Use Week of:

Unit 15 • Session 3

Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah

BIBLE PASSAGE:
Jeremiah

STORY POINT:
Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.

KEY PASSAGE:
2 Chronicles 7:14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
How did God plan to fix what sin broke? Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.

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Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit MinistryGrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah the priest. He lived in Judah, just north of Jerusalem. At the time God called Jeremiah into ministry, Josiah was king of Judah.

As evidenced in the callings of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others, each time God calls someone, He equips that person to do His work. Like Moses, Jeremiah was hesitant: "Oh no, Lord God! Look, I don't know how to speak since I am only a youth" (Jer. 1:6). God assured Jeremiah: "I will be with you" (Jer. 1:8).

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet. The people of Judah had broken the covenant God made with them at Mount Sinai. The terms of the covenant are found in Exodus 19. God said through Moses, "If you will carefully listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be my own possession out of all the peoples, … and you will be my kingdom of priests and my holy nation" (vv. 5-6). God's people responded, "We will do all that the Lord has spoken" (v. 8).

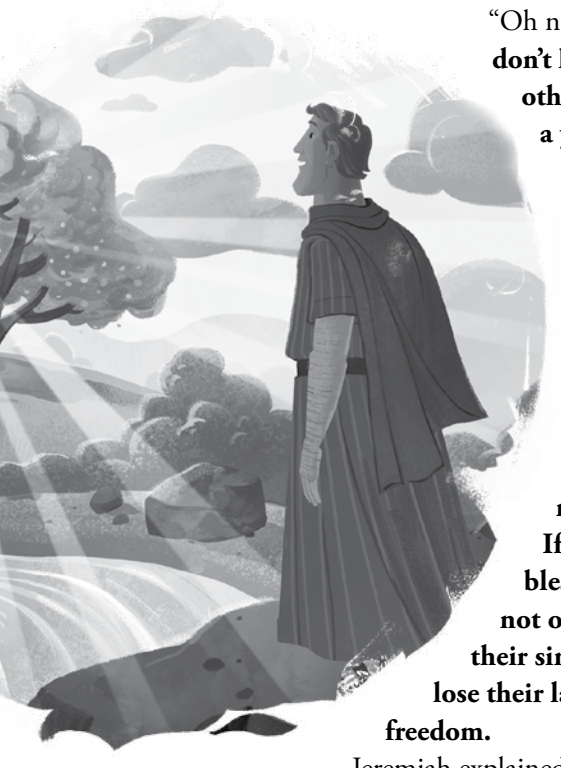
But Judah was deep in idol worship and other sins. God punished the unfaithfulness of Israel by sending the Northern Kingdom into exile. Now God's judgment was coming for Judah, and Jeremiah's job was to warn them.

Along with the warnings, Jeremiah brought a message of hope. Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant. He prophesied about a day when God would forgive sin and write His law on the hearts of His people. The new covenant promised that God would forgive sin. God forgives sin through His Son, Jesus. Jesus did not come to get rid of the law. (See Matt. 5:17.) Through His sinless life, Jesus fulfilled the demands of the old covenant. He changes our hearts and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.

Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah

Jeremiah

When Josiah was the king of Judah, God called a priest named Jeremiah to be a prophet. God told Jeremiah, "I knew you before I made you in your mother's womb. Before you were born, I chose you to do very special things. I chose you to be a prophet to the nations."



"Oh no, God!" **Jeremiah said. "I don't know how to speak in front of other people. I'm just a boy, only a youth."**

"Don't say that," **God replied. "You will go where I send you and say what I tell you to say. I am with you. I will protect you."**

For many years, Jeremiah spoke God's message to the people of Judah. He reminded them that God had made a covenant with them: If they obeyed Him, He would bless them. But the people did not obey. Now God had to punish their sin. God said the people would lose their land, their wealth, and their freedom.

Jeremiah explained that people's hearts fool them into thinking they are better than they actually are. They trick people into wanting things or doing things that God does not want for them. **The people did not want to listen to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah was**

sad. He warned them that God's punishment was coming, but he also said that God had a plan to change His people's hearts. **God promised a new and better covenant so the people could be saved from their sins. God would write His law on people's hearts. He would give His people power to obey His commands.** God said, "I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sin."

God told Jeremiah to write God's message on a scroll. So **Jeremiah spoke God's words, and his friend Baruch** (BAY rook) **wrote the words on a scroll.** Baruch read from the scroll so that all the people heard God's words. He warned that the king of Babylon would come and destroy Judah.

King Jehoiakim sent one of his officials to get the scroll. As the official read the scroll, King Jehoiakim cut off each part of the scroll and threw it into the fire. He did this until the entire scroll was burned up.

So God told Jeremiah to write another scroll with the same words as the first scroll. Jeremiah told the king, "God is going to punish you, your family, and your leaders **for doing wrong things. God warned you that disaster will come to Judah but you did not listen."**

Christ Connection: Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus made these words come true. God forgives our sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes us and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Vary your voice:** Use one voice for Jeremiah's dialogue and another voice for the words of God.
- **Use props:** Use scissors to cut paper into strips as you tell of King Jehoiakim cutting up the scroll.

INTRODUCE the Story

SESSION TITLE: Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah

STORY POINT: Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Chronicles 7:14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How did God plan to fix what sin broke? Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share something they think they'll be able to do once they're older. Could they do it while they are young? Why or why not?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Dream Job" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Dream Job" on the activity page. Guide kids to think about a job they would love to have. Prompt them to draw a picture of themselves doing that job, list skills the job would require, and describe some of the tasks they would do.

SAY • In the Bible story we will hear today, God called a man named Jeremiah to do a very important job. Do you think he was excited? No! In fact, he told God that he didn't think he could do it. We'll find out what God said about that.

LOW PREP

- paper
- pencils

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Pass a message

Instruct kids to sit in a circle. Assign one kid to be first.

Give the second kid and every other kid (fourth, sixth, and so on) a pencil and piece of paper. Whisper a message to the first kid, such as "He threw three free throws" or "Sheep should sleep in a shed."

The first kid should whisper the message to the second kid, who will write the message and pass it to the third kid. The third kid will read the message and whisper it to the fourth kid. Emphasize that kids may only whisper the message once. Continue around the circle—whispering, writing, passing, and reading—until the message reaches the end of the circle. Ask the last kid to announce the message.

SAY • Did the message change? Why? Long ago, God sent important messages to His people through the prophets. Today we'll learn about a message God gave through the prophet Jeremiah.

OPTION 2: New and improved

Form groups of three or four kids. Distribute paper, pencils, and markers to the groups. Assign each group a different household product (by name or actual item). Explain that kids should work together to think of ways the product could be "new and improved."

- household products, 1 per group (optional)
- paper
- pencils
- markers

Encourage kids to design a poster advertising the better product. After several minutes, call on groups to share their advertisements.

SAY • What made each product new and better? Which new product would you like to be able to buy? [*Allow kids to respond.*] In today's Bible story, the prophet Jeremiah told God's people about something that was new and better. We'll find out what it was.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story

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Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

· leader attire
· shoulder bag
· envelopes
· Bible

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

[Leader enters wearing dark pants, a light blue shirt, and a hat. He or she is carrying a bag across the shoulder that contains envelopes and a Bible.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! Beautiful day today, isn't it? It's so good to see you. My name is [*your name*]. I'm currently in training to become a mail carrier. This week has been exciting because I've been walking a mail route with Charlie, an experienced mail carrier who has been delivering mail and packages for more than 25 years! He's teaching me the best ways to do things and also explaining all the ways mail delivery has changed over the last 25 years. People used to write letters and mail them to communicate with one another! Now, people usually prefer quicker methods like phone calls, texts, or email to communicate.

[*Pull out a Bible.*] You know, sometimes change is hard but sometimes news of new and better things

can give us hope for the future. Let's get ready to hear our Bible story.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • The big picture question we have been answering is, ***How did God plan to fix what sin broke?*** Say the answer with me: ***Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.*** God's people often forgot that God had a better plan for them. One of the ways He reminded them of His good plan was by sending prophets to tell them what God was going to do.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

- Giant Timeline

LEADER • God's people had split into two kingdoms—Israel and Judah—and both kingdoms were ruled by a series of evil kings. God sent prophets to speak to His people, but the people continued to turn away from Him. Ultimately, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians.

Now the people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah were afraid. Would they be destroyed too? Many of Judah's kings were evil, but some kings (like Hezekiah and Josiah) were good kings, and they led the people back to God. Josiah was king when God called a priest named Jeremiah to speak to Judah.

- Bibles
- "Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to the Book of Jeremiah. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the

story, or show the Bible story video "Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah."

LEADER • God called Jeremiah to be a prophet. Being a prophet meant listening to what God said and telling the people God's message. Was Jeremiah excited about being a prophet? (*No.*) Why not? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Jeremiah was young; what if other people didn't listen to him? But God promised to be with Jeremiah and to give him the words to say. When God calls someone to do something, God gives that person everything he or she needs to do God's work.

Jeremiah reminded the people of Judah about God's covenant with them. The covenant that God made with His people through Moses said that if the people obeyed God, then God would do what? (*bless them*) But no matter how hard the people of Judah tried, they could not obey God perfectly. They disobeyed His commands and needed to make sacrifices every year for their sin.

Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant. The new covenant says that God will write His law on people's hearts. Without the Holy Spirit, we do not want to obey God's law [*see Rom. 8:7*], so God said He would give us His Spirit so our hearts will want to obey His law. The Spirit gives us power to obey God's commands, and God will forgive our sins forever.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 165 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • ***How did God plan to fix what sin broke? Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.*** Jesus made these words

come true. Just like the people of Judah, we need a heart change so that we can obey and follow God. We obey God because He loves us, not because we are trying to earn His love. We already have it!

God forgives our sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes us and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 15, Session 3" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about how they should treat someone who is mean to them. Guide them to discuss times they've been surprised by someone else's kindness.

- "Unit 15, Session 3" questions from kids video

Missions moment (3 minutes)

Ask kids to stand and face one direction. Tell them to jog in place, as if heading down a path in that direction. When you say "turn," tell them to stop and turn in the opposite direction. Repeat this a few times.

- "Eagles Team Photo" printable

LEADER • **Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.** As Christians, we can tell people about a better way of life by following Jesus. When we trust in Jesus, we stop going in the direction of sin and self, and we turn to follow Jesus' way.

Show the photo of the 10:12 Sports Eagles team and remind kids that these players are hearing about Jesus, and some are responding by following Him. Pray, thanking God that people are living His way.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 2 Chronicles 7:14.

- Key Passage Poster
- "I Will Hear" song

LEADER • God's people in Judah failed to obey God. Did God give up on them? (*No.*) God's heart is for people to turn away from sin and turn to Him. Let's sing our key passage song to help us remember the words of this verse.

Lead boys and girls in singing "I Will Hear."

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" song

Open your Bible and read aloud Ezekiel 36:26-27.

LEADER • We heard in today's story that **Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.** With the new covenant, God promised to change people's hearts! Without Jesus, our hearts are cold and hard like stone. God gives us hearts that are soft and open to Him. Let's sing!

Sing together "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord, You are good and You have good plans for us. Thank You for Your Word. Help us remember that You do not accept us because we follow Your rules, but You accept us because we trust in Jesus, who obeyed perfectly and died on the cross for our sin. Change our hearts and give us power through Your Spirit to love and obey You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

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

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

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

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

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

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How did God plan to fix what sin broke? Before He created the world, God planned to send the Messiah to save sinners.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- paper
- markers or crayons

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 2 Chronicles 7:14. Provide paper and markers or crayons. Assign each kid a key word from the key passage and instruct him to draw a picture to represent the word.

Then lead kids to say the key passage, holding up the pictures for the key words. Challenge them to say the key passage from memory, referring to the pictures as prompts. (Sample key words: *people, bear/called, pray, face, turn, hear, heaven, heal, land*)

SAY • Great job! Keep working to memorize this verse on your own. This key passage reminds us of God's heart for His people. He will punish sin, but He wants people to repent, turn to Him, and receive forgiveness.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- "Kings of Israel and Judah" printable
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)
- tape

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to the Book of Jeremiah. Direct kids' attention to the lists of kings from the "Kings of Israel and Judah" printable. Show the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. Ask kids which kingdom Jeremiah prophesied to. (*Judah*) Remind kids that

the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed about 100 years before Jeremiah's time as a prophet.

Tape the Jeremiah name tag next to the list of Judah's kings. Explain that Jeremiah lived in the last years of the kingdom of Judah. King Jehoiakim had destroyed Jeremiah's scroll, and within Jeremiah's lifetime, the people of Judah would be captured. Tape the arrow next to *Jehoiakim*.

SAY • Jeremiah's message was to stop sinning and turn back to God before it was too late. **Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.**

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Jeremiah 31:33-34. Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did Jeremiah say would be different about the new covenant? *Remind kids that in the old covenant, the people had God's commands in writing. They disobeyed His commands and made sacrifices every year for their sin. In the new covenant, God was going to write His law on their hearts. He would give His people the power to obey His commands.*
   (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 10:16.)
2. How does God change our hearts today? *Guide kids to identify that Jesus came to establish the new covenant. We all sin and, just like the people of Judah, need a heart change. God changes our hearts and invites us into a relationship with Him through Jesus. He gives us power through the Holy Spirit to obey God's commands.*
   (Option: Choose a kid to read Ezek. 11:19-20.)
3. Why should we obey God? *Invite kids to share their ideas. Help them recognize that We should obey God because He made us, He loves us, and His plans are good. We don't have to earn His love. We already have it!*
   (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Eph. 2:8-9.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

LOW PREP

- bottled water
- construction paper
- yarn or ribbon
- scissors
- crayons

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

OPTION 1: Water on a mission

Allow time for kids to tell you about different things that they enjoy (dance, cooking, playing with friends, playing with their pets). Distribute bottled water and construction paper.

SAY • No matter what you like to do, you can show people love the way Jesus did. You can show the love of Jesus to coaches, teachers, friends, and family members. This is an important part of missions!

Direct kids to make a simple card from the construction paper to give to someone with the bottled water. They can draw a picture, write a Bible verse, or write a note to a friend. Encourage them to include the words *Jesus Loves You* on the card.

As kids work, discuss ways that they can use the activity they enjoy to show the love of Jesus. Can they be helpful at home? Do they have teammates whom they can invite to church? Can they help their dance teacher clean up after class? Remind kids that people everywhere need to hear the good news that Jesus saves sinners.

- "Dry Erase Hearts" printable
- red paper
- scissors
- fine point dry erase markers
- clear contact plastic
- adhesive magnetic strips

OPTION 2: Dry erase hearts

Provide a heart for each kid from the "Dry Erase Hearts" printable or instruct kids to cut heart shapes from red paper. Lead kids to *2 Chronicles 7:14* on their hearts as a reminder to memorize the key passage Demonstrate how to laminate the hearts between two pieces of clear contact plastic. Trim off excess plastic. Encourage kids to write on the heart ways they can love God or the names of people to pray for.

Give each kid an adhesive magnetic strip to affix to the back of the heart. Suggest kids put their hearts on their refrigerators at home.

SAY • **Jeremiah told God's people about a new and better covenant.** Do you remember what God was going to change about people's hearts? [*Allow kids to respond.*]

Remind kids that in our sin, our hearts are hard and turned away from God.

SAY • Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus made these words come true. God forgives our sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes us and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, asking God to help kids understand that we are saved not because we follow rules but because we trust in Jesus, who obeyed God perfectly and died on the cross for our sin.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Old Covenant, New Covenant" on the activity page. Kids should color the statements red if they describe the old covenant or color them yellow if they describe the new covenant.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Old Covenant, New Covenant" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.