

Jer. 1:4–10

Ps. 71:1–6

1 Cor. 13:1–13

Luke 4:21–30

A Prophet of God

**Goal for
the Session**

*Children will seek ways to follow the example of Jeremiah
and speak God's word.*

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Jeremiah 1:4–10

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Gene M. Tucker

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.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” James Calvin Davis

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.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” George H. Martin

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.

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

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” James C. Howell

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.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 1:4–10

Focus on Your Teaching

“When you’re older, you can do that.” What child hasn’t bristled under those words? Or what oldest child hasn’t complained about a younger sibling, “You wouldn’t let me do that when I was that age”? A child is less likely to complain about being asked to do something that implies he or she is older and more capable. However, a request that seems beyond their abilities may bring a complaint. But this may be exactly where they connect with the story about Jeremiah.

God of the prophets, remind me that I have the gifts to do whatever you ask of me. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- green cloth
- white battery-powered candle
- offering plate
- Bible
- Resource Sheet 1
- Color Pack 19, 29
- 1" x 8½" green paper strip, paper chain started Dec. 2
- tape
- Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player
- masking tape

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2
- option 2: Color Pack 20
- option 3: clay or Model Magic™, toothpicks
- option 4: Color Pack 31; *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, lay a masking-tape line across the floor in an open area of the learning space. Greet each child. Invite early arrivals to help you set up the worship space with a green cloth, a white battery-powered candle, the paper chain started December 2, an offering plate, and a Bible open to Jeremiah.

When everything is ready, gather around the worship space. Point out the green cloth and remind learners that this is Common or Ordinary Time (or the Season after the Epiphany). Common Time is a time for growth as we learn more about following God’s ways.

Light the candle as a reminder of Jesus’ promise to be with his followers. Lead this litany:

Leader: Jesus has come.

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: Today we light the white candle, a symbol of Jesus.

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: We want to follow Jesus,

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

Leader: We pray for the light of Jesus to show us the way. Amen.

Ask a child to pass the offering plate and then place it next to the candle.

Invite the children to think of things that might be difficult for them to do. Gather at the masking-tape line on the floor. Indicate that one end represents “I can do that, no problem” and the opposite end represents “No way can I do that.” They can stand anywhere on the line to indicate whether they would be able to do what is named, such as:

✂ Make supper for my family.

✂ Change a light bulb.

✂ Take care of a baby for one hour.

- ✿ Attach a photo to an e-mail or text message.
- ✿ Swim the length of the big pool twice.

Name tasks until every child has found one that would be hard to do. Explain that the man in the Bible story for this session thinks he is being asked to do something that he isn't old enough to do.

EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship space, keeping it open to Jeremiah. Have the child hold the Bible up so the group can see where it is opened. Ask:

- ✿ Judging from what you see, do you think today's story is from the Old Testament or the New Testament?

Tell the children that the Bible is open to the book of Jeremiah in the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Scriptures. Jeremiah was a prophet of God, a man who spoke God's words to the people. Jeremiah lived about six hundred years before Jesus, and Jesus probably learned about Jeremiah as a boy growing up in Nazareth. Tell the story about Jeremiah from Resource Sheet 1 (Not Yet).

Show Color Pack 19. Ask:

- ✿ What does this artist tell us about Jeremiah?

Return to the masking-tape line. Ask the children to move to the place on the line that shows how Jeremiah felt when God spoke to him ("Sure, I can" or "No way"). Then have them stand where they think Jeremiah would stand at the end of the story. Talk together about how Jeremiah might have changed. From the rest of the book we know that Jeremiah did what God asked him to do. Then ask:

- ✿ What is hard about following God?

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

- 1. Prophets Today** Children can be encouraged to live God's ways by contemporary stories of children who acted as prophets of God. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Young Prophets) to the children. Ask for volunteers to read the two articles. Ask:
 - ✿ How do you think these young people felt when they spoke?
 - ✿ What difference do you think they made in the lives of others?
 - ✿ If some people disagreed with them, how could they respond?

Assure the children that God is with them, no matter what.

- 2. Courage from God** Praying to God requires no special words. Show Color Pack 20. Ask:
 - ✿ What story might you tell about the girl in this picture?

**EASY
PREP**

Encourage the group to be creative, imagining why she is sitting there. Suggest that she might be praying to God about a difficult problem. Ask:

✧ What words might she be saying to God?

Assure the children that they can say whatever they feel to God, just as Jeremiah did.

3. **Pocket Courage** A reminder of God's presence can give children courage to speak out or help someone. Have them make a pocket piece from clay or Model Magic™ (a compound that dries into a smooth, hard surface). Ask:

✧ Have you ever had something so comforting that just to hold it made you feel better?

Kum Ba Yah

Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum
ba yah!
Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum
ba yah!
Kum ba yah, my Lord, kum
ba yah!
O Lord, kum ba yah!

Come by here, my Lord,
come by here!
Come by here, my Lord,
come by here!
Come by here, my Lord,
come by here!
O Lord, come by here!

Jesus went about doing
good;
Jesus went about doing
good.
He told everyone God is
love;
God cares for you.

Shalom Havarim

Shalom, havarim! Shalom,
havarim! Shalom,
shalom;
Lehitraot, lehitraot, shalom,
shalom.

Perhaps children will recall a stuffed animal, a blanket, or a stone that served this purpose. Explain that they are going to make something to carry in a pocket that can help them remember that God is with them every minute of the day and night. Give each child a lump of compound about the size of a walnut. Suggest that they work with it for a few minutes to soften it. Then they can flatten it to about ¼" thickness. Have them round the edges and make an indent in the middle with a thumb. Give the children toothpicks to etch their initials on the back. Set the pieces aside to dry.

4. **Music** Songs have been used to comfort and give courage for centuries. The song "Kum Ba Yah" (Color Pack 31; track 10 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019) is such a song. Invite learners to read the words in unison with you. Talk together about how the song can be sung as a prayer of hope. Sing it together. Then ask the children to name other songs that give them hope and courage.

CLOSING

Gather around the worship space. Add a green paper link for Common Time (or Season after the Epiphany) to the church year paper chain.

Ask the group to make a circle with you and hold hands. Sing "Shalom Havarim" (Color Pack 29; track 14 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019) as the circle moves in a grapevine or side step.

Pray aloud:

God, thank you for prophets like Jeremiah. May we have courage to do as you ask. Amen.

Invite the children to respond: *Thank you, God.*

Say good-bye to each child with this blessing: "(Name), look for ways you can speak for God, too."

February 3, 2019
A Prophet of God

Teaching the Revised Common Lectionary
FEASTING *on the* **WORD**
CURRICULUM

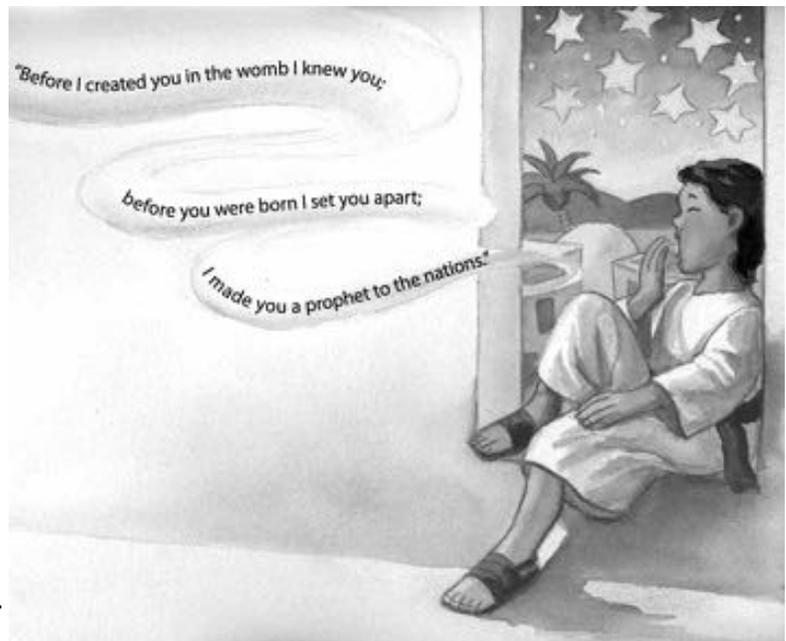
Multi-Age
Resource Sheet 1

Not Yet
based on Jeremiah 1:4-10

In those days, God often spoke directly to the people when he had a special task for them. It must have been a bit scary to know that God was talking just to you. Many times, God wanted someone to be a prophet. A prophet of God had to give God's people a message from God. Generally, it was not a happy task. God's people didn't like to hear God's message because it usually was a sign that they were not following God's ways.

When God looked for a prophet, God didn't look for the bravest person on earth. God didn't look for someone who gave great speeches. God didn't look for the one that you or I might think would be a good choice for a prophet. So you never knew whom God might call from one day to the next. This is how Jeremiah tells his story:

The Lord's word came to me:
"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."
"Ah, Lord God," I said,
"I don't know how to speak
because I am only a child."
The Lord responded,
"Don't say, 'I'm only a child.'
Where I send you, you must go;
what I tell you, you must say.
Don't be afraid of them,
because I'm with you to rescue you,"
declares the Lord.
Then the Lord stretched out his hand,
touched my mouth, and said to me,
"I'm putting my words in your mouth.
This very day I appoint you
over nations and empires,
to dig up and pull down,
to destroy and demolish,
to build and plant."



Jeremiah was a prophet of God for many years. His life was not easy, but he was faithful to God.

Scripture taken from
Common English Bible.
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Young Prophets

Reik's family came from the Sudan, in East Africa. His mother speaks little English. His father works two jobs to earn enough money to take care of their family. There are six children in the family. Reik is the oldest.

At school, Reik speaks up for his younger brothers and sisters. Sometimes teachers and cafeteria workers forget the many changes the children have faced and scold them for not understanding the rules. Reik is not afraid to ask questions. He always tries to be patient, even when people are not patient with him. He is not afraid to remind people that it takes time to learn a new language and new ways. Reik reminds people that, in his new country, people are given a chance to learn new things.

Mikela sometimes told her mother that she didn't want to go to school. One of the girls in her class had been calling her names. Even some of Mikela's friends joined in the teasing.

Mikela's best friend, Shawna, knew how sad Mikela was. Shawna asked the teacher if she could speak to the class. She told them a story about a little fish that was picked on by the other fish. She said that when bigger fish saw this, they started picking on the bully fish. When the smaller fish stayed together and watched out for one another, they were safe.

Shawna encouraged her friends to think about what they say and do, and to take care of one another. After school, Mikela thanked Shawna for speaking up. Their friendship grew stronger.