



# CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

JULY 04 2020

## who, me?

**Scripture Story:** Jeremiah 1.

**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 34.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

God called Jeremiah to a special task—and not an easy one. Jeremiah's role as a prophet would be to warn the people of Judah that God's patience had finally run out. Like the northern kingdom of Israel just a few generations earlier, Judah would be overtaken by a foreign power and her people forced into exile. For too long the people of Judah had ignored God's calls to repentance, and now they were going to reap the consequences.

From Jeremiah's perspective, it was a daunting call. God's message would not make him popular or well liked. He would have to look forward to rejection and persecution. As a very young man, Jeremiah didn't feel able to do the task. He protested that he wasn't able to carry the responsibility God was handing him.

God assured Jeremiah that he had been set aside for this task from before his own birth. It's an awesome thought to realize that God knows us and has plans for us even before we're born, but that was what God told Jeremiah. This week's lesson asks students to consider what that knowledge means for their own lives. What is God calling them to do and to be?

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that God had a special plan for Jeremiah's life. (*Know*)
- Believe that God also has a plan for their lives. (*Feel*)

- Choose to open themselves up to explore and follow God's plan for their lives. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

- Faith
- God's foreknowledge
- Discerning God's will

### TEACHING

#### I. GETTING STARTED

##### **Activity**

*Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

After discussing *What Do You Think?* write the following questions on the board:

- Should Christians be popular with others?
- If we are, is it a sign that we're not standing up for what we believe?
- If we're unpopular, is it because we're being persecuted for our faith—or are we just behaving badly and turning people off?

Divide students into groups of two and three to discuss these questions for five minutes. Bring the group back together, draw everyone's attention to the questions, and ask for responses.

As you process the discussion with your students, share the following ideas with them in their own words.

Jesus told His disciples to expect persecution, but He didn't tell them to go out looking for it. Rather, He told them to live the way He lived. That will be very

appealing to some people—and bring you into conflict with others.

Our goal as Christians shouldn't be to upset people—although sometimes God's messengers do that, as Jeremiah did. Nor should our goal be to get people to like us—though that may happen. Instead, our most important goal should be to discover God's will for our lives and follow it faithfully, without worrying too much about how others will react.

### Illustration

*Share this illustration in your own words:*

"A story is told of the death camps of World War II. At the train terminal in one of the camps the officers began separating able-bodied men from the women and children. One father, a member of a royal family, gazed on this scene and heard the fearful voices of families torn apart. He realized he might never see his young son again. He knelt down beside the boy and held him by the shoulders. 'Michael,' he said, 'no matter what happens, I want you always to remember one thing. You're special; you're the son of a king.'

Soon father and son were separated by the soldiers and marched off to different sections of the camp. They never saw each other again. Michael learned much later that his father had perished in a gas chamber. He had to go out alone and try to make his way in the world.

But his father's last words would always stay with him. They became a guiding beacon in his life. 'You're the son of a king.'

Michael determined that whatever came, he would behave like the son of a king.

Has the reality of this enormous truth hit you yet? Does it guide your actions? Does it mold your behavior? You are a child of the King of the universe. Royal blood runs through your veins. You are part of the royal family of heaven. When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior, we are 'born again' into the family of God. Through Christ we are adopted into heaven's royal line. The apostle Paul states this truth eloquently: 'Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God' (Eph. 2:19).

What a privilege! We are members of God's household. What a calling! We have a new identity.

A portion of God's family is in heaven, but there is also a portion right here on earth. Scriptures refers to those who have accepted Jesus as a definite part of

God's family. The third chapter of Ephesians makes the point plain:

'For the reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named' (Eph. 3:14, 15).

Let your spirit soar. You are a part of God's family. Let your soul grasp this glorious spiritual truth today. Your heavenly Father is the Creator of the universe.

You are the son or daughter of the King. Why not behave like the prince or princess you are?"—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground*, 2003, p. 69.

## II. TEACHING THE STORY

### Bridge to the Story

*Share the following in your own words:*

Few people are actually born in royal families. But the fact is that the story of the father's last words to his son, "You are the son of a king" is really the story of each one of us. While we may think we're nobody special, each of us is a child of the King of the universe, and our heavenly Father has designed a special role for each of us to play in His work. As He told Jeremiah, He knows about us even before we are born, and He has a plan for us. While we are free to make our own choices, our lives will be so much more rewarding—and interesting!—if we choose to follow His plan for us.

### Out of the Story for Teachers

*After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.*

Have two students from the class (asked in advance if necessary) read the roles of Jeremiah and the Lord in Jeremiah, chapter 1. You can join in by reading the narrative parts in between the dialogue.

Then ask students to look up Isaiah 6 and Exodus 3:1-14; 4:1-17. These are two other Bible stories in which God calls people to do a special task for Him. If time permits, read through them in the same fashion with one reader taking the part of God and the other the part of the person He is calling, reading the narrator's part yourself. If you don't have time for that, ask students to turn to each passage and read through the highlights of each scene quickly to ensure they are familiar with each story. After looking at all three stories, discuss the following questions:

- In these three stories, what do the people God is calling have in common? How are their responses to God similar?
- What tasks is God calling each person to do? How do you think they might feel about taking on these jobs?
- How do you feel knowing that God has a plan for your life and job for you to do? Does it make you feel excited, scared, challenged, rebellious—or some other response? Can you relate to anything Jeremiah, Isaiah, or Moses said in these three passages?
- If God does have a plan for our lives, how do we discover it? How do we know that we are on track with His plan and not just following our own desires?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Psalm 139; Isaiah 6; Exodus 3; 4.

### Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The Bible relates many stories of God calling people to serve Him. In many cases—as in the example of Jeremiah in this week's lesson, or of Isaiah and Moses in the *Out of the Story* section above—those whom God called questioned the call at first. Moses said he was a poor speaker. Isaiah was a man of “unclean lips.” Jeremiah felt he was too young. Other biblical heroes, though their “call” stories may be less dramatic, felt themselves ill-fitted for the role they

### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

#### Reading Scripture in Class

It's important to expose students to reading Scripture in class—perhaps more important than most of the things we do in Sabbath School, since they may not read the Bible on their own. But how do you present passages of Scripture as part of the lesson?

One option is to read aloud to students yourself. Another is to read through a passage assigning a verse at a time to different people to read. Or, as suggested in this week's *Out of the Story* section, assign different students to read the spoken words of the characters in the Bible story, while you read the narration that ties it together.

If you're doing an activity in which the literal translation of a text is important, everyone should have the same translation (have a stack of NKJV Bibles in your classroom, or make photocopies of the passage in the version you want to use). For looking at a short passage from a few different perspectives, you can ask a couple of students who have different Bible versions to read and compare theirs. The dynamic or functional equivalence translation of the Bible, such as the New International Version, focuses on the overall meaning of the text rather than on literal translation. Translations such as *The Message* or *The Clear Word* use extensive paraphrasing and elaboration of the Scriptural passages for ease of comprehension in the contemporary context.

### Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book *Prophets and Kings*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from *Out of the Story*.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

were called to play. David was the youngest and least impressive of his brothers when Samuel anointed him as the future king. Esther told Mordecai there was no way she could go before the king and defy his decree. The Bible makes it clear that the greatest heroes of faith didn't feel like heroes when they were first called.

Maybe that's the sign of someone who will make a good servant of God—someone who initially feels inadequate and unworthy. When Ellen White—a mostly uneducated teenager in poor health—received her first vision, the vision itself was exhilarating, but the idea of sharing what she had seen with others was daunting. “I went to the Lord in prayer and begged Him to lay the burden on someone else,” she wrote in *Early Writings*. “It seemed to me that I could not bear it. I lay upon my face a long time, and all the light I could get was, ‘Make known to others what I have revealed to you.’”

People who don't think they're ready are, in fact, the kind of people God can use. If the task God is calling us to do seems too big for us, we can be assured that His strength and power will be with us. We respond to His call not in our own strength, but in His.

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

*Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.*

In advance, ask students to provide you with a picture of themselves as a baby or small child (or, if you have contact with the parents of all your students, ask parents to give you pictures so you can scan and print them, then return the originals, without your stu-

dents even knowing you have them). At the end of the lesson, give each student a picture of him/herself as a baby. If you're not able to arrange this in advance, have students cut pictures of babies from magazines and ask each one to stick a baby picture on an index card to represent their younger selves.

Write this week's key text on the board and ask students to copy it onto the back of the picture or card. Tell them to keep it as a reminder that God has a plan for each of their lives.

#### Summary

*Share the following thoughts in your own words:*

Jeremiah was called by God to do a special task. He knew that it wouldn't be easy and might even involve danger and persecution. At first, Jeremiah didn't feel equal to the task. He thought he was too young and inexperienced. But with God's help and support, he became a powerful messenger for the Lord. He accepted the challenge that was given to him.

God has a challenge for each of us, too. He knew you before you were born, just as He knew Jeremiah. His plan for you doesn't cancel out your own free will, but He longs for you to put your will in alignment with His so that He can use you to do great things.

Like Jeremiah's task, yours may involve challenge and difficulty. The things God asks us to do aren't always easy. But they are always rewarding and always best for us in the long run—and they can provide far more satisfaction and opportunity for growth than a safe, “ordinary” life lived without God. Take up His challenge. Trust His plan for your life.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty and Ruin*), chapter 34.

\*A special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net).