

**Conversations on
Jeremiah 1:4–10**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch the scene from *Evan Almighty* (2007; PG) when God first visits Evan and tells him to build an ark. Discuss: How might you have reacted if you were in Evan's position? What might God be calling you to do?

WHAT is important to know?

At this point the dialogue is over, and the ritual of ordination begins. As befits designation for the prophetic role (see Isa. 6:5–7; Ezek. 2:8–3:3), YHWH touches Jeremiah's mouth and establishes his office "over nations and over kingdoms" and gives him the message he is to deliver (vv. 9–10). If one thinks of the experience of a call as an inner experience, here it quickly moves out into the world of international politics. God means to shape the history of nations through the word of a solitary human being. The voice of God through Jeremiah is to actually bring about destruction, and then rebuilding. (*Gene M. Tucker*)

- ✪ What is the specific call to Jeremiah?
- ✪ What is significant about Jeremiah's call as a prophet to all nations, a call to international politics?
- ✪ What is unique about God's ordination of Jeremiah in verse 10?

WHERE is God in these words?

Against a view of religion as essentially a private matter, God puts words into the mouth of the prophet that give him authority "over nations and over kingdoms." The word of God is thus a dynamic force that at times stands in opposition to the inertia of culture and politics. While the overall tenor of Jeremiah's commission is judgment, the destructive imperatives are followed by a constructive pair; Jeremiah is appointed not only "to pluck up and pull down" but "to build and to plant." Jeremiah is commissioned to take to God's people the message of death *and* rebirth—so that even in the forecast of judgment lies the promise of new life. (*James Calvin Davis*)

- ✪ In what ways does God's Word sometimes stand "in opposition to the inertia of culture and politics"?
- ✪ What is the theological importance of following destructive imperatives with constructive ones?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

The reasons for not doing something that relates to God's work are often reasonable and justifiable. Most of us aren't trained for these tasks, or if trained we are ill prepared. Yet if God's call is about skills or experience, God does not tell this to Jeremiah. God does not say, "Don't worry, I have a trade school for prophets. You will get it all there." Instead, God says, "Do not be afraid," which just happens to be an angelic message rather common in the biblical story. (*George H. Martin*)

- ✪ What implications does God's calling of an untrained young person have on your sense of call?
- ✪ What reasons have you given "for not doing something that relates to God's work"?
- ✪ How does God's message of "Do not be afraid" connect with your understanding of discipleship?

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

The order is everything: before building and planting, you break down and pluck up. Spiritually we prefer just some building addition, some planting to spruce up the place a bit, so that we can hang on to what we already have: we are attached to it, we earned it. But when the gospel dawns, the whole structure has to be ripped out, every growth in the garden plowed into fresh dirt so the gardener, the builder, can start over. No good life from God can grow without our dying to our old self, as old, bogus priorities are tossed aside, the house of cards cast down. (*James C. Howell*)

- ✪ How can tossing "bogus priorities" to the side lead you to become a more faithful disciple of Jesus Christ?
- ✪ What changes can you or your congregation make to toss "bogus priorities" to the side?

God, who calls us into action even when we feel unprepared, challenge us to toss aside any priorities that distract us from your vision of our discipleship. Amen.