



God Calls Jeremiah

Goal: To wonder how God might be calling them.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Jeremiah 1:4-10

Jeremiah endured suffering as God's prophet. What sustained him? His call from God. Here he recognized he was being set apart to serve God. In his account, we see several stages.

First, Jeremiah recognized God's commissioning. God said, "Before I created you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set you apart; I made you a prophet to the nations" (1:5, CEB). God chose Jeremiah, even before his birth, to carry out God's work. This is the deepest sense of purpose imaginable. But then Jeremiah objected. He said he didn't know how to speak and was only a child (v. 6).

Yet, God reassured Jeremiah. God said not to be afraid and that wherever he went, "I'm with you to rescue you" (v. 8). This was a divine reassurance that no matter how bad things got, Jeremiah could depend on the presence and protection of God.

Finally, to make this real, God gave Jeremiah a sign. God "stretched out his hand, touched my mouth, and said to me, 'I'm putting my words in your mouth'" (v. 9).

God's grace called and protected Jeremiah. He spent his life in gratitude for God's grace and in obedience to God's call.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children probably have many experiences of hearing a parent or other adult call them with a job for them to do. "Hey, I need your help." Children of all ages will be able to tell a story about ways they help out and chores they do. You might ask, "Is there a job you don't think you could do?" or "Are there jobs at home or school or in the neighborhood that you don't like to do?" These questions will help make the transition to telling the story of Jeremiah and understanding his response to God's call to him to be a prophet.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As the children arrive, involve them in helping you with something for the session. Let them assist you with getting out supplies for the learning activities or putting out the Bible or candle. As you involve them in getting the room ready, you could talk with them about the ways they help out at home. What are jobs do they have to do at home or at school or in their neighborhood?

As you tell the story of Jeremiah and his reluctance to believe he could do what God was asking, remind the children that whenever they have tough jobs to do, God is with them.

Dear God, open my ears to your call and give my feet strength to respond. Amen.



Supplies

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

cloth

candle

building blocks

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) 6, 33, 38, 42,
45–48

Music & Melodies (MM)
2016–2017

story audio (see p. vii)

Responding

Claiming

prepared game box

Offering

alphabet-shaped cereal

paper towels

dried fruit or nuts

Bonus Activity

Grace Notes (GN) 1

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM 45–46**. Use the visual schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM 47–48** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Claiming God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG A B M MS

Play “Holy, Holy, Holy!”—**MM 21**— as the children arrive.

Welcome each child by saying, “Grace and peace be with you, (*name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.” Invite children to place a cloth, candle, and Bible on the worship table.

Ask a volunteer to open a Bible to the book of Jeremiah and place it on the table.

Ask some children to prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two lead today’s singing.

Ask two children to make a line on the floor with masking tape. Invite the children to think of things that might be difficult for them to do. Gather at the line. Say that one end means “too young,” the opposite end means “too old,” and the center means “just right.” One at a time, name the items on the list below and invite the children to stand on the line to indicate if they are too young, too old or just the right age to do it:

- ▼ Sleep in a crib
- ▼ Go to school
- ▼ Drive a car
- ▼ Read
- ▼ Eat baby food
- ▼ Buy a house
- ▼ Have friends
- ▼ Get married
- ▼ Do homework

Tell the children to keep the question, “Am I old enough?” in mind during today’s story.

Singing

Gather together and play “Sing for Joy”—**MM 6, SCM 33**—as the children listen. Play the song again and encourage the children to clap the rhythm and move as they sing.

Praying

Turn on the candle. Ask if the children have any prayer concerns. Invite someone to lead the opening prayer. Encourage the volunteer to include the concerns in the prayer. Then end by saying:

“God of grace, shape us into the people you created us to be, full of grace and gratitude. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

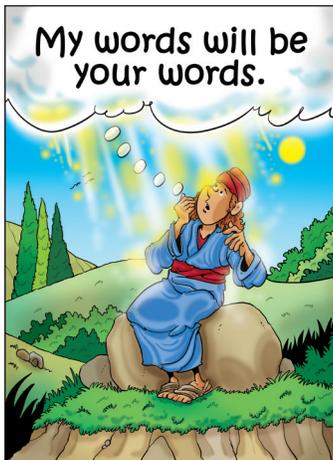


Preparing to Hear the Story SD

Have many building blocks available, and invite the children to build towers to prepare for the story.

As they work, ask the children to describe what a prophet is. Explain that a prophet is a person who speaks God's words to the people of God. Many times, a prophet would tell the people how they were not being faithful to God, what would happen if they continued to be unfaithful, and that they needed to repent (return to God).

Ask a volunteer to hold the Bible so the group can see where it is opened. Tell them that the Bible is open to the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. Jeremiah lived about six hundred years before Jesus. Explain that God chose Jeremiah to be a prophet when he was a boy and Jeremiah thought it was too big a job for someone so young.



Some children will love to knock down blocks. Others might be upset about their blocks being knocked down, but they may enjoy building anew.

Hearing the Story L

Encourage the children to listen as you tell the story from **SCM 6**, or invite a volunteer to read it. Use your voice, expressions, feelings, and body to make the story livelier. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

Tell the children that when they hear God tell Jeremiah that a time would come when the nation would be pulled down and destroyed, they are to knock down the towers they made. Then, when God tells Jeremiah that there would be a time for planting and building up, invite the children to build new towers or structures.

Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Reflecting on God's Grace MS

Return to the masking tape line. Ask the children to move to the place that shows their response to "Do what God wants me to do." Encourage everyone to move to "just right" in the center. Emphasize that they are always the right age to do what God wants them to do.

Say that Jeremiah did what God asked him to do. Wonder what is hard about following God:

- ▼ How do you know when God is calling you to do something?
- ▼ How do you feel when you realize what God wants you to do?
- ▼ What might God be calling you to do?

Singing

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing "Holy, Holy, Holy!"—**MM 21, SCM 38**.

Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.



Claiming God's Grace

M MS

Before the session, obtain a medium-sized cardboard box (such as a copier paper box). Draw a large face with an open mouth on one side of the box. Cut out the mouth to make a hole.

Give each child five half-sheets of paper. Invite the children to think of words or phrases that God would put into their mouths. Then have them write one word or phrase on each half-sheet of paper.

Younger children may need help with writing, or you might write suggestions on newsprint for the children to copy.

Set the box on a chair on one side of the room. Determine the distance for the throwing line and mark it with a piece of masking tape. Option: Make a two lines, one closer for younger children and one farther away for older children.

Tell the children to crumple their papers into balls. Let them take turns throwing the words God gives them into the mouth on the box. Instruct them to shout out the words they have written on each paper ball as they toss it.

Celebrating God's Grace

A MS

Ask the children to sit on the floor. Tell them you are going to read several unfinished sentences. If they want to finish a particular sentence, they should pop up (stand). If several children pop up at once, let each give her or his answer. The first sentence is an example:

- ▼ I might not be called by God to preach a sermon, but I can . . . *tell a Bible story or invite a friend to church or pray.*
- ▼ I might not be called by God to go to another country, but I can . . .
- ▼ I might not be called by God to cook meals for homeless people, but I can . . .
- ▼ I might not be called by God to give thousands of dollars to help people who are poor, but I can . . .
- ▼ I might not be called by God to build a house for the homeless, but I can . . .
- ▼ I might not be called by God to perform surgery to heal someone, but I can . . .
- ▼ I might not be called by God to help stop a war, but I can . . .



Give the children the opportunity to suggest other unfinished sentences. Talk with them about their responses. Ask how it felt to realize that there are many things they can do for God. Ask how they might do some of those things this week.

Praying God's Grace

TD

When God calls the young boy Jeremiah, God reminds him that God formed him and knew him. Give each child a lump of play dough. Invite the children to form something from the clay that represents them. You may need to give the children some suggestions, such as forming something they like, something they like to do, or even a small sculpture of themselves. Invite the children to share their sculptures with the group.

Play “Our God, Fills Us with Love and Joy”—**MM 22**—as they sculpt.

After they have completed their sculptures, gather in a circle. Invite the child to your right to share his or her object and go around the circle until everyone who wants to share has done so.

Have the children place the figures on a table, then gather in a circle around them. Lead an echo prayer:

Thank you, God /
For forming us /
And knowing us. /
Help us
To listen to your call /
And to respond as Jeremiah did, /
By becoming your messengers. /
Amen. /



Offering God's Grace

LG FA

As they use edible letters to spell out words about God, this activity will remind the children of what God said to Jeremiah: “I’m putting my words in your mouth” (Jeremiah 1:9, CEB).

Have the children wash their hands. Place a paper towel in front of each child and put about ½ cup of alphabet-shaped cereal on it. Invite the children to think of words that tell something about God or about living as God’s people. List the words on newsprint. Invite the children to use their cereal letters to spell out their favorite words (for example: *love, kind, help, peace, pray, Jesus*). As they eat the words, remind them that God will help them tell other people these things about living as God’s people.

Invite the children to make snack mix for the congregation’s hospitality time after worship. Add dried fruit or nuts to the alphabet-shaped cereal. Make a sign with the words of Jeremiah 1:9 to display.



Bonus Activity



Cut apart the strips on **GN 1** and place them in a container. To help the children imagine prophetic messages they might proclaim or enact in different situations, they will act out and respond to the different scenarios suggested. Invite a volunteer to draw one of the strips without looking. This volunteer then recruits one or two others to act out the scenario, including a response. If volunteers have trouble thinking of a response, invite other group members to make suggestions. Continue until all the scenarios have been presented. Invite the children to discuss what helps them follow God’s ways in what they say and do.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Ask the children to help clean up the space.

Recall that today we heard about Jeremiah answering God’s call.

Sing together “I Will Exalt My God, My King”—**MM 25, SCM 42**.

Invite the children to imagine ways God may call them to share a message:

- What might the message from God be?
- Who might they be called to share it with?

Offer a few moments of silence as the children consider this call. Tell them they will get the chance to voice their ideas during the prayer.

Offer a prayer:

“Holy God, thank you for inviting us to join you in your work. When you ask us to be your messenger, sharing messages like (*prompt the children to name their ideas*), help us to respond: ‘I will go! Send me!’ Amen.”

Ask parents and caregivers for their e-mail addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org.

Scenario 1

Two friends are sitting together in the lunchroom at school.

Friend 1: I can't stand that kid. Let's go "accidentally" bump his lunch tray out of his hand.

Friend 2: *(Make up a response.)*

Scenario 2

Three friends are walking.

Friend 1: I just heard that the river here is so polluted, we shouldn't eat any fish we catch from it.

Friend 2: Oh, well, there's nothing we can do.

Friend 3: *(Make up a response.)*

Scenario 3

A sister and a brother are watching TV.

Sister: The other girls in my class keep picking on me. But I am afraid to tell Mom.

Brother: *(Make up a response.)*

Scenario 4

Three friends are eating lunch together.

Friend 1: Look, Jasmine is standing over there all by herself. Maybe we should ask her to sit with us.

Friend 2: I heard the WORST thing about her! She . . .

Friend 3: *(Make up a response.)*

Scenario 5

Two classmates are walking home from school.

Friend 1: No one likes me anymore. And I can't stand my parents. Whatever. No one cares about me, so I won't care about anyone.

Friend 2: *(Make up a response.)*

Scenario 6

Three friends are having a sleepover.

Friend 1: I used to believe in God, but I don't anymore.

Friend 2: Yeah, I think God is just a fairy tale for little kids.

Friend 3: *(Make up a response.)*

Scenario 7

Two friends are watching TV and a news alert interrupts the show.

Friend 1: Wow, look at all those wrecked houses! I'm sure glad that tornado missed our town.

Friend 2: *(Make up a response.)*

