

The Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations

Lesson 1: The Call of Jeremiah -- Jeremiah 1:1–19

Imagine being handed a job you never asked for, in the hardest decade your nation will ever face, and being told you will mostly fail. No crowds will repent. The kings will not listen. Your own neighbors will turn on you. And you are young, unknown, and afraid. That is the assignment God lays on a boy from a little priestly town called Anathoth. Before Jeremiah preaches a single sermon, the Lord tells him exactly how the story ends: they will fight against you. It is one of the most honest job descriptions in all of Scripture.

And yet the chapter does not open with Jeremiah at all. It opens with God. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Long before Jeremiah had a name, a voice, or a single qualification, God had a purpose for him. The call did not begin the day Jeremiah felt ready. It began in the mind of God, in the quiet of eternity, where God had already decided what this life was for.

Jeremiah does what most of us would do. He flinches. “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” It is the oldest excuse in the book, the cousin of Moses’ stammer and Gideon’s smallness. I am too young, too plain, too unqualified, too afraid. And God does not argue the point. He simply refuses to let it be the last word. “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go.” Then He reaches out and touches Jeremiah’s mouth: “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.”

Notice what God gives him and what He does not. God does not promise success, comfort, or applause. He promises two things only: His word in Jeremiah’s mouth, and His presence at Jeremiah’s side. “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you.” Then God shows him a branch of an almond tree, the first tree to wake in spring, and says He is watching over His word to perform it. The call of Jeremiah is really a call to trust that when God speaks, God acts, and that the One who sends is the One who stays.

Group Discussion: God told Jeremiah the truth about how hard his calling would be before it began (1:19). Why do you think God gave him the full, costly picture up front rather than easing him into it, and how does that shape the way we think about following God ourselves?

Personal Reflection: God answered Jeremiah’s “I am only a youth” not by agreeing or disagreeing, but by promising His presence and His word. Where in your own life are you hiding behind an “I am only...,” and what would change if you really believed God was with you in it?

Read Jeremiah 1:1–19

Study Questions

1. Read 1:4–5. Before Jeremiah was born, God says He “knew” him, “consecrated” him, and “appointed” him a prophet. What does this reveal about God’s purpose and initiative, and how is this a call to a particular task rather than a statement that some individuals are unconditionally destined for heaven while others are not?

2. Jeremiah’s first instinct was to name his limitation: “I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth” (1:6). What is the “I am only...” that most often rises in your heart when you sense God asking something of you?

3. Read 1:7–9. God answers Jeremiah’s fear not by promising him eloquence but by putting His own words in Jeremiah’s mouth. What does this teach us about where the power of God’s message actually comes from?

4. God said, “Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you” (1:8). Whose faces, or whose disapproval, are you most afraid of right now, and how does the promise “I am with you” speak to that fear?

5. Read 1:11–12. God shows Jeremiah an almond branch and says, “I am watching over my word to perform it.” The almond was the first tree to bud in spring. What is God teaching Jeremiah about the certainty and timing of His word?

6. If God truly watches over His word to bring it to pass, how would resting in that promise change the way you obey Him in a situation where you cannot yet see any results?

7. Read 1:13–16. The boiling pot tilting from the north pictures the coming judgment on Judah “for all their evil” in forsaking God and worshiping the works of their own hands. What does this vision reveal about God’s holiness and His response to sin?

8. Jeremiah was called to speak hard truths people did not want to hear. Where are you tempted to soften, edit, or stay silent about God’s truth to keep the peace, and what would faithful courage look like there?

9. Read 1:17–19. God promises to make Jeremiah “a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls,” adding, “They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you.” How does God equip the people He calls, and how does this promise of His sustaining presence both demand faithful endurance and make it possible?

10. Look back over the whole chapter, from God’s eternal purpose to His promise to stand with Jeremiah against the whole land. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is using Jeremiah’s call to form courage, trust, or obedience in you this week.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Exodus 4:10–13, where Moses pleads that he is not eloquent and God answers, “Who has made man’s mouth?”; Isaiah 6:1–8, Isaiah’s call and his trembling “Here I am! Send me”; Acts 18:9–10, where the Lord tells Paul in Corinth, “Do not be afraid... for I am with you”; 2 Timothy 1:7, God has given us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control; Hebrews 13:5–6, the promise, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

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