**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 4 of 4

# Jeremiah

### MEETING AIM

To explore how Jeremiah faced his struggles.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Jeremiah 20

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

Jeremiah was hated for what he said, and ridiculed for who he was – a prophet who listened to God. Jeremiah was only doing what God had told him. However, other people didn’t like hearing what Jeremiah or God had to say.

In response, Jeremiah hated himself. His very being, as a prophet, brought him shame. By being angry at himself, Jeremiah was also angry at God. In this session we will explore anger towards God.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the young people by name and share any refreshments you have provided. Invite the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask them how their week has gone. Have any faced any issues because of their faith from others – eg being teased or even bullied? As with all these sessions, be pastorally aware of the situations your group are dealing with and be available to help.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

Before the meeting, do some research on the following predictions and events from history: nuclear war between the West and the Soviet Union; COVID-19 pandemic; the climate crisis. For each situation you need to have a basic idea of the event, what actually happened and how the governments and people responded.

Invite discussion around each of the predictions in turn, asking the group what they know of the predictions and the outcomes.

Make sure the point is made that in the first example the worst-case scenario failed to be realised. There was no nuclear war as a result of the cold war. However, in all the scenarios the governments acted and, in general, the people were concerned about what might happen.

Explain that there are similarities between these predictions and the prophecies that Jeremiah gave in the Old Testament. The leaders of the day responded, as did the people; unfortunately it was Jeremiah who faced the consequences, at least initially.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** printouts of Jeremiah 20 (one for each person); pens; highlighter pens; Bibles

Give out copies of the Jeremiah 20 and encourage the young people to read Jeremiah 20 on their own.

Explain that this is the fifth lament of Jeremiah. A lament is a style of prayer or psalm for when things are bad. This is the fifth time that Jeremiah is saying “woe is me”, so it is no surprise that he is seen by many as a misery. However, is he more of a realist? He says things like they are and for that reason people don’t like him. The whole point of prophets in the Old Testament were to turn people back to God: “If you don’t change your ways, then this will happen.” The people didn’t want to change their ways and they didn’t want ‘this’ to happen either.

Alone or in pairs, get the group to read through Jeremiah 20 and mark in pen or highlighter what parts of Jeremiah’s lament are positive and what are negative, what parts seem angry towards God and what parts praise God.

Once they have done this, get feedback from the group and see if any areas of agreement emerge. Discuss any areas of dispute or uncertainty.

Point out that Jeremiah is angry at God. It was God who chose Jeremiah as a prophet. The prophecies that Jeremiah delivers are what leads to the shame he feels. It is then that Jeremiah wishes he doesn’t exist. However, despite all this, there is still acceptance that God is great. There is raw emotion and anger, but this doesn’t lead to a loss of faith!

Ask the group to look at Psalm 22. As they read through it, let them compare the words in the psalm to Jeremiah’s lament and share what they find. Tell them that this psalm is the one that Jesus uses on the cross. Jesus too cries out to God. There is nothing wrong with crying out, even in anger, to God. God is not just there for the good times…just ask Jeremiah.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Use the following questions to encourage the young people to share how they feel about the themes found in this passage:

* Is Jeremiah right to blame God for his shame? Why?
* What could Jeremiah do to change the situation he is in?
* How do we react when people try to shame us and make us feel small?
* How honest are our prayers to God?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bibles; paper; art materials

Read out Psalm 22:1-11. Explain that this psalm is very similar (it is a lament psalm) to the words Jeremiah used. This psalm, or rather the beginning of it, was also used by Jesus when he was on the cross.

On their own, encourage the group to rewrite the psalm in their own words, expressing the emotions and feelings that it contains. Using the art materials, they can decorate their words, visually expressing the meaning. Give any reluctant writers any help they need to do this. If they’d prefer not to write, then they can draw a picture which illustrates the same sentiments as the psalm.

If anyone wants to share what they have written, allow them to do this. However, these are personal so don’t push anyone to share.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Close with a time of open group prayer. Encourage the group to be honest and open with the way they pray. If they need and want to, they can use the words in their rewritten psalm or some of Jeremiah’s words.

End with the following:

Dear God,

Thank you for being there.

Thank you for letting me be honest.

Be with us as we leave this meeting.

Be with us through the good times and the bad times.

Amen

Be available if anyone wants to chat.

**DARREN HILL**

tells stories at the [Creative Minimalist](https://www.darrenrhill.com/).