiah, Lamentations*. (St. Louis: The Concordia Publishing House, 1968).

Short and simple, but very helpful. More accessible for lay readers than Bright's volume.

Keil, C.F. and F. Delitzsch. *Jeremiah, Lamentations*. Volume VIII (Commentary on the Old Testament) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977).

Very technical and designed for clergy use.

Laetsch, Theodore. *Jeremiah*. (Bible Commentary) (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952).

More popularly written and accessible of lay use.

## BIBLE

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# MEET THE WEEPING PROPHET

## Lesson 1

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### The Weeping Prophet

On the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome a visitor may take a long look at the prophet Jeremiah. Michelangelo has portrayed him there as a bearded older man, robed in red, gold, and green, seated with his chin in his hand, brooding in anguish over the destruction of Jerusalem. One can almost hear his muffled sobbing.

Jeremiah has been nicknamed “the Weeping Prophet,” in part because of the mournful, desperate “diary” entries scattered through the book that bears his name, and because of the palpable sorrow voiced in its smaller companion, the Book of Lamentations, which is thought by most to be a product of Jeremiah’s grief. The English word “jeremiad,” rooted in his name, refers to a long, sorrowful complaint.

The Book of Jeremiah is the longest in the Bible, containing more words than any other book. Its sheer size is forbidding, and in this introductory course we will read and discuss not even half of it. But the portion we DO read will wrap itself around our hearts and tug at our emotions. Ronald Youngblood in the *Concordia Self-Study Bible (CSSB)* observes that Jeremiah’s “personal life and struggles are made known to us in greater depth and detail than those of any other Old Testament prophet.” John Bright says Jeremiah is the “most human and most appealing” of all the prophets, a man whose 40+ years of ministry as God’s spokesman is a story both inspiring and heart-rending. William Urbrock calls him “one of those salty people whose biography and message perk up our jaded spiritual palate . . . a man for our seasoning.”

Jeremiah never had his own family, which surely added to the burden of loneliness he carried. In fact, we read in 16:1-4 that God forbade His already isolated prophet to marry or have children, since his message of doom and the traumatic times that unfolded at his word guaranteed a sad ending to marriages and families all over the land. Further, God told Jeremiah he was not to enter a house for human fellowship, whether for a funeral meal or a celebratory feast (16:5-9). No spouse? No family? No parties? No fun? You’d cry too!

## One of the “Goodly Fellowship”

He was by no means the first of what the *Te Deum* hails as “the goodly fellowship of the prophets.” Prophets had been active in Israel for 400 years by the time Jeremiah came on stage, ever since the time of Samuel just before 1000 BC. The Books of Kings record memorable stories of Elijah and Elisha. The latter headed a prophetic band that lived a communal life and was supported by gifts from pious people (2 Kings 4:42-44). Some prophets were transported into ecstasy. Some rendered their oracles for a fee (2 Kings 5:20f.). But there were others like Jeremiah (and Samuel, Gad, and Micaiah before him) who appeared as lone individuals and brought a message from God which the listeners often did not want to hear (Bright).

## A Heroic Failure

Jeremiah led a remarkably drama-filled life. Born into a priestly family, he was called as an unwilling teenager. A solitary figure, his frequent emotional distress is recorded in the diary entries that punctuate his book. He faced opposition from people so angered by his messages that attempts were made on his life. His fiery sermons made enemies in high places. Like Paul in the New Testament and like such modern-day prophetic figures as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr., he spent time confined in a prison cell. He employed some vividly acted-out parables, like the smashing of a flask in the presence of his startled hearers. Yet in spite of his colorful and eloquent appeals, he was, at best, a heroic failure. Almost no one responded to his preaching. At one point he bemoaned the fact that no one had listened for 23 years (25:3). He was unable to change the course of his doomed nation. At last, he had to look on helplessly as Jerusalem fell, as thousands died a brutal death, and as its wondrous temple was burned to the ground. No wonder he wept!

## A Very Disorderly Book

The Book of Jeremiah itself is not only forbiddingly long, but very disorderly. John Bright summarizes its contents as “a grand disarray.” One feels, in reading it from start to finish, that things are frequently jumbled. It is not so much a sequential narrative as an anthology of the prophet’s life and work.

The *CSSB* acknowledges that the oracles in Jeremiah are “not arranged in chronological order.” It attempts a listing of chapters rearranged in such an order, and this course will generally follow that suggested order in an effort to present Jeremiah’s life as a coherent narrative from his call until his final ministry to a band of Israelite refugees in Egypt almost fifty years later.

Although the book practically defies outlining, commentators have pointed out that there are three “collections” of oracles that can be labeled. The first is a series of oracles of censure and judgment that are grouped in Chapters 1-25. The second is a smaller series of oracles in Chapters 30-33 that contain messages of hope. This one has been labeled “the Book of Consolation.” The third, which comes near the very end in Chapters 46-51, consists of oracles against the nations around Judah – Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Elam, and finally Babylon itself. In between these, and sometimes interrupting their flow as well, are what may be loosely labeled “biographical” sections about the prophet’s life. “The words of Jeremiah end here,” announces 51:64, and there follows a historical appendix.

## Jeremiah's Secretary

Jeremiah was not completely isolated. God granted him the companionship and assistance of a personal secretary named Baruch. Chapter 36 records him writing the prophet's message and reading it in the temple. Later, after King Jehoiakim burned the first copy piece by piece, Baruch was tasked with writing down a second expanded version and delivering it again. For his trouble, he and Jeremiah were threatened with arrest and had to go into hiding. A whole chapter is directed to Baruch personally, urging him to be content with his role and not "seek great things" (45:5). It is possible that he's the one who was originally responsible for transcribing and assembling the book we now have. In that role he takes his place alongside Tertius, the scribe who wrote Romans as Paul dictated.

## Encountering the Prophets

To embark on the study of a biblical prophet, especially this one, will prove to be a challenging, even unsettling experience for any student who takes these words to heart. They should be rated "X," for mature audiences only! The prophets were, first of all, preachers who brought a message from God to people. Every preacher of God's Word has two tasks – "to afflict the comfortable" and "to comfort the afflicted." The first task must be done before the second, just as a doctor must diagnose before he proposes medication or surgery.

***God's Word  
has two tasks  
- "to afflict the  
comfortable"  
and "to comfort  
the afflicted."***

The biblical prophets confronted sin boldly, sometimes with breathtaking harshness. Some paid for it with their lives. Not a few of today's preachers find the first task so unpleasant that they avoid speaking the hard words required. They rush ahead to speak "good news" without helping their listeners understand the peril they face and the need for a cure. Pastors and others who intend to speak for God will do well to sit at the feet of the prophets, seeking a pattern in proclaiming the Law. And we who are normally listeners also do well to pay heed to these ancient spokesmen of the Lord. When they speak words of judgment and doom, instead of turning

a deaf ear, we ought to ask, "Is it I, Lord?" For our country and our churches provide examples galore of godlessness and depravity, yes, even idolatry! Jeremiah still calls us to self-examination and penitence. Only when we soberly confront our own sin can we really hear the Good News of Jesus as GOOD!

## Encountering Jeremiah

When this writer was a pre-seminary student in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, I had my first serious encounter with Jeremiah. It happened that our college choir was to go on tour, and a part of each tour stop was a short play choir members presented to the congregation's youth group. Our brief drama was "Are You Joking, Jeremiah?" by Norman Habel, then an Old Testament professor at the St. Louis seminary. I was cast in the lead role of the prophet himself. Others played the role of God and of a speech chorus of modern-day youth.

Looking back now, I feel it was providential. I wasn't just reading ABOUT Jeremiah. I WAS Jeremiah, stunned that God would call me, young and unprepared as I was, and lay on me an assignment both thrilling and frightening. In our play, God framed my assignment this way:

*Go off and win the world.  
Make its history out of date  
By changing men and rearranging fate  
With words that I provide!*

The real-life pastoral ministry that lay ahead of me felt forbidding. I not only spoke Jeremiah's response. I felt it!

*God, there must be some mistake.  
I can't do work like that . . .  
You'll soon be sorry, God,  
If you pick someone like me.*

Because of playing the role, I was hooked forever after by this vulnerable man pressed into God's service and driven by an inner fire that would not be quenched.

## Your Turn!

Now it's your turn to meet this unforgettable man! Listen to his scorching sermons. Eavesdrop as he spills his guts and raves at God. Watch him bury a linen shirt by a river and wear a yoke around his neck for sermon illustrations. Sit with him in the mud at the bottom of a cistern, convinced he's soon to die. And ask, as every listener must, "What is God telling me about my world, my church, and the role He wants me to play?"

We are taking an abbreviated tour of Jeremiah's life and ministry. We will not be covering every chapter, nor will we be reading everything in order. Our journey through this prophetic anthology will aim at a topical treatment under the following headings:

- Lesson 2 - God Drafts an Unwilling Teenager (Chapter 1)*
- Lesson 3 - His First Scorching Sermons (Chapters 2, 3, and 4)*
- Lesson 4 - Confrontation at the Temple (Chapters 7 and 26)*
- Lesson 5 - A Mournful Diary (Chapters 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, and 20)*
- Lesson 6 - Crazy Antics! (Chapters 13, 19, and 27)*
- Lesson 7 - Prophet Versus King (Chapters 22 and 36)*
- Lesson 8 - Prophet Versus Prophet (Chapters 23, 27, and 28)*
- Lesson 9 - A Letter to the Exiles (Chapter 29)*
- Lesson 10 - Jeremiah's Captivity (Chapters 37 and 38)*
- Lesson 11 - Day of Darkness (Chapters 39, 40, and 52 and excerpts from Lamentations)*
- Lesson 12 - Murders and a Flight to Egypt (Chapters 40-43)*
- Lesson 13 - Final Message of Doom (Chapters 43 and 44)*
- Lesson 14 - The Light of Hope (Chapters 23, 30, and 31)*
- Lesson 15 - Review and Reflection (Jeremiah in the New Testament)*

We will incorporate scattered readings from other Bible books, including 2 Kings, Lamentations, and selected verses in the New Testament. These will provide the necessary backdrop for his life and provide a wider picture of his impact in the generations that followed.

***Now it's your  
turn to meet this  
unforgettable  
man!***

This study draws on insights from three notable scholars. John Bright, who authored the volume on Jeremiah in the Anchor Bible, was professor of Old Testament at Union Seminary in Virginia. Norman Habel taught this author at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Ronald Youngblood, another Old Testament scholar, served on the translation team of the NIV and edited the Jeremiah notes in the *CSSB*. All have been most helpful and supplied many of the details in this study.

My hope is that, having completed this study, you'll be well equipped to return and read the whole of this amazing book. It is my prayer that you will say with me, "Ah, Jeremiah. One of my favorite books in the Bible!"

## Personal Application

*Prayer as we prepare: Dear Father, as I begin this study, open my ears and heart to Your Word in Jeremiah. Help me hear the call You have issued me to serve You! In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### FOR REVIEW

1. Before undertaking this class, what did you know about Jeremiah?
  
2. My present picture of Old Testament prophets is:
  - a. Doom and gloom!
  - b. Bearded old men in the desert.
  - c. Messianic predictions.
  - d. I have only the vaguest notion.

### JEREMIAH 1:1-3

3. What do you learn in the very first verse about Jeremiah's father? How might this have shaped the boy growing up?
  
4. Using a map in your Bible or on the internet, see if you can locate Anathoth. How close is it to Jerusalem? Jeremiah's proximity to the country's leaders and its temple will be important for his ministry!
  
5. The commonly accepted date of King Josiah's accession to the throne is 640 BC. If so, what's the year that Jeremiah's ministry begins?
  
6. Josiah's reign was a pivotal moment in Judah's history. For some background, read 2 Kings 22:1-20 and 23:1-16, 29-37 (lengthy, but crucial!)
  - a. How does 2 Kings evaluate Josiah?
  
  - b. What stunning discovery did he make? When?



- c. What radical changes did he undertake as a result?
  
- d. What happened to him?
  
  
- e. Who were his immediate successors?

***JEREMIAH 1:4-10***

- 7. What's the job description God gives Jeremiah in verse 5? Verse 10?
  
  
  
- 8. What objection does Jeremiah raise? Read the brief narratives of the calls of Moses (Ex. 3:1-12) and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-13). What objections do they raise?
  
  
  
- 9. What do you think is the difference between a "job" and a "vocation"? To what do you think God may have called you?
  
  
  
- 10. What excuses are you used to making about yourself or your abilities when you sense that God (or someone in the church) wants to recruit you?

***JEREMIAH 1:11-19***

- 11. Twice in this section comes God's question, "What do you see?" What two things does Jeremiah list for Him? How does God explain each?

12. What reason does God give for the coming disaster about to be unleashed on Judah?
  
13. Would you characterize the United States as a “godly” nation or as a “wicked” nation just now? What evidence would you cite for your evaluation?
  
14. Who are to be the “audience” for Jeremiah’s messages? What kind of reaction does God say he can expect from them?
  
15. Have you ever heard a word of rebuke or judgment from the pulpit? If so, how did YOU respond?
  
16. What is God’s promise of help? What’s the promise Jesus makes to His followers in Matt. 28:20?



# GOD DRAFTS AN UNWILLING TEENAGER

## Lesson 2

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## JEREMIAH CHAPTER 1

### Drafted!

Through six wars, the United States had a military draft. Able-bodied men as young as age 18 were eligible. To receive one's draft notice signaled a dramatic life change and brought significant risks, and not all were willing to serve. During the Civil War, some men paid substitutes to serve in their place. Others were fearful in the face of battle and deserted. During the Vietnam War, some unwilling draftees burned their draft cards, and others fled to Canada.

At the present time, our country has an all-volunteer army. But young men between the ages of 18 and 25 are still required by law to register with the Selective Service System in case there arises a need to draft more soldiers.

The story of Jeremiah begins with his draft notice. God was calling a frightened and unprepared teenager to serve as His personal messenger. There was nowhere for Jeremiah to run. He would be a commissioned officer in a very small army. A pressing need had arisen. God was going to war with His own people!

***God was calling  
a frightened and  
unprepared teenager to  
serve as His personal  
messenger.***

## A Tumultuous Time — Jeremiah 1:1-3

Jeremiah was born into a priestly family (as were Ezekiel and Zechariah). His birthplace was Anathoth, a Levitical town three miles northeast of Jerusalem. The seventh century BC was a time of political peril in Israel. Warfare was perpetually on the horizon. The tiny nation of Judah was surrounded by nations larger and stronger than she. Egypt was still a power to be reckoned with. Assyria, which almost a century earlier had swallowed up Judah's relatives, the ten northern tribes, was weakening and on the verge of collapse. Meanwhile Babylon was rising and sending shivers of fear everywhere. For a little while, Judah was enjoying a political "calm before the storm."

The accession of King Josiah (640-609 BC) brought spiritual upheaval. The reforms of "good King Hezekiah" were now a distant memory, undone by his son Manasseh, a notoriously evil ruler who brought back Baal worship with a vengeance. He "erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole . . . bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them . . . built altars in the temple of the Lord . . . sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery . . . and consulted mediums" (2 Kings 21:2-6).

After Manasseh's equally wicked son Amon had ruled only two years, he was assassinated, and grandson Josiah was placed on the throne at age eight (2 Kings 22:1)! He proved to be the last good king in Judah. Twelve years into his reign he began a systematic reform, tearing down Baal's altars and smashing Asherah poles (2 Chron. 34:3). In the eighteenth year of his reign (622 BC), his workmen cleansing the temple made a momentous discovery. Hilkiah the high priest reported to Josiah that they had discovered "the Book of the Law." Some commentators believe it was a copy of the entire Pentateuch, while others think it was the Book of Deuteronomy.

Startled to hear its stringent demands and threats of God's punishment for disobedience, which were reinforced by the prophetess Huldah, Josiah undertook even more intense reform measures (2 Kings 23). He commanded a public reading of the book and staged a renewal of the ancient covenant. He burned all the idolatrous paraphernalia he could find in the Kidron Valley. He ordered the desecration of all of Baal's high places, then slaughtered the pagan priests on their own altars and covered those altars with human bones to make them forever unclean.

It was an unparalleled, zealous response which earned the accolade, "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him" (2 Kings 23:25-26). But the reform, necessary as it was, brought only a temporary stay of execution of God's "fierce anger." As Huldah had predicted, Josiah was spared from seeing God's punishment fully unleashed. In the year 609 BC he unwisely attempted to intercept and stop Pharaoh Neco's army at Megiddo and was killed in the battle. Josiah's youngest son Jehoahaz, who was not pro-Egypt, was placed on the throne by the people, but shortly thereafter Neco replaced him with his older brother Jehoiakim, who was more friendly to Egypt.

## Jeremiah's Summons — Jeremiah 1:4-5

It was in the midst of all this turmoil that Jeremiah received God's draft notice. The date stamp is "the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah," or 627 BC, the very year that Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian king, died and his empire began its collapse. Scholars guess that Jeremiah was 18 years old, only a few years younger than Josiah himself. But he was old enough to be drafted!

How was the notice delivered? Jeremiah records simply that “The word of the LORD came to me.” Identical words are used to describe what happened to others God drafted into this crucial role (Ezekiel, Jonah, Haggai, Zechariah, Hosea, Joel, Micah, and Zephaniah). We do not know whether the ensuing dialogue between God and His unwilling recruit took place while Jeremiah was “lounging on a rooftop” (Habel) at midday or while he lay on his bed late at night. The summons he received that day would change the course of his life. He would remain on duty more than forty years. Along the way he would endure the death of Josiah, betrayal and imprisonment, and the fall of Jerusalem. He would witness the destruction of the temple and be compelled to accompany some refugees on their flight to Egypt. But just now Jeremiah knew none of that, only that he felt frightened and inadequate.

## The Prophet’s Objection and God’s Response — Jeremiah 1:6-10

It must have been a stunning surprise for him to hear that he had been on God’s radar all his life! In fact, God told him, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (1:5). The Hebrew word translated “formed” is elsewhere used to describe how a potter shapes clay. But Jeremiah wasn’t willing to sing, “Have Thine own way, Lord” just yet! He immediately raised what he felt was a convincing objection: “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.”

God had heard such objections before from His would-be draftees. Moses, while not so young as Jeremiah, had tried a similar line: “O Lord, I have never been eloquent . . . I am slow of speech and tongue” (Ex. 4:10). Isaiah, startled by a vision of God in the temple and anticipating a summons, wanted to beg off too: “Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips.” (Isaiah 6:5). All three protested their unworthiness to speak for God.

We too are in the habit of resisting God’s summons, aren’t we? We say we are (choose one or more) too young, too old, in poor health, too busy, inexperienced, “not a good fit” for the task held out to us. At times, if we were being completely honest, we would have to confess that we are afraid to fail. We might even admit, “I don’t want to!” We can understand Jeremiah’s reluctance very well.

God is having none of it, though. He ignores His new recruit’s youth and inexperience: “Do not say, ‘I am only a child.’” He underlines the urgency of the task: “You must go!” But He does even more, and we can almost feel ourselves tingle at what comes next. “Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, ‘Now, I have put my words in your mouth.’”

In the movie *1917* two youthful British soldiers are summoned to their commander’s bunker and given a similarly urgent role as messengers. They are to make their way across “no man’s land” to several thousand of their fellow soldiers who are poised for an assault on German lines. But the commander knows it’s a trap and those soldiers will be slaughtered - unless his message is delivered in time. It must be done NOW! The commander will tolerate no excuses. To ensure their success, he places a letter with his own words and his own signature into their hands. Surely the recipients will heed the commander’s own message. With that, the two young soldiers set out, carrying the message and bellies full of fear!

“Today,” says Commander God to His new soldier Jeremiah, “I appoint you . . . to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.” Two of the three pairs of words are negative. Jeremiah’s sobering message will be more gloom and doom than hope. It will hold more Law than Gospel, for his hearers are entrenched in their spiritual rebellion. The stern word must take precedence.

He has all he needs – words placed in his very mouth, and a promise that will allay any lingering fears: “I am with you and will rescue you.” From a mountain in Galilee, our Commander Jesus has given us the very same assurance: “Surely I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20).

## Vision Test for the New Recruit — Jeremiah 1:11-16

Most army recruits must undergo a vision test. So did God's new prophet. "What do you see, Jeremiah?" God queried (1:11 - cf. Amos 7:8 and Zech. 4:2). No alphabet charts on the wall, no optometrist's lenses to squint through! Instead, Jeremiah gazed blankly at a nearby tree. "I see the branch of an almond tree [Hebrew *shaqed*]," replied the youth. "You have seen correctly, for I am watching [Hebrew *shoqed*] to see that my word is fulfilled," God explained.

Round two followed immediately. An instant replay: "What do you see?" Young Jeremiah shifted his gaze. "I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north." Once again came an explanation from God: "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land."

God was teaching His new prophet to look at things with new vision, to see ordinary items imbued with divine significance. The message was a foreboding one. Judgment was coming on the nation "because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods." It would come from the north, the traditional invasion route for an army that wished to avoid the great barrier of the desert that lay to the east. It would soon be Jeremiah's job to help his listeners see things God's way too. The so-called "symbolical acts" Jeremiah would weave into his later preaching (the flask, the yoke, and more) follow from a man whose eyes were opened to see as God wanted him to see.

## Body Armor — Jeremiah 1:17-19

God had placed His message in the prophet's mouth, though he protested that he did not know how to speak. Now God had to equip His frightened rookie with some body armor if he were to face the genuine perils posed by the resistance and hostility of "the whole land – the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land."

The prospect of facing down the "powers that be" at the royal palace and in the temple was no small challenge. New pastors, presidents or athletic coaches often meet people in their new arenas who are unhappy with the changes they bring. In the same way there would certainly be resistance to this fledgling prophet. "They will fight against you" God warned him. The hostility was almost certain to terrify Jeremiah. So God wrapped His new man in a blanket of invincibility: "Today I have made you a fortified city" (impregnable!), "an iron pillar" (strong and dignified!), "a bronze wall" (to repel attackers!).

There's an old saying that "God plus one is a majority." Jeremiah would soon discover how strong, and how essential, was God's partnership with him.

## For Reflection

Jeremiah's "call" makes us reflect on our own. That's the root of the word "vocation." A vocation is not necessarily the same thing as one's "job." We Christians believe that God calls every person. One of those "callings" is baptism, which connects us with Christ and summons us to the ministry of bearing one another's burdens and sharing our witness of the Gospel. But God also calls us to specific kinds of service, whether clergy or lay.

What has God called you to be or to do? If you're not sure, perhaps some talk with your pastor, your family, or a trusted friend who knows you well is in order.

## Personal Application

*Prayer as we prepare: Lord God, bless my eyes that read and my ears that listen to Your Word. Deliver me from heedlessness when I study at home and when I attend to the sermon in church. Help me hear Your voice and obey it. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### FOR REVIEW

1. Briefly describe the reform measures instituted by King Josiah.
2. What objection does Jeremiah make to serving, and how does God deal with it?

### JEREMIAH 2:1-25

3. What makes a sermon memorable to you? Can you recall a sermon that remained in mind long after you heard it? If so, what was its message?
4. How does Jeremiah remind the listeners of God's past mercies?
5. God expresses the heartache of a husband facing a divorce who remembers the happy early days of His "marriage" to Israel. In marital terms, how would you characterize your own relationship to God just now?
  - a. Feels like we're honeymooning!
  - b. Faithful, but dull.
  - c. Deep roots and good memories.
  - d. I'm fearing a divorce.
6. How does the sermon evaluate the role of Judah's leaders?
7. Verse 9 uses the legal term "charges." In the verses that follow, what are the specific charges God presses against them?
8. What do you think Jeremiah means by his reference to "drinking water" from Egypt and Assyria (v. 18)?

9. Among the memorable images is that of a “wild donkey” in heat (v. 24)! Who is the donkey? Who are the “males” pursuing her?
10. Which of the following word pictures used by the prophet communicates most effectively about your own struggle with sin?
- Animal throwing off a yoke.
  - A prostitute.
  - Wild vine (with bitter fruit).
  - A stubborn stain.

### ***JEREMIAH 3:6-10***

11. Jeremiah compares Israel and Judah to two sisters. What does “faithless Israel” do? What’s the consequence?
12. What is the surprising response of her sister, “unfaithful Judah”?
13. Verse 10 is God’s unhappy assessment of the response to the reforms by King Josiah. How does this explain the harsh judgments proclaimed by Jeremiah?
14. Think of examples of “spiritual pretense” you have seen (or been part of!) in your church. Was the pretense ever confronted? Was there change of heart?

### ***JEREMIAH 4:5-31***

15. Imagine yourself as an Israelite hearing this sermon. What does the prophet say is about to happen? Has he made clear WHY this will happen?

16. Which of the following do you think is a genuine possibility for our country?
  - a. Nuclear annihilation.
  - b. Diseases finally overwhelm.
  - c. Global warming - permanent disaster.
  - d. Descent into political anarchy.
17. What change of heart and life does God plead for?
18. How does the prophet give voice to his own emotions in this chapter?
19. Verses 23-27 paint a “post-apocalyptic” scene like several recent movies. What words do verse 23 and Genesis 1:2 have in common?
20. What note of mercy is sounded in verse 27? Read what is said in Jeremiah 5:10, 18 and 31:10. What purpose would this serve for the hearers?
21. Have you ever experienced heartbreak while voicing a necessary rebuke to a family member or friend?