Discussion Leader Notes

Lesson 3 Old Testament Prophets

God provided a spiritual positioning system through the Old Testament prophets to guide His people safely through history. These men and women were not flawless superheroes, but frail human beings who struggled with fear and discouragement, yet faithfully delivered God's messages to realign a wandering world.

Opening Poll:
What is the most comforting thing about knowing the biblical prophets were flawed human beings?
A. It proves God can use anyone, even me.
B. It makes their stories more relatable and real.
C. It shows that God's grace is greater than human weakness.
D. It reminds me that perfection is not a prerequisite for service.
E. It keeps my focus on the message rather than the messenger.

Opening Engagement Story Think about a modern GPS. When we make a wrong turn, it doesn't just yell at us and shut down; it continually recalculates to get us back on the right path. God's prophets functioned much like a spiritual GPS, constantly offering course corrections, warnings, and guidance to lead a wandering people back to the safety of His covenant.

Day 1: Old Testament Prophets

Prophets served as a heavenly positioning system to provide guidance and warnings to God's people.

Poll:
If you were lost on a long journey, what kind of guidance would you prefer?
A. A detailed map I can read myself.
B. A voice giving me turn-by-turn directions.
C. A companion who knows the way walking beside me.
D. A set of clear warning signs to keep me out of danger.
E. A bright light showing the path ahead.

Opening Illustration Just as travelers need signs and maps to avoid hazards, spiritual travelers need heavenly guidance to navigate the treacherous paths of a fallen world.

Set the Scene King Jehoshaphat faced a terrifying enemy invasion. In the face of this crisis, he stood before his people and reminded them of the ultimate key to their survival.

Read the Text "So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper'" (2 Chronicles 20:20, NKJV). (Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice?

Jehoshaphat addresses all of Judah and Jerusalem in a moment of crisis.

Belief in God brings establishment and stability.

Belief in His prophets brings prosperity and success.

Guided Discussion

Why do you think belief in God and belief in His prophets are linked together so closely in this verse? (Allow discussion)

What does it mean to "prosper" in a biblical, spiritual sense when we listen to God's messengers? (Ask follow-up)

How can we practically tune our ears to the "spiritual GPS" of the Bible today? (Invite multiple responses)

What are the dangers of trying to navigate our spiritual lives without listening to the prophetic Word? (Allow discussion)

Discovery Insight God provided the prophetic gift so that His people would not be left to wander blindly. Through their narratives, counsels, and warnings, we discover a God who is deeply invested in guiding His children safely home.

Christ Connection Jesus is the ultimate Prophet and the living Word who perfectly guides our steps and secures our eternal prosperity.

Life Response Before making a major decision this week, spend intentional time reading Scripture to seek God's navigational guidance.

Encouragement Bridge God loves you too much to let you wander in the dark; He has provided everything you need in His Word to find your way.

Day 2: The Humanity of Prophets

God’s messengers were frail human beings subject to the same fears, discouragements, and weaknesses we face.

Poll:
When you face deep discouragement, what is your typical response?
A. I isolate myself and pull away from others.
B. I try to stay busy to distract myself.
C. I pour my heart out to God in prayer.
D. I talk to a trusted friend or counselor.
E. I struggle in silence, hoping it will pass.

Opening Illustration We often put biblical heroes on an impossibly high pedestal. But if we look closely, we see that the people God used mightily also experienced moments of profound exhaustion and despair.

Set the Scene After an incredible spiritual victory on Mount Carmel, the prophet Elijah received a death threat from Queen Jezebel. Overwhelmed and exhausted, he ran for his life into the wilderness.

Read the Text "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit" (James 5:17-18, NKJV). (Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice?

Elijah is specifically described as having a nature just like ours.

He prayed earnestly, and God answered powerfully.

His humanity did not disqualify him from being used by God.

Guided Discussion

Why is it comforting to know that a powerful prophet like Elijah struggled with intense fear and depression? (Allow discussion)

How does God respond to Elijah's burnout in 1 Kings 19? (Ask follow-up)

Why do we sometimes feel like a sense of "failure" disqualifies us from God's service? (Invite multiple responses)

What promises can we claim when we feel overwhelmed by the challenges of life? (Allow discussion)

Discovery Insight Elijah’s life proves that God does not require flawless emotional strength from His servants. When Elijah was depressed and wanted to die, God provided rest, food, and a gentle whisper, demonstrating that He meets our frailty with compassion.

Christ Connection Jesus took on our frail human nature, experienced our sorrows, and was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin, making Him our sympathetic and merciful High Priest.

Life Response Give yourself or someone else permission to rest this week, remembering that God honors our physical and emotional limits.

Encouragement Bridge God does not condemn you for your weariness; He invites you to bring your exhaustion to Him and find rest.

Day 3: Identifying True Prophets

True prophets faithfully, accurately, and honestly transmit God’s messages, even when those messages are deeply unpopular.

Poll:
How difficult is it for you to speak the truth when you know it will be rejected?
A. Extremely difficult; I hate conflict.
B. Somewhat difficult, but I do it anyway.
C. It depends entirely on who I am speaking to.
D. I find it easy because truth is what matters most.
E. I usually try to soften the truth to make it acceptable.

Opening Illustration Imagine being the only person in a room of 400 experts who has the courage to say, "You are all completely wrong." That requires a conviction that only comes from heaven.

Set the Scene King Ahab gathered 400 false prophets who told him exactly what he wanted to hear. But King Jehoshaphat asked for a true prophet of the Lord, bringing Micaiah to the scene to face incredible pressure.

Read the Text "Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, 'Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.' And Micaiah said, 'As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak'" (1 Kings 22:13-14, NKJV). (Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice?

The messenger pressured Micaiah to conform to the majority.

The false prophets spoke in "one accord" to flatter the king.

Micaiah vowed to speak only what the Lord gave him, regardless of the consequences.

Guided Discussion

Why is it so tempting to soften or alter God's truth to make it more acceptable to the culture around us? (Allow discussion)

What are the identifying marks of a true prophet as seen in Micaiah's response? (Ask follow-up)

How can we stand firm when popular opinion completely contradicts the Word of God? (Invite multiple responses)

Why did the people of Israel so often prefer the false prophets over the true ones? (Allow discussion)

Discovery Insight Micaiah stood alone against 400 false prophets and a hostile king. True prophets do not seek royal favor or popularity; their sole allegiance is to the faithful transmission of God's Word, even if it leads to prison or hardship.

Christ Connection Jesus frequently stood alone against the religious majority, speaking the unvarnished truth of God even though it ultimately led to His rejection and crucifixion.

Life Response Identify one area where you have been compromising your convictions to please others, and ask God for the courage to stand firm today.

Encouragement Bridge When you stand for God's truth, you may feel alone, but you are standing in the company of the bravest men and women in history.

Day 4: Functions of Prophets

Prophets served as the moral compass of the nation, holding civil and religious leaders accountable to God's law.

Poll:
What do you think is the most important function of a spiritual leader today?
A. Comforting those who are hurting.
B. Holding people accountable to God's Word.
C. Teaching and explaining the Scriptures.
D. Guiding the administrative decisions of the church.
E. Inspiring people to live better lives.

Opening Illustration A ship's captain may turn the steering wheel, but the compass determines if the ship is actually heading north. Kings steered the nation, but prophets were the compass pointing them to God's true north.

Set the Scene The Israelites demanded a human king to be like the surrounding nations. God used the prophet Samuel to warn them, and later used prophets to hold those very kings accountable.

Read the Text "Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, 'Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations'" (1 Samuel 8:4-5, NKJV). (Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice?

The elders came to the prophet for a major national decision.

They wanted a king so they could be "like all the nations."

They rejected God's current system of leadership through judges and prophets.

Guided Discussion

What was the underlying spiritual danger in Israel's desire to be "like all the nations"? (Allow discussion)

How did prophets function as a check and balance against the absolute power of kings and priests? (Ask follow-up)

What happens to leadership (both then and now) when it refuses to listen to the prophetic Word of God? (Invite multiple responses)

How can we ensure that God's Word remains the ultimate authority in our own homes and churches? (Allow discussion)

Discovery Insight Prophets anointed kings and priests, but they also confronted them when they engaged in corruption or apostasy. They were teachers, intercessors, and fearless messengers who proved that no earthly leader is above the authority of God.

Christ Connection Jesus is our ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King. He alone exercises perfect authority with perfect love, and His kingdom will never be corrupted.

Life Response Submit a specific area of your life where you like to be "in control" to the authority of God's Word today.

Encouragement Bridge True freedom is not found in being like everyone else, but in surrendering to the loving authority of your Creator.

Day 5: Women Prophets

God pours out His Spirit on both men and women, calling courageous female prophets to deliver His messages and lead His people.

Poll:
Which biblical woman's story inspires you the most?
A. Miriam, leading the people in worship.
B. Deborah, judging and guiding a nation.
C. Huldah, sparking a national revival.
D. Esther, risking her life for her people.
E. Mary, faithfully following Jesus to the cross.

Opening Illustration When the book of the law was discovered and the nation of Judah was on the brink of disaster, King Josiah didn't consult a priest or a general; he sent his top officials straight to a female prophet named Huldah.

Set the Scene Throughout Scripture, there is abundant evidence that God called women to the prophetic office to sing, judge, prophesy, and counsel.

Read the Text "Then Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess... (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her" (2 Kings 22:14, NKJV). (Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice?

The highest officials of the kingdom sought out Huldah.

She is explicitly identified as a "prophetess."

God entrusted her with a message that would change the course of the nation.

Guided Discussion

What does the inclusion of female prophets like Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah teach us about God's calling? (Allow discussion)

How did Huldah's unvarnished message from God impact King Josiah and the nation? (Ask follow-up)

In what ways can we better encourage and support the spiritual leadership of women in our communities today? (Invite multiple responses)

How do the stories of these women show that God's Spirit is not limited by human cultural norms? (Allow discussion)

Discovery Insight Huldah's prophetic message averted immediate judgment and sparked one of the greatest revivals in biblical history. The Bible makes it clear that both sons and daughters are called to prophesy and proclaim God's truth.

Christ Connection Jesus continually elevated the status of women, entrusting them with some of the most profound spiritual truths, including the very first announcement of His resurrection.

Life Response Send a note of encouragement today to a woman in your church or community who exercises faithful spiritual leadership.

Encouragement Bridge God has a unique and vital role for every person in His kingdom, regardless of gender; He simply asks for a willing heart.

Day 6: False Prophets

We must anchor our faith in the Word of God to recognize and resist the comfortable lies of false prophets.

Poll:
Why do you think people are so easily drawn to false teachings?
A. They promise a life without suffering or hardship.
B. They don't require deep repentance or life changes.
C. The teachers are often very charismatic and persuasive.
D. People lack a solid understanding of the Bible.
E. They validate what people already want to believe.

Opening Illustration You cannot spot a counterfeit dollar bill just by guessing; you have to study the real thing so closely that the fake becomes obvious. The same is true with spiritual truth.

Set the Scene In Jeremiah's day, false prophets were highly popular because they promised peace and prosperity while the nation was actually spiraling toward destruction.

Read the Text "Then the LORD said to me, 'The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart'" (Jeremiah 14:14, NKJV). (Ask someone to read.)

What Do You Notice?

False prophets claim to speak in God's name.

God explicitly denies sending or speaking to them.

Their prophecies are born from the deceit of their own hearts.

Guided Discussion

Why is it so dangerous to listen to someone who only preaches "smooth things" and never calls for repentance? (Allow discussion)

How can we effectively test the spirits to distinguish a true prophet from a false one? (Ask follow-up)

Why did the false prophets in Jeremiah's day hate him so much? (Invite multiple responses)

What steps can we take to ensure our minds are protected against the deceptions of the last days? (Allow discussion)

Discovery Insight Satan always attempts to counterfeit the divine. False prophets offer comfort in sin and follow popular views, whereas true prophets boldly call people back to God's law and faithfully transmit His messages, regardless of the reception.

Christ Connection Jesus warned that false prophets would arise to deceive many, but He also promised that He is the Good Shepherd, and His true sheep will recognize His voice and follow Him.

Life Response Commit to reading a portion of Scripture every single day this week so you can become more familiar with the authentic voice of God.

Encouragement Bridge When you are deeply anchored in the truth of God's Word, the deceptions of the enemy will lose their power over you.

Day 7 Summary

God uses imperfect people to deliver His perfect messages, providing a spiritual compass to guide us safely to Jesus.

Poll:
What is your biggest takeaway from this week's study on the Old Testament prophets?
A. That even great prophets struggled with human frailty.
B. That true prophets stand for truth, even if they stand alone.
C. That prophets fearlessly held the highest leaders accountable.
D. That God powerfully used women as prophetic voices.
E. That we must constantly test all messages against the Bible.

5 Weekly Takeaways

God provided prophets as a spiritual positioning system to guide, warn, and restore His people.

Prophets like Elijah were frail human beings who experienced fear and discouragement, proving God uses imperfect people.

True prophets, like Micaiah, faithfully deliver God's message even when it contradicts popular culture and angers those in power.

God poured out His Spirit on courageous women like Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah, using them to lead and reform the nation.

False prophets offer comfortable lies; we must test every message by the Word of God to avoid deception.

Final Reflection Question: How will you tune your heart to listen more closely to the voice of God's messengers this week? (Pause for responses.)

Closing Appeal The prophets of the Old Testament were not flawless statues of perfection; they were real people who bled, wept, doubted, and feared. Yet, through their yielded lives, God spoke words that have echoed through eternity. They faced rejection and prison so that you and I could hold the truth in our hands today. Let us not ignore the spiritual GPS God has provided. Let us believe His prophets, anchor our lives in His Word, and follow the path that leads directly to our Savior.

Closing Prayer Father in Heaven, thank You for the faithful men and women who fearlessly delivered Your messages throughout history. Thank You for loving us enough to warn us, correct us, and guide us. Help us to study Your Word diligently so that we will never be swept away by comfortable lies. Give us the courage of Micaiah, the faith of Huldah, and the willing heart of Isaiah. Most of all, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the ultimate truth and the living Word. In His precious name, Amen.