

The Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 13: Jeremiah Threatened; the Yoke of Babylon

Jeremiah 26:1–28:17

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, these chapters set true prophecy against false prophecy and faithful submission against proud resistance. The teacher should help students see that God demands faithfulness regardless of reception (26:2), that the test of a true word is whether it comes from God and comes to pass (Deuteronomy 18:21–22; 28:9), and that false prophets are exposed not by their popularity but by their fruit and their fulfillment. Hananiah's smooth promise of peace, contradicted by God and ended by his own death, is the cautionary center.

The chapters also teach submission to God's providence. The yoke of Babylon is a sign that God sometimes calls His people to bend their necks under a hard discipline rather than fight for a deliverance He has not promised (27:8–11). The teacher should keep this God-centered: the call is not to fatalism but to trust, submitting to what God has declared because He is sovereign and wise. Where natural, point to the One who learned obedience and submitted to the Father's hard will (Matthew 26:39), and whose own yoke is, by contrast, gentle and light (Matthew 11:28–30).

Beyond doctrine, the lesson aims at formation. Students live in a world full of Hananiahs offering comfortable lies, and they feel the same pressure Jeremiah felt to soften the truth and protect themselves. The teacher's goal is that students leave with more courage to speak and live God's truth even at a cost, more willingness to submit to hard providences in trust rather than resentment, and a sharper love for the costly true word over the popular smooth one.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 26:1–6. God tells Jeremiah to speak “all the words that I command you... do not hold back a word,” even knowing it may provoke a deadly reaction. What does this reveal about God's call to faithfulness regardless of the response it brings?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the charge God gives Jeremiah: stand in the temple court and speak “all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word” (26:2). God even adds the hope behind the hard word: “It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way” (26:3). The warning is an act of love, a last appeal before judgment.

Notice that God does not tailor the message to the audience's mood. He does not soften it because the temple crowd will hate it. Faithfulness is measured by fidelity to what God said, not by how the message is received. The preacher's job is to deliver the word in full, not to manage the reaction.

Teach the seriousness of 'do not hold back a word.' It is tempting to keep the encouraging parts and quietly drop the convicting ones, to preach a gospel with no repentance and a God with no holiness. But to subtract from God's word is to misrepresent God. The whole counsel of God must be declared (Acts 20:27).

Apply it warmly. Most of us are not prophets, but all who speak for God, parents, teachers, friends, witnesses, face the same temptation to edit. The call is to deliver God's truth faithfully and lovingly, and to leave the response to Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's call to faithfulness measured by fidelity, not reception (26:2).
- The warning of judgment as itself an act of love and a call to repent (26:3).
- The temptation to subtract the convicting parts of God's word.
- Declaring the whole counsel of God, not a softened version (Acts 20:27).
- Leaving the response to God while delivering the message faithfully.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God measure faithfulness by what is said rather than how it is received?
- How is a warning of judgment actually an expression of God's love?
- What does it mean to declare the 'whole counsel of God' rather than an edited version?

Question 2

Student Question:

Jeremiah was commanded not to "hold back a word," even the unwelcome ones. Where are you tempted to edit, soften, or hold back part of God's truth to protect yourself or keep the peace?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question presses 'do not hold back a word' into the student's own speech. We rarely deny God's truth outright; more often we trim it. We mention God's love but not His holiness, forgiveness but not repentance, comfort but not the cross. We edit to protect ourselves from a frown or a fight.

Help students locate their editing. With which person, or in which setting, do they consistently soften what they know God says? A skeptical relative, a workplace that mocks conviction, a friend whose choices they do not want to address. Naming the place where we trim is the first step.

Distinguish loving wisdom from cowardly editing. Speaking truth 'in love' and with good timing (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 4:6) is not the same as quietly dropping the parts that cost us. The question is whether love or self-protection is driving the silence.

Move toward courage. Invite each person to name one truth they have been holding back and one loving, gracious way they could speak it this week, trusting God with how it lands.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The subtle editing of God's truth to protect ourselves.
- Trimming away holiness, repentance, or the cross while keeping comfort.
- The difference between loving, wise timing and cowardly silence (Ephesians 4:15).
- Trusting God with the outcome of a truth faithfully spoken.

Discussion Prompts

- Where or with whom do you most often soften God's truth?
- How do you tell the difference between wise timing and self-protective silence?
- What is one truth you have been holding back that you could lovingly speak this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 26:7-16. When the mob cries "You shall die!" Jeremiah answers, "I am in your hands; do with me as seems good... only know that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves." What does his response teach about courage, integrity, and trusting God with the outcome?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When the priests, prophets, and people seize Jeremiah crying "You shall die!" (26:8), watch how he answers. He does not grovel, lie, or recant. He calmly restates the message, "The LORD sent me to prophesy... all the words that you have heard" (26:12), and then leaves his life in their hands: "Behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you" (26:14). His only warning is that shedding innocent blood will fall on them.

Teach the courage of integrity. Jeremiah's composure comes from a settled conviction that he answers to God, not the mob. He will not buy his safety with a softened message. This is the same spirit that later moved Peter and John: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Notice that courage here is not recklessness or aggression. Jeremiah is calm, truthful, and even willing to die, but he does not provoke or posture. He simply tells the truth and entrusts the outcome to God. Faithful courage and quiet humility belong together.

Apply it directly. We may never face a mob, but we face hostility, mockery, and pressure to bend. Jeremiah models the alternative to both cowardice and combativeness: tell the truth, refuse to compromise it, and leave your safety in God's hands.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Courage rooted in answering to God rather than the crowd (Acts 5:29).
- Integrity that refuses to buy safety with a softened message.
- Entrusting the outcome, even one's life, to God (26:14).
- Faithful courage joined to calm humility, not aggression.
- The alternative to both cowardice and combativeness.

Discussion Prompts

- Where did Jeremiah's calm courage come from?
- How is faithful courage different from both cowardice and combativeness?
- What does it look like to entrust the outcome of your obedience to God?

Question 4

Student Question:

Jeremiah did not defend himself with clever compromise but with calm truth, leaving his life in God's hands. When you face hostility for your faith, do you tend to trust God with the outcome or to protect yourself by bending? What would trusting Him look like?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question turns Jeremiah's posture into a mirror. Under pressure, we tend toward one of two defenses: we bend, softening or hiding our faith to avoid conflict, or we lash out, defending ourselves with anger rather than trust. Jeremiah did neither; he told the truth and left the outcome with God.

Help students recall a real moment. When someone challenged or mocked their faith, what did they do? Did they go quiet and compromise, get defensive and sharp, or speak truth calmly and trust God? Honest memory exposes our default.

Locate the root. Bending usually grows from fear of people; lashing out usually grows from fear of being thought weak. Both are forms of trusting ourselves to manage the outcome. Trusting God frees us to be both honest and gentle.

Move toward a settled resolve. Invite each person to name one relationship or setting where they feel the pressure most, and to decide in advance how they will respond with truth and trust the next time it comes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The two common defenses under pressure: bending or lashing out.
- Fear of people as the root of compromise.
- Trusting God with the outcome as the alternative to self-protection.
- Deciding in advance to respond with truth and trust.

Discussion Prompts

- When your faith is challenged, do you bend, lash out, or speak truth and trust God?
- What fear is usually driving your default response?
- How could you prepare now to respond with both honesty and gentleness next time?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 26:20–24. The account pauses to tell how the prophet Uriah, who preached like Jeremiah, was hunted down and killed, while Jeremiah was spared through Ahikam. What does this sober contrast teach about the real cost of faithfulness and God’s providence over His servants’ lives?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The narrative pauses for a sobering aside. There was another prophet, Uriah son of Shemaiah, who “prophesied against this city... in words like those of Jeremiah” (26:20). But when King Jehoiakim sought to kill him, Uriah fled to Egypt; the king’s men hunted him down, brought him back, and “struck him down with the sword” (26:23). Meanwhile Jeremiah was protected by Ahikam, “so that he was not given over... to be put to death” (26:24).

Teach the real cost of faithfulness. Uriah’s death is a deliberate reminder that obedience to God is not always rewarded with rescue in this life. Faithful prophets did die for the word. The Bible never pretends that following God guarantees safety; it promises God’s presence, not immunity from suffering.

Hold this together with God’s providence. Two faithful men, one spared and one slain. God’s sovereignty does not mean every servant is delivered from death, but that every servant’s life and death are held within His purposes. The writer of Hebrews honors both kinds: those who ‘escaped the edge of the sword’ and those who were ‘killed with the sword,’ all commended for faith (Hebrews 11:34–37).

Apply it honestly and hopefully. This guards us from a shallow faith that expects God always to shield us, and roots us in a deeper trust: whether spared like Jeremiah or slain like Uriah, the faithful are safe in God’s hands, for nothing can separate them from His love (Romans 8:38–39), and the final word is resurrection.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The real cost of faithfulness; obedience not always rewarded with rescue.

- Uriah and Jeremiah, one slain and one spared, both within God's providence.
- God promising His presence, not immunity from suffering.
- Faith honored whether it escapes the sword or falls to it (Hebrews 11:34–37).
- The faithful safe in God's hands and kept by His love, even in death (Romans 8:38–39).

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the account pause to tell us about Uriah's death?
- How do we hold together God sparing Jeremiah and allowing Uriah to be killed?
- What kind of trust does it take to follow God when obedience may be costly?

Question 6

Student Question:

Uriah's death reminds us that faithfulness is not always rewarded with rescue in this life. How does it affect your willingness to follow God when you accept that obedience may be costly and not always shielded from suffering?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question takes Uriah's costly faithfulness and asks the student to count the cost too. Much modern religion quietly promises that following God will make life smoother, safer, and more successful. Jeremiah 26 will not let us believe that. Sometimes obedience leads to loss, and we must decide whether we will follow God anyway.

Help students examine their motives gently. Are we following God for what He gives, comfort, security, a problem-free life, or for who He is? The faith that only obeys when it is safe is not yet the faith of Uriah, or of the martyrs, or of Christ Himself.

Make it concrete. Obedience may cost a friendship, a promotion, a reputation, the approval of family. Where might following God genuinely cost the student something, and are they willing? Counting the cost in advance is what Jesus called for (Luke 14:28).

Move toward settled commitment. Invite each person to name one area where obedience might be costly and to settle now, before the test comes, that they will follow God there regardless of the price, trusting that He keeps the faithful in His hands.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Counting the cost of following God (Luke 14:28).
- Examining whether we obey God for His gifts or for Himself.
- Willingness to follow even when obedience brings loss.
- Settling commitment before the test arrives.

Discussion Prompts

- Are you following God for what He gives or for who He is?
- Where might obedience genuinely cost you something?
- How does settling your commitment now prepare you for the test later?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 27:1–11. God commands Jeremiah to wear a yoke as a sign that the nations must submit to Babylon, whom God has appointed for a season. What does this teach about submitting to God's hard providence rather than resisting His declared will?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God gives Jeremiah an unforgettable sign: make a yoke of straps and bars, wear it on your neck, and tell the nations to put their necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and live (27:2, 8–11). The God who made the earth has, for this season, given these lands into Nebuchadnezzar's hand (27:5–6). To resist is to perish; to submit is to be spared.

Teach the hard truth of submitting to God's declared providence. There are times when God's people must accept a discipline they hate rather than fight for a deliverance God has not promised. Bending the neck under the yoke was not defeatism; it was obedience to what God had actually said. The proud insistence on a different outcome was rebellion dressed up as faith.

Be careful and clear. This is not a call to passive fatalism about every hardship, nor an excuse to tolerate evil we are called to resist. It is submission to what God has specifically declared. Judah was not free to choose its own ending; God had spoken, and faith meant trusting His word even when it was painful.

Point gently to Christ. The yoke of Babylon was heavy, but there is another yoke. Jesus says, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' (Matthew 11:29–30). Submission to God always involves a yoke, but the One who Himself submitted to the Father's hard will now offers His people a yoke of rest. The path of life still runs through a bent neck and a trusting heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Submitting to God's declared providence rather than fighting it (27:8–11).
- God's sovereignty over the nations, giving lands into Babylon's hand for a season (27:5–6).
- Submission to what God has actually said, not passive fatalism about all hardship.
- Proud insistence on our own outcome as rebellion disguised as faith.
- The contrasting yoke of Christ, easy and light, for those who submit to Him (Matthew 11:29–30).

Discussion Prompts

- How was bending the neck under the yoke an act of obedience rather than defeat?
- What is the difference between submitting to God's declared will and mere fatalism?
- How does the yoke of Christ differ from the yoke of Babylon?

Question 8

Student Question:

God called His people to bend their necks under a yoke they hated, trusting that submission to His providence was the path of life. Where is God calling you to stop fighting a hard circumstance He has allowed and to submit to it in trust?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question brings the yoke down to the student's own neck. All of us face circumstances we cannot change and would never have chosen: a chronic illness, a difficult marriage, a season of loss, a closed door, a responsibility we did not ask for. The question is whether we will fight God's providence in resentment or bend our necks in trust.

Distinguish wise resistance from faithless resistance. Some hardships God calls us to resist and change; others He calls us to accept. Wisdom and prayer are needed to tell which is which. But many of us exhaust ourselves fighting what God has clearly allowed, when peace would come through trusting submission.

Name the difference submission makes. Bending under a hard providence is not despair; it is the place where we discover that God's grace is sufficient and His strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Resentment hardens us; trusting submission softens us toward God.

Move toward surrender. Invite each person to name one hard circumstance they have been fighting and to take a step this week toward submitting it to God in trust, asking not first that He remove it but that He meet them in it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Fighting a hard providence in resentment versus bending in trust.
- Discerning which hardships to resist and which to accept.
- God's sufficient grace and perfecting strength in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- Trusting submission as the path to peace, not despair.

Discussion Prompts

- What hard circumstance have you been fighting that God may be asking you to accept?
- How do you discern between a hardship to resist and one to submit to in trust?
- What would change if you asked God to meet you in it rather than only to remove it?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read 28:1–17. The false prophet Hananiah promises peace and breaks Jeremiah's yoke, but God replaces it with "bars of iron," and Hananiah dies within the year. What does this confrontation reveal about the difference between true and false prophecy and the danger of preaching comfort God has not spoken?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now the lie steps into the open. The prophet Hananiah stands in the temple and declares, in God's name, "Within two years I will bring back... all the vessels... and the exiles" (28:3–4). It is everything the crowd longs to hear: peace, restoration, and soon. Then he dramatically takes the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and breaks it before everyone (28:10), a piece of theater designed to win the room.

Watch Jeremiah's response, for it teaches us how to weigh prophecy. He says 'Amen, may the LORD do so' (28:6), longing for it to be true, but then names the test: 'the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the LORD has truly sent the prophet' (28:9; compare Deuteronomy 18:21–22). True prophecy is verified by its source and its fulfillment, not by its popularity or its drama.

Teach the marks of false prophecy. Hananiah speaks what people want, claims God's authority for it, and offers no call to repentance. He promises peace where God has spoken judgment. It is comfortable, confident, and false. 'Bars of iron' replace the broken wooden ones (28:13); fighting God's word does not cancel it, it only makes the discipline heavier.

Note the deadly seriousness of speaking lies in God's name. God's verdict on Hananiah is swift: 'This year you shall die, because you have uttered rebellion against the LORD' (28:16), and within two months he is dead (28:17; 28:1). To preach comfort God has not spoken is not a harmless mistake; it is rebellion that leads people astray and brings judgment on the false teacher (James 3:1).

Apply it to our own day. We still live among Hananiahs, voices that promise prosperity, ease, and peace without repentance, and claim God's blessing on what He has not authorized. The test remains: does the message come from God's word and align with it, or does it merely tell people what they want to hear? Costly truth, not comfortable lies, is the voice of the true God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The marks of false prophecy: telling people what they want, claiming God's authority, omitting repentance (28:2–4).
- The test of a true prophet, source and fulfillment, not popularity (28:9; Deuteronomy 18:21–22).

- Religious drama mistaken for divine power (28:10).
- Fighting God's word does not cancel it but makes the yoke heavier (28:13).
- The deadly seriousness of preaching comfort God has not spoken (28:16; James 3:1).

Discussion Prompts

- What were the warning signs that Hananiah was a false prophet?
- How does Scripture tell us to test a message that claims to be from God?
- Where do we hear 'Hananiah' voices today, and how do we recognize them?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over all three chapters, the temple sermon, the fate of Uriah, the yoke, and the clash with Hananiah. Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is forming courage, submission, or a love for costly truth in you this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the whole lesson, the temple sermon and the mob, the death of Uriah, the yoke on Jeremiah's shoulders, and the clash with Hananiah, and asks the student to respond. The aim is formation: more courage, more trusting submission, and a deeper love for costly truth over comfortable lies.

Press for specifics. Perhaps the Lord is calling someone to stop holding back a truth they have been editing. Perhaps He is asking someone to bend their neck under a hard providence they have been fighting. Perhaps He is sharpening someone's discernment to recognize the Hananiah voices around them, or stirring fresh willingness to follow Him at a cost.

Tie it explicitly to Christ. Jesus is the faithful Witness who spoke the truth that cost Him His life, the obedient Son who submitted to the Father's hard will in Gethsemane, and the One whose yoke is gentle and light. We are formed not by gritting our teeth but by walking with Him, learning His courage and His submission.

Invite each person to name their 'one thing' aloud or on paper, a truth to speak, a yoke to accept, a lie to refuse, and to carry it into the week as a matter of prayer and obedience to the Lord who is forming them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moving from study to formation and obedience (James 1:22).
- Christ as the faithful Witness and the obedient, submitted Son (Matthew 26:39).
- A growing love for costly truth over comfortable lies.
- Naming one concrete step of courage or trusting submission.

Discussion Prompts

- Which theme of these chapters is the Lord pressing on you most this week?
- Is He calling you to speak a truth, accept a yoke, or refuse a comfortable lie?
- What is the one specific step of obedience you will take in response?