



**Session 4**  
**Summer 2020**  
**Multiage**

# Jeremiah and a new covenant

**JEREMIAH 1:1-10; 31:31-40**

## prepare



### PRAYER

*God, you work so hard to have a relationship with us. May our gathering today be a celebration of your love and your promises. Amen.*

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

To love God wholeheartedly

### STORY SUMMARY

The word of God came to Jeremiah, saying that Jeremiah was appointed as a prophet before he was born. Jeremiah said he was only a boy, but God touched Jeremiah's mouth. Jeremiah spoke about a new covenant. This covenant would lead to forgiveness, rebuilding, and a deep knowledge of God. Everyone, from the least to the greatest, would know God. Jeremiah used the magnitude of God's creation to describe the enormity and endurance of God's love.

### teaching tips for multiage

The new covenant Jeremiah told about promised the people a relationship with God. Children will understand the idea of a promise. Explore how God's promise is for us too, and how we can feel the same hope it gave the Israelites. Encourage children to respond to God's new promise by voicing their thanks and love.

Decide which Explore options to offer. During Retell, children will make a story box out of paper. Younger children may need help making the box. Ask older children to assist, or bring in another adult to help. Check Supplies and To Do throughout this session to see what needs to be prepared.

## The prophet Jeremiah

Each biblical prophet was a product of a particular time and place, and Jeremiah is no exception. Jeremiah prophesies during and after the last days of the Judean realm—from 626 BCE when Josiah institutes important reforms until 587 BCE when, under Zedekiah [ZED-uh-KI-uh], Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed. That event is the cloud under which Jeremiah lives his life.

The reader also learns that Jeremiah belongs to a priestly family from Anathoth that was banished from Jerusalem three centuries earlier during the reign of Solomon.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah is undoubtedly forced to move back to Jerusalem when Josiah's reforms close all religious sites outside Jerusalem. It would be fair to say that one of the reasons Jeremiah can speak to those displaced by exile is because of his family's experience of banishment and later relocation.

## Jeremiah's vocation

Jeremiah is designated from the beginning as a prophet to the nations: "Before you were born, I consecrated you" (1:5). Believers sometimes feel that God calls them away from who they really are. Jeremiah's call is rooted in his divinely given nature, in the character of his DNA. In sum, God tells Jeremiah to be all that he was formed to be.

Jeremiah finds himself in the context of nations like Assyria and Babylon and Egypt who are battling for domination of the Near Eastern world and are changing the territorial landscape. His words reach out to those who are part of forced migrations, as in his letter to the Babylonian exiles in Jeremiah 29 and in his advice to King Zedekiah, discouraging alliance with foreign powers, in Jeremiah 27 and 28.

Jeremiah has been called the father of exilic Judaism because his words, long after they are spoken, have inspired groups who find themselves pummeled by world powers. He is called to give words of judgment—"to pluck up and to pull down"—but also words of hope—"to build and to plant" (1:10). Even when the future looks bleak, there is a way through.



## Reluctance and assurance

Like Moses and Gideon, Jeremiah does not leap at the opportunity to serve. He excuses himself on the basis of his youth and his lack of speaking experience. What enables leaders to lead? First of all, as this text suggests, God does not call us away from our skills. God knows what we are suited for better than we do. Jeremiah, for instance, is a gifted poet. His striking poetry challenged his generation and has inspired all generations since. Secondly, God gives an assurance: "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you" (1:8). Jeremiah exhibits a God-given courage amid difficult circumstances throughout his life. Third,

Jeremiah lives under the direction of God. He is not inventing a direction for his life, but rather following one: "For you shall go to all to whom I send you" (1:7).

## A brand-new covenant

While much of the book of Jeremiah contains words of judgment, oracles of hope have been collected in Jeremiah 31–32, part of what is called the book of consolation.<sup>2</sup> For the people who have experienced the horror of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 587 BCE, Jeremiah's words bring an expectation that God is not finished with Judah and Israel.

In the new covenant, the law will be written on their hearts. It will be natural for them because of their new relationship with God. The old covenant presupposed a hierarchical relationship: Moses over the people, priests over the laity, king over the subjects. The elitism of the old covenant has been transcended by the new: "No longer shall they . . . say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest" (31:34). No one is excused or seen as inferior in relationship to God.

Verse 34 contains the greatest comfort: "I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." It's over. Thanks to God's initiative, Judah and Israel are reconciled to God. A new life opens for an oppressed people who have lost their cherished past.

1. 1 Kings 2:26–27.

2. Jeremiah 30:1–3.

# gather

## supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD* (or digital versions)
- *Annual Shine Songbooks*
- CD player
- Paper
- Crayons/markers colored pencils
- Battery-operated or regular candle, matches

## resource pack

- Bible memory poster (Psalm 90)

## media connections

- “We Know Who We Are—Kids Making a Difference” from Geniuz Design (YouTube)
- Songs: “Love the Lord” by Lincoln Brewster; “I Can Hear Your Message” by Bryan Moyer Suderman
- “Overview: Jeremiah” from The Bible Project (YouTube) for teacher background

## BUILD COMMUNITY

Stand in a circle and pass a silent greeting, such as a smile, wave, or nod. One child begins by silently greeting another child. That person responds with the same greeting and then passes a different greeting to another child. Continue until everyone has been greeted and has greeted someone.

**For smaller groups:** Create a special handshake that is a series of hand movements.

## WORSHIP TOGETHER

Light a candle and invite the children into a time of silence. Let the silence settle for about a minute, then pray about loving God. As part of the prayer, pause to give children a chance to pray a thank-you to God. Then sing or listen to “We Are So Grateful” (track 12, page 18).

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

God made a new covenant asking for our undivided love. Teach the prayer and motions below for children to show their love with their whole bodies.

**Dear God** (*look up and fold hands*),

**I love you.** (*Hug yourself.*)

**You are my God.** (*Raise hands and pull them to chest.*)

**I belong to you.** (*Extend hands up and out from chest.*)

**May I speak your words and do your deeds.** (*Walk in place.*)

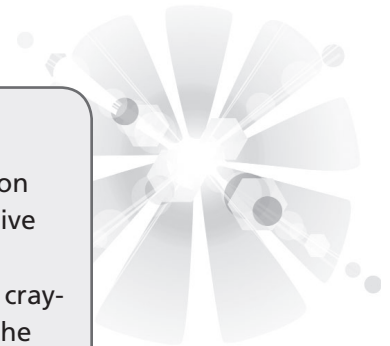
**Amen.** (*Bow head and fold hands.*)

## Bible memory

Give each child a noun or verb from the memory passage to illustrate. Depending on the size of your group, you may need to give some children the same word or give each person more than one. Provide paper and crayons, markers, or colored pencils. Hold up the drawings at the appropriate time as the group recites the memory passage.

**Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

—Psalm 90:1–2



# experience

## SHARE THE STORY

Ask a child to find Jeremiah in the Bible; use a bookmark for nonreaders. Display a pile of blocks. As you read the story from page 142 of *Shine On*, build the blocks into a circular wall. At the end of the story, all the blocks should be arranged in a structure.

## WONDER AND REFLECT

Reflect on the story together, pondering the following questions. Leave space for silent reflection, responses, and questions from the children.

- Imagine what God has planned for you since before you were born.
- I wonder how Jeremiah felt speaking God's words.
- I wonder about the things that need to be destroyed, and the things that need to grow.
- I wonder how the people felt hearing God's new covenant.

## PEACE NOTES

The Bible is a guide, a history, and a love letter from God. Bookmark the following scriptures in your Bible: Psalm 139:1–3; John 16:27; and Romans 5:5–8. Read these verses aloud to the children or have volunteers read them to the group. Invite children to share how these verses make them feel. Responses may include feeling loved, special, and grateful. Talk about how we can show our love to God in return; for example, through prayer, learning about God, and caring for others.



## Jeremiah and a new covenant

**Jeremiah 1:1–10;  
31:31–40**  
*Shine On*, p. 142

## supplies

- Bible
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*

## storytelling props

- Pile of blocks

## to do

- Bookmark Bible passages for Peace notes.

# explore

## CREATE

God took the old covenant and made a new covenant. In this activity, children can take something old and make it new. Ahead of time, gather used plastic spoons; wash the spoons, cut off the handles, and sand the cut edges of the round part. Children can create whimsical bugs by painting them or coloring with permanent markers. Attach chenille stem legs and antennae with hot glue.

*Option:* Use stick-on googly eyes. To make the bugs more solid, fill the underside with clay.

### supplies

- Plastic spoons with handles removed
- Craft paint/brushes or permanent markers
- Thin chenille stems (pipe cleaners)
- Hot glue gun (for adult use)
- Stick-on googly eyes (optional)
- Modeling clay (optional)

## MOVE

One way we can return God's love is to love others. Work together as God's people and play the "Together we can" game. The instructions are on page 84 of this guide, and the game tiles have been cut apart from the "Together we can" game in the resource pack, for use in an earlier session.

### supplies

- "Together we can" game instructions (from Additional resources)
- "Together we can" game tiles (from resource pack)
- Coin
- Game pieces

## other ideas

- Play "Whisper down the lane," mimicking how Jeremiah repeated God's words.
- Decode a puzzle that shows God's promise to Jeremiah. The activity sheet is found at [www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras](http://www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras).



## RETELL

Ask children to read the Bible story on page 1 in the Multiage leaflet. (Older children can read to non-readers.) Then give each child a Story box template copied from page 88 of this guide. Children can draw an image from the story in each block, then cut and tape the story box together. *Drawing suggestions:* Jeremiah as a child, God touching Jeremiah's mouth, Jeremiah with King Josiah, a heart, a night sky, a wall around a city.

### supplies

- Multiage leaflets
- Story box template (from Additional resources)
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Scissors
- Clear tape or glue

## LEAFLET

On page 3 of the Multiage leaflet, older children can read "Prophets" and learn about other prophets in the Bible. Younger children can cut out the shapes on that page and attach them to the right places on pages 2 and 3. All children can decode the message in "Destroy and grow" on page 4. Emphasize that they need to follow the roots down to the words to figure out which words are not part of the message. *Solution:* I will be their God and they shall be my people.

### supplies

- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- Multiage leaflets
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Glue



# bless

## PRAY

Gather together in a circle. Ask a child to mark with stickers the categories on the “Faithful followers” poster from the resource pack that fit Jeremiah (*Old Testament, public speaker, called by God*). Then stand and pray the People’s prayer together from the “Ways to pray” poster from the resource pack.

**God, we come together to worship and learn about you.**

*(Link elbows).*

**We praise you in our joys.**

*(Stand on tiptoe.)*

**We support each other in our sorrows.** *(Bend knees.)*

**In your love we meet** *(step in),*  
**and in your love we part.**

*(Step out.)*

**Be with us as we go.**

*(Unlink elbows.)*

**Shine through us as we live.**

*(Raise arms.)*

**Amen.** *(Lower arms.)*

## SEND

Send the children with these words from Lamentations 3:22–23:

**The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.**

Make sure to send leaflets home with the children.

## supplies

- Multiage leaflets
- Small stickers

## resource pack

- “Faithful followers” poster
- “Ways to pray” poster

*Spirituality isn’t something that we achieve—it’s a gift from God that is woven into the very fabric of our innermost being. We can’t create a spiritual capacity in anyone. But we can help to form it. We can provide opportunities for children and youth to have spirit-to-Spirit connections with the One who gave them the gift of spirituality.*

—Dave Csinos  
Princeton, Ontario



## leader’s closing prayer

We often face difficulties feeling alone and overwhelmed. Be encouraged. God knows our struggles. Like Jeremiah, we need not be afraid. God is with us forever, just as promised.

*Merciful God, your love is more than I deserve and yet you give it in abundance. I love you for the joy you give me. I love you for the peace I find in you. I love you, God. Amen.*