


JEREMIAH ~ 6-WEEK DEVOTION/REFLECTION SERIES

INTRODUCTION

There are 52 Chapters in the book of Jeremiah. In this series, we are only going to zoom in on a few chapters, but I encourage you to read the book in its entirety. Explore it, read it in different translations, use its words in your prayers, ask God to open your eyes to new lessons and convict your heart in new and challenging ways. Ask questions about it, ponder its meaning, research its context, and discuss it with friends.

All my scripture references are from the HCSB translation. I provide a digging deeper that is optional, but when it comes to group discussion questions, I am leaving that to you. I have found that if you adhere to the discussion questions given by the author, you tend to miss some of the most important and God given inspirations that a heart experiences when studying scripture. So, as you read the study and scripture, consider using just two symbols to mark your inspirations.

 Heart = a truth, statement, or moment that tugged at your heart, answered a prayer, brought a tear to your eye, or spoke to your heart in a personal way only you and Jesus may understand.

 Star = A truth, statement or scripture that gave you a poignant reminder, something to share with another person, and refer back to.

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WEEK ONE – WORD WATCH

Right away in Jeremiah, there is something exciting that most of us (if not all) can relate to and learn from. Let's set the stage: The Lord calls upon Jeremiah to go and speak without fear about all He [Lord] has shared and continues to share with him. Of course, Jeremiah, like many before him, says, **"Oh no, Lord, GOD! Look, I don't know how to speak since I am only a youth."** (**Jeremiah 1:6**) and then the Lord reaches out His hand and as He touches Jeremiah's mouth, He tells him, **"I have now filled your mouth with My words."** (**v. 9**)

This makes my heart leap. Have you ever been in one of those situations where you have been able to speak a gentle truth, offer a loving comfort or submissively follow in a way that you know you could have never, would have never been able to do if God had not stretched out His hand and filled your mouth with His words and your heart with His love?

Write out your memory and more importantly your reaction and the awe you may have felt after realizing your response was not yours, but from God Himself working through you.

It's an incredible feeling when you realize that God has used you as His messenger, errand runner of encouragement or answer to pray. I am so thankful God has been teaching me over the years how to tame me, myself, and I so I am able to step out of the way of His plan. This makes it possible for Him to use me to do something I never thought capable for His glory. Of course, we are always capable when we say, "Not me, but You God!"

As usual, the lessons from Jeremiah do not end there. God then shares two visions with Jeremiah. I just want to look at the first and, in the digging deeper section, you will explore the second vision.

Then the word of the LORD came to me, asking, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” I replied, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” The LORD said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I watch over My word to accomplish it.” Jeremiah 1:11-12

Here is what God opened my heart to focus on as I read this scripture.

“ . . . for I watch over My word to accomplish it.”

This is the kind of revelation and reminder that keeps me coming back day after day to God’s word. We often envision God looking down on us and watching over us, but have you ever considered that He watches over His word so that it is accomplished?! Those nine words make my arms raise in joy, my eyes look to the heavens, my heart leap with gladness and my spirit soar with faith and hope. I know and trust God’s word to be from Him. I believe that every word penned by human hands He guided and allowed to enter His holy text, but to picture Him watching over His word is such an incredible image and a great reminder. God is close! He is in every teeny tiny detail, He sees all, knows all and will accomplish all He has promised and declared.

What teeny tiny detail(s) of your life do you need to trust and believe God sees?

Pray He gives you the strength and courage to trust He knows your heart and your desires.

What an awesome God we serve. I pray we honor Him in all ways, praise Him for His power, embrace Him with all our hearts and serve Him with every cell. He is here, He is always near and He is in control so we can set all fear and uncertainty aside.

DIGGING DEEPER: Read and explore the second vision (beginning at Jeremiah 1:12) that God gave Jeremiah. Illustrate the vision (don't worry, I'm not an artist either) and write the meaning of the vision below it.

Read the Lord's declaration in Jeremiah 1:17-19. We may often feel as if we are unworthy, unable and unprepared, just as Jeremiah did. Write your name in spaces below from verse 19.

"They will fight against _____ but never prevail over _____, since I am with _____ to rescue _____."

This is the LORD's declaration. (v. 19)

How does it make you feel to know God is with you and for you as you share your faith, stand up for His values and share truth?

Next week, we pick up in Chapter 13 of Jeremiah so take time this week to read and explore chapters 2-12 of Jeremiah.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Share and discuss at least one of your  hearts one of your  stars from the week's study/scripture readings.

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WEEK TWO - DIRTY UNDERWEAR

Again, God has blown my mind, surprised me and made me smile. I wonder how I missed this little nugget in Jeremiah in my years of reading the Bible. I love how God continues to teach His people and prophets through everyday ordinary things. Look at what the Lord shows Jeremiah through dirty underwear. Yes, underwear.

This is what the Lord said to me: “Go and buy yourself a linen undergarment and put it on, but do not put it in water.” So I bought underwear as the Lord instructed me and put it on. Then the word of the Lord came to me a second time: “Take the underwear that you bought and are wearing, and go at once to the Euphrates and hide it in a rocky crevice.” So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. Jeremiah 13:1-5

The Lord has placed a lot of things on my heart over the years, but He has never urged me to purchase underwear, wear it for a while and then hide in under a rock by the creek in our backyard.

Have you ever had to follow God’s nudge to do something that seemed strange at the time? Did you follow Him or go your own way? Write out the ways your decision affected you and the other person/people involved.

And let’s not miss how obedient Jeremiah is when the Lord speaks to Him. This is quite a strange and unusual request, but Jeremiah never questioned why or what, he just followed the Lord’s commands no questions asked.

Then Jeremiah tells us (v. 6-7) that “a long time later” the Lord tells him to return to the same spot where he hid the underwear and dig it up. OK, maybe even a little stranger until you keep reading. Of course, Jeremiah finds what you would expect: old, dirty, stinky and maybe even decaying or ragged underwear that are of no use. Where is God going with all of this?

Then the word of the Lord came to me: “This is what the Lord says: Just like this I will ruin the great pride of both Judah and Jerusalem. These evil people, who refuse to listen to Me, who


follow the stubbornness of their own hearts, and who have followed other gods to serve and worship—they will be like this underwear, of no use at all. Just as underwear clings to one’s waist, so I fastened the whole house of Israel and of Judah to Me”—this is the Lord’s declaration— “so that they might be My people for My fame, praise, and glory, but they would not obey. Jeremiah 13:8-11

I pray I will always have the faith, courage and strength Jeremiah shows us through this encounter when God calls on me. *Has God been calling you to do something that doesn’t make sense to you right now? Something that is out of your “normal” but in His plan? Write out a prayer for God to give you a trusting heart to follow Him.*

In these verses, God uses the dirty underwear to illustrate how useless the people who have turned from His ways are to Him and foretells of their ruin. For us, this is a wonderful reminder to look for God in the ordinary. Using tangible illustrations that we will understand and be able to comprehend is one of the great ways He uses to teach us His ways and truth every day of our lives.

Not only that, but it also reminds us that when we put God aside and refuse to listen to Him, we are nothing more than dirty underwear and useless for His kingdom and drawing the hearts of others to Christ. I do not know about you, but I want to be like the elastic waist in that underwear that “clings” to my Heavenly Father and cut free of the world.

Who knew underwear could teach us so much?! I love our God!



DIGGING DEEPER: Look up and read the following scriptures and write what you learn about linen garments.

Exodus 39:27	
Leviticus 16:4	
Ezekiel 44:17	

Take a trip back to Genesis 31:1-51 and read the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Laban. Pay close attention to when God speaks in this story (v. 22-24), two things stand out to me in this story. First, God will still speak to whoever He needs to. Idol worshiper or not! Second, and even more intriguing, is that Laban listened when God spoke. How interesting he was an idol worshipper, but willing to listen to God's voice in a dream and not dismiss it. Laban took God's directive to heart even though it was not His God but Jacob's. I believe this speaks to the power and strength of our God and the fact that Laban had seen God's provision and blessing on Jacob. When God speaks, it is a powerful experience.

Next week, we pick up in Chapter 18 of Jeremiah so take time this week to read and explore chapters 14-17 of Jeremiah.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Share and discuss at least one of your  hearts one of your  stars from the week's study/scripture readings.

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WEEK THREE – REPURPOSED

The Potter's Story in Jeremiah Chapter 18 resonated with me after a conversation with a friend. The words flew out of my mouth, but I watched them in slow motion and my heart froze. Have you ever experienced that moment of instant regret? Thankfully, my friend knows my heart and understood my words were not meant to hurt her or put her down, but my mind was consumed with guilt and my spirit convicted after speaking so quickly and without more thought. No matter how many times I said I was sorry, it did not feel like enough.

What are the thoughts, feelings and emotions that creep up in your heart and mind when you do something that is hurtful to others? What do you do to overcome and deal with them?

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Go down at once to the potter’s house; there I will reveal My words to you.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, working away at the wheel. But the jar that he was making from the clay became flawed in the potter’s hand, so he made it into another jar, as it seemed right for him to do. Jeremiah 18:1-4

God used this illustration to show Jeremiah how He could change His mind and relent from punishing the House of Israel **IF** they would turn from their evil ways. For me, it was a wonderful reminder that when I start down the wrong path, I can always turn back to God so that He is able to make something new out of me. After all, each of us are “flawed pots” made great only by the Maker’s hands. When we allow Him to shape and mold our hearts, desires and minds He can make us into a beautiful piece of art.

The word of the LORD came to me: “House of Israel, can I not treat you as this potter treats his clay?”—this is the LORD’s declaration. “Just like clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, house of Israel. At one moment I might announce concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will uproot, tear down, and destroy it. However, if that nation I have made an announcement about turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the disaster I had planned to do to it. Jeremiah 18:5-8

Without God as our compass, our lives will take on a form that is flawed. As I look back on the days in my life where I had placed God aside and was living for my own desires and pleasure, it was shallow and filled with pride, selfish envy, temporary satisfaction and sin. It was so full of selfish muck that no one would have ever been able to recognize my Maker or Creator in me.

Finally, God broke through to me once again, He took my warped clay and turned me into something new and beautiful. Yes, I still have scars, but He has made them beautiful. So beautiful that they are now a part of my story that I can use to share the gospel with others.

What scars and trials are a part of your testimony and life story? Is there someone in your life that you have not shared your story with? Pray that God will lead you to a person who needs to hear your story and that He will give you the time and courage to share.

I'm not sure where you are today. Maybe you still feel like a flawed pot or maybe you have turned yourself over to the Creator for some modifications. The good news is that it is never too late. Whether you need to turn your entire life back over or your sin from the day, the Creator and Master potter awaits your willing heart and can turn your flaws into something beautiful for His plan. I pray our hearts are willing to be molded and shaped by the Creator today and every day.



DIGGING DEEPER: Look up and write out what you learn about the potter and clay from each of the verses.

Isaiah 29:16	
Isaiah 45:9	
Romans 9:20	

We are all Kintsugi (the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold and lacquer). Just like this Japanese philosophy that shows when something is broken it can be made into something new and even more beautiful and unique. Reflect on that and find a scripture that backs the truth that God creates in us something new and beautiful when we allow Him in to do His work.

Next week, we pick up in Chapter 29 of Jeremiah so take time this week to read and explore chapters 19-28 of Jeremiah.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Share and discuss at least one of your  hearts one of your  stars from the week's study/scripture readings.

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WEEK FOUR – UNDER THE HOOD

For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the Lord’s declaration— “plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

We have all heard, seen and probably have this verse in our homes somewhere. So, seeing them in actual scripture made me stop. They are wonderful words to remember and reflect on in our daily lives. Remembering God has our backs, has a Master plan for each of us and has us in the palm of His hand is something I certainly need at the forefront of my mind. However, too often I feel we look to verses for our own purposes and forget to consider the context they are found in. We miss the deeper meaning and magnitude of the words spoken when we do this.

Jeremiah 29:11 is only one verse (out of 25) taken from, **“the text of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exiles, the priests, the prophets, and all the people Nebuchadnezzar had deported from Jerusalem to Babylon.”**

Jeremiah 29:1

God’s people, who had their city plundered and were taken prisoner to Babylon, certainly needed to hear there were brighter days ahead. That God had not forgotten them completely despite their evil ways. This was the news they had waited for. God’s promise that after 70 years He would show up and show off for them again. Verse 14 clearly states God’s promise to, **“restore their fortunes, gather them up from where He has driven them and bring them back to the place from which He sent them to exile”**

For a prisoner to hear those words, a promise from the Lord, can you imagine how much that meant to God’s people? When we know the rest of the story, ordinary becomes much more extraordinary. “Looking under the hood” and past the surface meaning gives the living word of God breath and life. It gives God’s story and promises a deeper meaning.



Stop here and read Jeremiah 29 in its entirety. Had you read the entire chapter/story behind the famous verse from Jeremiah 29:11? Explain how knowing the rest of the story has given you a deeper meaning/appreciation for the power the verses hold and add any new insights you have gained.

How about this verse from Jeremiah 33?

Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know. Jeremiah (v.3)

I love this verse and use it frequently. This verse is a wonderful reminder that all we need to do is ask God for help, wisdom, grace, forgiveness, patience, etc. and He will answer us. However, when we slow down, we discover that God gave these words to Jeremiah while he was still confined in the guard’s courtyard, still in trouble, still feeling isolated for prophesying the Lord’s words. As usual, the Lord arrives right on time to encourage him, lead him, support him and lift him up. Then God tells him about the restoration of Israel.

While he was still confined in the guard’s courtyard, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time: “The Lord who made the earth, the Lord who forms it to establish it, Yahweh is

His name, says this: Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know. Jeremiah 33:1-3

Think back to a time when God showed up for you during a difficult time to encourage you, guide you or lift you up. Did it come in the form of an interaction with someone, through reading scripture, a situation, or something else?

Context and meaning are vital to understanding and giving life to God's words. We can relate His words to our lives in a deeper way when we look under the hood and see how it all works and comes together.



DIGGING DEEPER: Pick at least two of these popular Bible verses (or a few of your own) and read the chapter they are a part of in its entirety to discover the back story and context. Write out how your new understanding gives you a deeper grasp on the meaning behind God's words.

Philippians 4:13 – I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Romans 8:28 - We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.

Acts 18:10 - For I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to hurt you, because I have many people in this city.

1 Peter 3:15 - But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect

Next week, we go back and look a little closer at Jeremiah 31, so you don't have any additional reading this week.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Share and discuss at least one of your  hearts one of your  stars from the week's study/scripture readings.

JEREMIAH WEEK FIVE - AN IRRIGATED GARDEN

They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will be radiant with joy because of the LORD's goodness, because of the grain, the new wine, the fresh oil, and because of the young of the flocks and herds. Their life will be like an irrigated garden, and they will no longer grow weak from hunger. Jeremiah 31:12

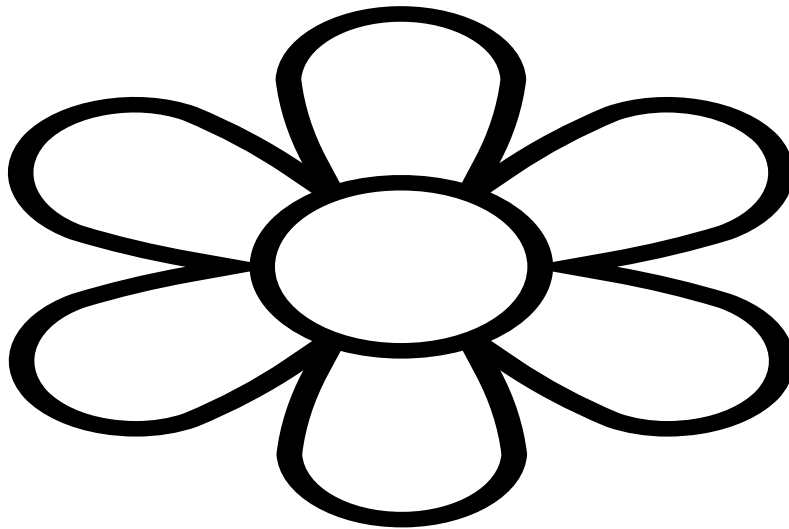
I could not stop myself from reading these words over and over again: "Their life will be like an irrigated garden" What a beautiful image of what our life can look like when God is in it. I investigated the benefits of irrigation and it is amazing how much they relate to all the benefits and blessings we can experience with God in our hearts.

1. Irrigation is important because crops can't depend only on rain. Like crops, we should not depend on only ourselves if we are going to be successful in patience,

forgiveness, grace, courage, faith, etc. Relying only on ourselves will lead to failure, disappointment, and no harvest.

Are you trying to manage all aspects of your life on your own or have you allowed God in? Sometimes, we turn over parts of our life, but maintain a tight hold on others. Other times, we turn parts over and then turn around only to discover we have picked them back up again. What part(s) are you still trying to manage on your own (marriage, children, finances, career, social life, future, etc.)? Write it in the center of the flower and then write out the characteristics of God, from the verses below, in the flower petals.

Colossians 3:13, 1 Cor. 10:13, 1 John 1:5, 2 Peter 3:9, Psalm 18:30, Psalm 116:5



We need the Word to keep us rooted in trust so our faith in God and His plan can bloom.

2. Irrigation allows introduction of high yield crops.

Like irrigation, God can equip and lead us to yield an abundance of fruit (love, patience, kindness, honesty . . . the best and sweetest fruit of all, the Fruits of the Spirit).

3. With irrigated fields, the yields are stable and reliable, and you can be more assured that your production goals can be met. With God, who is the same today as He was yesterday and

will always be, we can count on a consistent strength and supply of grace, love and forgiveness. We can trust that when He calls us, no matter what He calls us to do, He will equip us with all we need to complete the task.

4. Irrigation allows for continuous cultivation.

Following God daily and growing in His word gives us a growing and deeper understanding of His heart, ways, and desires so that we can follow Him closely in our daily lives and not stray from His path.

5. Finally, irrigation reduces fluctuations and the risk of crop failure due to drought.

With God in the center of our lives and our eyes looking to the cross we are less likely to have fluctuations in our hearts and minds. We are less likely to succumb to sinful and selfish desires when we are living close to God and in His word. Please notice I said we are “less likely”, not guaranteed. We will falter and fall many times, but with God’s grace we can pick ourselves up, dust off and try again.

Overall, there are so many more benefits to living, loving and believing in our faithful Father in Heaven. I don’t know about you, but I want my life to be like an irrigated garden that never grows weak or weary, that produces fruit pleasing to our Father and sustains me through the splendor and the desert.

What is it that you need most from the Lord today?

Take a few minutes to look back over our past lessons from Jeremiah. What have those lessons taught you about how to approach God, trust God and seek God for direction?



DIGGING DEEPER: Read Galatians 5:16-26. Fill in the list below. Circle the works of the flesh that you are struggling with the most right now. Then Circle the fruits of the Spirit you desire to grow in your life. Pray that God will replace the works of the flesh with His fruits.

Works of the Flesh	Fruits of the Spirit

Look up Matthew 7:16-20 and write out why it is important for us to lean on God to grow the Fruits of the Spirit.

Next week, we pick up in Chapter 42 of Jeremiah so take time this week to read and explore chapters 32-41 of Jeremiah.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Share and discuss at least one of your  hearts one of your  stars from the week's study/scripture readings.

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WEEK SIX – PRESS PAUSE

Jeremiah holds so many nuggets of truth. It has reminded and taught me many things and I hope you feel the same. As we close out this study on Jeremiah, I want to focus on one more major encounter from Jeremiah's life. As I read Jeremiah's response to the commanders of the armies, I am reminded of an especially important practice we often forget when seeking wisdom and direction from the Lord. Let's take a look.

Back then, you would've had to be living under a rock not to have known or heard about Jeremiah the prophet. So, it wasn't surprising to find the commanders of the armies approaching him to **"Please hear our petition and pray to the LORD your God for this entire remnant. For as you now see, though we were once many, now only a few are left. Pray that the LORD your God will tell us where we should go and what we should do."** Jeremiah 42:2-3

Like a good prophet, Jeremiah hears their requests and promises to pray for a response and tell them everything the Lord says in response to their request. The commanders even tell Jeremiah that they want to hear the whole truth and nothing but the truth even if it is unpleasant and not what they want to hear (v. 6) How many times do we pray like that?! If I am being honest, I just want to hear the good news most of the time.

But it is verse seven that caught my attention.

Now at the end of 10 days, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah (v. 7)

First, I am fairly certain these commanders, in the thick of battle, were hoping for a quick answer. They needed to make some decisions and were relying on hearing from the Lord sooner rather than later.

Second, Jeremiah could have just given them his opinion, but he knew better than that. Jeremiah prayed and waited! There is no evidence that shows he knew when the Lord would respond or how many times the commanders may have checked back in with Jeremiah to see if he had heard anything yet, but I would venture to guess they checked in several times anxiously awaiting a response and some direction.

Even with all that pressure, Jeremiah waited until he heard from the Lord. It was ten days later he received an answer. Now, in my book that is a pretty quick turnaround, but again they were strategizing and working on battle plans. Both Jeremiah and the commanders waited for the Lord's reply. Jeremiah did not give his own answer because the Lord did not answer right away and the commanders did not make a move until they heard the word of the Lord from Jeremiah (although in the long run they didn't listen anyway, but that's for another day).

This reminded me of how quick I can be to give or take advice before seeking the Lord first. It also reminded me of the times I asked God for direction, got tired of waiting and acted on my own accord (never ending up very well). I know my life and all our lives would look quite different if we could seek the Lord for any and all direction we need, pause until we hear from Him and live out this example to our children and others.

Seek ~ Pause ~ Listen ~ Act!

It's a tall order in this world of instant communication, instant grits, instant popcorn, instant gratification, instant dating You name it, and we can access it any minute of the day. Will you join me in trying to press the pause button when it comes to our prayer lives and our patience in waiting on the Lord's direction? I will pray for your strength and courage to attain this goal and please pray for mine!

In what area of your life do you need to be patient and wait on the Lord before acting? Consider sharing this with your group and asking them to pray along with you for your patience and an answer from the Lord.

DIGGING DEEPER: I talked about how incredible it was that Jeremiah and the commanders waited ten days for the Lord to respond with their plan of action only to disregard His plan. Read Jeremiah 42:9-17 and list out all the things God says will happen if they stay in Judah verses leave for Egypt.

Stay in JudahLeave for Egypt

In Chapter 43, we find that Jeremiah's counsel is rejected by the commanders and they tell him he is lying. Have you ever given Godly counsel to someone only to have them take a different path that there is no doubt will lead to destruction?

How did you feel? Do you feel as if Jeremiah felt the same way?



Have you ever made a decision you knew was against God's desire for you? What was the outcome? What did you learn from that experience? It is important not to let any shame, guilt or regret pile up in our hearts when we don't "get it right". These feelings are not from the Lord and will create a wedge between us and Him. Instead, turn those feelings over to Him, go to His Word for the reminders of who you truly are in Christ, repent and pray for strength and courage to follow His way in the future.

Look up the verses below and match up the truth of what we are to the verse. Then take some time to let those words sink into your heart and accept them from the Lord.

Romans 3:8	Treasured
Psalms 138:7	Accepted
Malachi 3:17	Loved
Romans 15:7	Redeemed
Ephesians 1:7-8	Protected
Psalms 45:11	Wonderful
Psalms 83:3	Chosen
Psalms 139:14	Beautiful
1 Peter 2:9	Cherished

As we close, we be sure to spend some time reading the remainder of Jeremiah to bring your journey to a close. We have only scratched the surface of lessons we can glean from the book of Jeremiah and it's just one book of the Bible. Imagine all that waits for us as we open and spend time with the Word of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Share and discuss at least one of your  hearts one of your  stars from the week's study/scripture readings.

Consider choosing another book of the Bible to study with your group but do it on your own. Now that we have done this together, you get the idea. Divide up the chapters for each week, read, pray and trust God will show you amazing new insights and revelations. You got this!