

Jeremiah the Hungry Herald

Pre reading – Jeremiah 1 should be read in advance of the study.

Groups – The sheet at the end of this pack could be given to smaller groups of 3-4 people.

Introduction

How do we hear the God's Word in our lives today? The question over all our lives is what is God's will for us? How do we hear God's Word in our lives, what does he say, and how do we respond?

This study will look at the call of Jeremiah, where he heard the God's Word in a powerful way, and proclaimed it to the people of his day. We will see how important and powerful God's Word still is in our lives today. And how it requires Kingdom Courage to trust God's Word and act upon it.

Read Jeremiah 1:1-3

The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. ² The word of the LORD came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah, ³ and through the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah king of Judah, when the people of Jerusalem went into exile.

Questions (5 mins)

- (1) What do we find out about Jeremiah?
- (2) What do we see is happening in the nation in this time?
- (3) How do we hear the Word of the Lord today?

The prophet Jeremiah

The Book of Jeremiah is the writing of a prophet based in Jerusalem, urging the people to turn back to God. Jeremiah worked throughout the reigns of five different kings and sees the moral decline of the nation, until the eventual invasion of the Babylonians.

This study will look carefully through the first chapter of Jeremiah and see how he heard the word of the Lord and how that equipped him for his life.

Read Jeremiah 1:4-10

⁴ The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

*⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."*

⁶ "Alas, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young."

⁷ But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

⁹ Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

Questions (5 mins)

- (1) What was Jeremiah called to do?
- (2) What did Jeremiah think about his ability to do this?
- (3) How did God equip Jeremiah?
- (4) How does God equip us in a similar way?

Jeremiah was living in a time before Jesus. In this time, particular people were raised up in powerful ways to lead the nation back to God. Jeremiah had a big role to play in this time of disaster, to show that God was still in control and would still speak in the hardest of times.

We often look at powerful stories of God speaking and commissioning people in the Bible and wish this would happen to us and we would hear God with such clarity. We actually live in a far more amazing time, when the Word of God has been fully revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. This means that anyone can receive the Word of God by reading the scriptures and looking at the life of Jesus.

But so often the Word of God doesn't feel relevant to our lives. We feel distant and far away from God, and we feel that He isn't speaking to us.

God is very much still speaking to us through the pages of the Bible and the interpretation of the Holy Spirit. Let's look at the what the Lord says to Jeremiah, and how they can speak things into our lives too.

God speaks

Read Jeremiah 1:11-12

¹¹ The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?"

"I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied.

¹² The LORD said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled."

Questions (5 mins)

- (1) Why is it important that the Lord uses Jeremiah's name?
- (2) How does the Lord involve Jeremiah in revealing his word?
- (3) What do we learn about how and to who God reveals his Word?

The Lord speaks to Jeremiah by showing him a branch of an almond tree. The almond tree was the first to bud in Israelite countryside. This would have shown Jeremiah that something was coming, spring was coming, something was going to bud and grow. This was showing Jeremiah that the Lord was going to reveal something new through his ministry.

We can take something amazing from this too. God's word grows new things in our life, it builds us up and helps us blossom and bear fruit – or almonds!

Jeremiah's second picture is not quite as positive.

Read Jeremiah 1:13-16

¹³ The word of the LORD came to me again: "What do you see?"

"I see a pot that is boiling," I answered. "It is tilting toward us from the north."

¹⁴ The LORD said to me, "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. ¹⁵ I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms," declares the LORD.

*"Their kings will come and set up their thrones
in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem;
they will come against all her surrounding walls
and against all the towns of Judah.*

*¹⁶ I will pronounce my judgments on my people
because of their wickedness in forsaking me,
in burning incense to other gods
and in worshiping what their hands have made.*

Questions (5 mins)

- (1) What is the Lord showing to Jeremiah?
- (2) Why would this happen to the people?
- (3) How do you deal with parts of the bible that tell you things you disagree with?

This vision for Jeremiah showed him the impending Babylonian army, which would come and destroy the city. This is the message that a lot of the book of Jeremiah concerns. Jeremiah tells Judah that they had forsaken God, and because of this God would no longer protect them and they would be destroyed.

The picture of a budding branch is the picture of what happens when we allow the Word of God effect our lives, but the picture of the boiling pot, burning up all its path, is a picture of our lives without God. Our lives become a waste land, an empty city with its walls demolished and the heart of the city, the temple, destroyed.

The Word of the Lord is sometimes hard to understand this side of eternity. It will sometimes be something we don't understand, but we faithfully accept it. We accept it because it brings growth, and without it there is no life.

Stand up

Read Jeremiah 1:17-19

¹⁷ "Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them."¹⁸ Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. ¹⁹ They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD.

Questions (5 mins)

- (1) After these visions what does the Lord tell Jeremiah to do?

(2) Do you find it hard to stand up and say what God says?

(3) Are there areas of your life that terrify you?

(4) What promise does the Lord give you in this passage?

Sometimes it is hard to follow God's Word. 'I am with you' is one of the most important promises in the Bible. These four little words don't seem that important, but they look back to the promise that God made with Abraham that the almighty Creator God would be with His people. It also looks forward to the ultimate completion of this promise when Jesus Christ came and God lived in the midst of his people. This is called the *Immanuel* (God with us) promise, that God promises to be with you, and through the Word of God we hear His voice in our lives today.

You can take this powerful truth from this passage, that God wants to be involved in your life, and not just in a distant way, but in an intimate way. God says to each of us, 'I am with you'.

Devouring God's word

Jeremiah 15:16 *When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty.*

We all want God to speak to us, in this verse it says that Jeremiah ate the words of God, that they were so important to him that he took them into his body like food. He was nourished by regularly being fed on the Word of the Lord.

Group questions (5 mins)

(1) How does this picture change the way we approach the Bible?

(2) How else can we hear the Word of God in our lives?

(3) Do we have a hunger for God's Word in our lives?

Response (15 minutes)

Pray for each member of the group.

You may consider praying:

- For God's Word to nourish their lives
- That God will speak into particular situations in their lives
- That God will give them a hunger for his Word.

Jeremiah the Hungry Herald – Group Handout

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Introduction (5 minutes)

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The prophet Jeremiah (5 minutes)

- (1) What was Jeremiah called to do?
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God speaks

Jeremiah 1:11-12 (5 minutes)

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Jeremiah 1:13-16 (5 minutes)

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Stand up (5 minutes)

- (1) After these visions what does the Lord tell Jeremiah to do?
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Bible passages

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