

The Calling of Jeremíah

Jeremíah 1:1-12

MEMORY VERSE

JEREMIAH 1:5

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; and I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A large piece of thin cardboard or poster board, a pencil, markers and scissors.

A paper plate for each child. You may want to consider using smooth edged paper plates. You will also need markers or crayons and scissors.

Several 3 x 5 cards, your chalk or dry erase board and chalk or dry erase markers.

ATTENTION GETTER!

We Each Have a Part!

In today’s lesson we will learn that God had a special calling and purpose for Jeremiah. He also has a special calling and purpose for our lives. As we serve the Lord in what He gives us to do we see how that the Lord puts us all right where He wants us in order to bring glory to Him. You will need a large piece of thin cardboard or poster board, a pencil, markers and scissors.

Prior to class take a large piece of thin cardboard or poster board and draw a large picture on it. You can be as simple or get as fancy as you like. If you are artistically challenged you can just write out the lesson’s memory verse. Next, use a pencil to lightly mark on your picture lines for puzzle pieces. After marking your lines cut out the puzzle pieces (cut large pieces, the younger the class, the larger the pieces).

After worship time give each child a puzzle piece and have all of the children work together on the floor to put together the puzzle. Use this puzzle to introduce your lesson. Explain to the children that God has a special purpose and place for us in His kingdom. When we are all faithful and obedient to what He has for us then we all join together to make a beautiful work of art. Let's look at how God used Jeremiah's life.

LESSON TIME!

What is success? Many people believe that success comes in the form of making a lot of money, perhaps being popular or really powerful. These are the things the world holds as success. In our culture we are pushed to be rich and beautiful and powerful and if you don't match up to this standard then your life will never be a success. Also, many times success is measured by how many people are listening to us or following us. How many people do we influence?

By these standards, Jeremiah the Old Testament prophet would be considered a miserable failure. For 40 years, he served God as His spokesman to the people of Judah; but when Jeremiah spoke, nobody listened. He served God faithfully to persuade the people to turn from their wickedness, but they refused to obey. And he certainly did not become the richest man in Israel, at least in material things. He was poor and underwent severe trials and times of going without the comforts of life in order to faithfully deliver his prophecies.

Throughout his life Jeremiah stood alone declaring God's message of judgment on a nation that had rejected Him. He also wept over the fate of his beloved country. It broke his heart to see what would happen to his country, but he still faithfully declared God's Word to His people. Out of love he spoke the truth to the Israelites, but they rejected him. Consistently and passionately he urged them to respond to God's call for holiness, but nobody moved.

Jeremiah was a preacher who had no converts, no one responded to the message. In the eyes of Israel Jeremiah was a failure. As the world today looks at success he would also be considered a failure.

In the eyes of God Jeremiah was one of the most successful people in all of history. Success, in God's eyes involves obedience and faithfulness. Despite what other people say and what it may cost in life. Jeremiah was everything but a failure, because he was faithful to the calling that God had given him. He courageously and faithfully proclaimed God's Word to the people, even when no one listened. Jeremiah obeyed God no matter what and that is what God wants in our lives. **A successful life requires faith and obedience to God.**

In our lesson today, we will learn the true meaning of success. As a young man, God called Jeremiah into an overwhelming ministry that would require both faith and obedience. The choice was his and as we study his life we will see that he was a great success.

JEREMIAH 1:1-3

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin,

to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

As we begin the book of Jeremiah, he gives us information about his family background and himself. He lived in a village called Anathoth, which was about three miles northeast of Jerusalem in the land of Benjamin. He held a very important position as of one of the priests, which made him a descendant from the priestly line. Undoubtedly, Jeremiah came from a great family heritage that devoted themselves to serving God.

How thankful we can be for a godly family who desires to serve the Lord. By having a strong foundation in Jesus there are so many wonderful things that God can use our lives for. God can use anyone who comes to Him and any time in their lives, but it is a special blessing to know the Lord at a young age and to be used by Him for many years. All we need to do is simply be faithful and obedient. **A successful life requires faith and obedience to God.**

JEREMIAH 1:4-5

Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

Immediately, Jeremiah tells us that the Lord spoke to him, calling him to be a prophet to all the nations. God revealed that His selection of Jeremiah as a prophet had occurred before he had even been formed in his mother's womb. Before Jeremiah was conceived God had singled him out to be His spokesman to the people of Judah.

God initially fashioned Jeremiah in his mother's womb, blessing him with the gifts and abilities to fulfill his calling. God wanted Jeremiah to know that He had prepared him for this day, and not only was he prepared he was sanctified (set apart) and appointed

to this ministry. God had left Jeremiah with no excuses. He had called him and He had equipped him to fulfill his purpose.

God also knows you, as He knew Jeremiah, long before you were born or even thought of. King David wrote a psalm of praise about the thought of how wonderfully and marvelously he had been made (139:13-16). God knew you, thought about you, and has a plan for you. He has a purpose for your life. He wants to do great things through your life. When you feel discouraged or inadequate, remember that God has always thought of you as valuable with a purpose for you in mind. Every child of God has a special place in His plan. **A successful life requires faith and obedience to God.**

Good News Frisbee Rings

For this craft you will need a paper plate for each child. You may want to consider using smooth edged paper plates. You will also need markers or crayons and scissors.

Using your scissors, poke a hole near the rim. Make your cut 1 to 1 1/2 inches from the edge. Cut out the middle of the paper plate leaving a ring. Using your markers or crayons write "Jesus Loves You" around the edge. For younger children you may need to help them with the writing. You may also decorate the Frisbee. Allow the children to toss the ring back and forth and tell each other, "Jesus loves you" as they do.

God told Jeremiah that he would be a prophet to all the nations. God has also called us to go into all the nations and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-19). These Frisbee rings will help us to remember to spread the good news of Jesus' love for us.

JEREMIAH 1:6

Then said I: "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth."

God had called Jeremiah into an incredible ministry as His ambassador, or representative to the nations. When Jeremiah realized what an important job it was the he was called to he could only see his inadequacies as a youth. As a young man Jeremiah felt he lacked the speaking ability needed for such a public ministry. Sometimes God will give us an idea or glimpse of what He has for our lives and it seem like such an important and responsible task that we can feel overwhelmed. How could we even attempt to begin such an awesome task?

Moses made the same mistake when God had called him to lead His people out of Egypt. Moses was also overwhelmed by his inability to speak. He refused to trust in God to help him and provoked God to anger. God told Moses that He would send Aaron his brother to do the speaking. But it is interesting that we don't see Aaron speaking to Pharaoh, we see Moses. So God did help Moses and he became a great man of faith and obedience in his ministry. **A successful life requires faith and obedience to God.**

All that Moses and Jeremiah needed was some help, and who better than God to help them say and do the right things? It is easy for us to focus on our weaknesses, but if God asks us to do something, then He will help us get the job done. If the job involves some of our weak areas, then we can trust that He will provide the words, strength, courage and abilities we need. We just need to trust Him.

JEREMIAH 1:7-10

But the LORD said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.

Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD.

Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant."

Jeremiah thought he had a good excuse to get out of God's call on his life, but in God's hands there are no limitations. God had reassured Jeremiah with three things he could count on. God answers Jeremiah's complaint with His commitment to provide His provision and protection. Let's look at those three things.

First, God commissions Jeremiah to go wherever He will send him and say whatever He commands him to say. Jeremiah was to be led by God to serve Him as a faithful messenger. He didn't have to come up with the message, just repeat what God had told him to say. He simply needed to follow the Lord in obedience and trust in God to help him. **A successful life requires faith and obedience to God.**

Second, God promised Jeremiah that He would deliver and protect him. It seems that Jeremiah was afraid for his personal safety and rightfully so. He would face persecution from the people as they would try to get rid of him (see 11:18-23; 12:6; 20:1-2; 26:11; 37:15-16; 38:4-6). God promised to see Jeremiah through trouble, not to keep trouble from coming.

Jeremiah would be thrown in jail, insulted, beaten, sentenced to die, left for dead in a pit and deported from his country. Yet God was faithful to His promise. God does not keep us from encountering life's storms, but He will see us through them. He promises to be there for us and help us as He did Jeremiah. God told Jeremiah not to be afraid of them, because He would be on his side.

Third, God showed Jeremiah the source of His message. God appears to him in a vision as He stretches out His hand to touch Jeremiah's mouth. God would put His words in his mouth, providing the very words he would speak; Jeremiah didn't need to worry about preparing a speech, God would speak through him.

Jeremiah's work was to warn not only the Jews, but also all the nations of the world about God's judgment on sin. His message would be a message of both judgment and blessing to nations and kingdoms. God's judgments would tear down, destroy and overthrow the wicked, but through His blessings to the faithful, He would build them up.

As God tried to reach the people of Israel with His Word, His plan was to communicate to every nation and person. We were also included in Jeremiah's message of judgment and hope. As believers we are to share God's desire to reach the whole world for Him. God has given us the responsibility to proclaim His Word to everyone (Matthew 28:18-20). Jeremiah had an awesome responsibility to be faithful in telling others God's message, but so do we as believers. If we desire to be successful in life for God, we need to be obedient to His call on our lives. **A successful life requires faith and obedience to God.**

JEREMIAH 1:11-12

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do you see?" And I said, "I see a branch of an almond tree."

Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word."

Jeremiah sees an interesting vision from God. He wanted Jeremiah to know that He was with him to confirm His Word. As he looked at the branch of the almond tree, Jeremiah would remember that in Palestine it would be the first tree in the year to bud and bear fruit.

Its blooms would grow before the leaves appeared blooming in January thus earning the name “awake tree.”

This branch represented God who was watching to see that His Word is fulfilled. Jeremiah could begin his ministry with the confidence that God will accomplish through him all that He would have him do.

Jeremiah didn't have to respond to God's call out of fear or uncertainty. God assured him that the success of his ministry would be dependent on Him. Jeremiah simply needed to respond in faith and obedience. **A successful life requires faith and obedience to God.** Looking back in history at the life of Jeremiah, we see that God was true to His word, and we see that Jeremiah was successful. He lived a life of faith and obedience to God.

What has God called you to do lately? Are you ready and willing to answer His call on your life with faith and obedience? You can trust that God will enable you to live the life that will make you successful in His eyes. God had a plan for Jeremiah and He has a plan for you. Our unknown future is secure in the hands of our all-knowing God.

Child of God

Use this game to review today's lesson with the children. You will need several 3 x 5 cards, your chalkboard or dry erase board and chalk or dry erase markers. This game is a variation of the old game Hangman, except no one is hung. Before you begin, write down several questions and answers on 3 x 5 cards to review today's lesson.

Stand by your chalk/dry erase board. Choose one of the 3 x 5 cards and read the question to the class. Have children who think they know the answer raise their hands. Choose someone to answer. If the child knows the answer, have him or her come up to the board

and draw a body part on the board (head, hand, eye, etc.). Next, allow that child to select the next card and read the question to the class (if they are at a reading age). Play until the class completes the “child of God” on the chalkboard.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to live a life of faithfulness and obedience to God. To listen for God’s instructions on what He would have them to do for Him and then to step out into it in faith and obedience. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.