8WEEKBIBLESTUDY.COM • SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM LIBRARY

THE 66-BOOK 8-WEEK GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES • BOOK 24 OF 66

יִרְמְיָהוּ

# JEREMIAH

An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

## The Call and the Broken Cisterns — Jeremiah 1:1–6:30

Scripture Scope: Jeremiah 1:1–6:30 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

LEADER GUIDE EDITION

Complete Participant Text + Interleaved Pacing, Hebrew Word Studies, Facilitation Probes & Pitfalls

# Jeremiah — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Leader Guide Edition)

## Week 1: The Call and the Broken Cisterns (Jeremiah 1:1–6:30)

**Scripture Translation & Copyright Notice:** Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. ESV Text Edition: 2025. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Study guide curriculum and commentary © 2026 by Greg and Kayla Gibson. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated into any other language. Users may not copy or download more than 500 verses of the ESV Bible or more than one half of any book of the ESV Bible.

- **The prophet:** "The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin" (1:1). Jeremiah prophesied for about forty years, from the thirteenth year of King Josiah (627 BC) through the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC) and into exile in Egypt.
- **The setting:** Assyria was collapsing, Egypt was grasping for influence, and Babylon was rising under Nebuchadnezzar. Isaiah had warned that Judah's treasures would one day be carried to Babylon; Jeremiah lived to see it. His ministry runs alongside 2 Kings 22–25 and 2 Chronicles 34–36.
- **Its form:** Prophetic poetry and sermons, personal laments, sign-acts, and long sections of narrative. The prophecies are not always in date order.
- **The structure:**
  - The call and early warnings (1–10).
  - Laments and confrontations (11–20).
  - Kings, false prophets, and the seventy years (21–29).
  - The Book of Consolation and the new covenant (30–33).
  - The fall of Jerusalem (34–39).
  - After the fall: the remnant and Egypt (40–45).
  - Oracles against the nations (46–51).
  - A historical appendix: the fall retold and a captive king lifted up (52).
- **Why it matters:** Jeremiah shows the cost of faithful ministry, the seriousness of covenant unfaithfulness, and the danger of false security. Out of the ruins he announces a new covenant written on the heart, which Jesus fulfills in his blood. Jeremiah is the most personally revealed of the prophets, often called the weeping prophet.

### How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, this 8-week study walks through all fifty-two chapters of Jeremiah by following the book's own story. Jeremiah is among the longest books in the Bible, and the longest by many English word-count measures, so most weeks read a few focal passages closely and summarize the rest. Each week invites you to listen to the prophet together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of Jeremiah and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV.

### Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

### Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Jeremiah:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

### The 8-Week Jeremiah Study at a Glance

| Week | Title & Passage | Movement 1 / Movement 2 | Canonical Horizon |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **The Call and the Broken Cisterns** (1:1–6:30) | The Call of a Reluctant Prophet (1:1–19) / Broken Cisterns and the Call to Return (2:1–6:30) | The God who calls; Christ the fountain of living water |
| 2 | **False Security** (7:1–10:25) | The Temple Sermon (7:1–34) / Is There No Balm in Gilead? (8:1–10:25) | Jesus and the "den of robbers"; boasting in the Lord |
| 3 | **The Prophet's Anguish** (11:1–20:18) | Covenant Broken, Prophet Opposed (11:1–17:27) / The Potter, the Stocks, and the Fire in My Bones (18:1–20:18) | The faithful sufferer; the potter who remakes broken vessels |
| 4 | **The LORD Is Our Righteousness** (21:1–29:32) | The Righteous Branch and the Seventy Years (21:1–25:38) / True and False Prophets and the Letter to the Exiles (26:1–29:32) | Christ the righteous Branch; the true word of God |
| 5 | **The New Covenant** (30:1–33:26) | Restoration and the New Covenant (30:1–31:40) / A Field Bought and a Promise Kept (32:1–33:26) | The new covenant in Jesus' blood |
| 6 | **The Fall of Jerusalem** (34:1–39:18) | Broken Promises and the Burned Scroll (34:1–36:32) / The Cistern and the Fall of the City (37:1–39:18) | The word that cannot be burned; Christ rejected by his own |
| 7 | **After the Fall** (40:1–45:5) | The Remnant in the Land (40:1–43:13) / Refugees in Egypt and a Word for Baruch (44:1–45:5) | The God who meets refugees; a Savior who did not seek great things for himself |
| 8 | **Judgment on the Nations, Hope for a King** (46:1–52:34) | Oracles Against the Nations and Babylon's Fall (46:1–51:64) / Jerusalem Falls, Jehoiachin Lifted Up (52:1–34) | Babylon's fall; the King lifted up |

# How to Use This Leader Guide Edition

This **Leader Guide Edition** is built on a synchronized two-edition architecture so you never have to juggle two separate books during your small group or mini-church gathering:

**1. 100% Word-for-Word Participant Text Included:** Every section, Scripture reading prompt, verbatim ESV anchor verse callout, teaching narrative, table, and discussion or reflection prompt appears here **word-for-word identical** to what your group members see in their Participant Study Edition. Section numbers and question labels match exactly, so leaders and participants can stay on the same page.

**2. Interleaved `[LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY]` Blocks:** Immediately following each section, you will find a dedicated leader block containing:

- **Pacing & Time Targets** calibrated for a 75–90 minute session. Pacing targets appear in every Leader section header. If time runs short, shorten the Teaching Narratives rather than the discussion.
- **Hebrew Word Study & Ancient Near Eastern Research Quick-References** so you can explain terms naturally without lecturing, when they add something useful.
- **Question-by-Question Facilitation Probes** listed in question order, designed to move conversation past polite answers into honest reflection.

- **Pitfalls to Steer Around** so you can gently redirect common rabbit trails back to the biblical text.
- **Additional Research Notes** appear when they add something useful.

**3. Leader Flags:** Numbered in reading order, they mark passages that need pastoral care or tend to raise hard questions. Jeremiah speaks of war, siege, famine, exile, and a prophet in deep despair, and some scenes involve violence or sexual imagery. Those scenes are told in brief and never printed as anchors. Some members have lived through loss, abuse, divorce, or seasons of despair, or have served faithfully without visible results. Do not rush past hard words, and do not leave anyone under judgment without the hope God offers in the same book. If someone discloses abuse, exploitation, trafficking, coercion, or immediate danger, listen without interrogation, take the disclosure seriously, help the person reach safety, and follow applicable law and your organization's safeguarding and reporting procedures. If someone expresses current thoughts of suicide or self-harm, ask directly whether there is immediate danger, intent, a plan, or access to means. Do not leave the person alone when imminent risk is present. In the United States, call or text 988 (the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), and call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate danger. Outside the United States, use the appropriate local crisis or emergency service. Inform the appropriate pastor or safeguarding leader while prioritizing immediate safety.

**4. Reading aloud:** Assign readers ahead of time for the Guided Scripture Reading. Printed anchor verses are for quick reference; read the longer focal passages from an open ESV. Passages marked "in brief" are summarized or retold by the leader rather than read.

**5. Large sections:** Most weeks cover many chapters. Read the focal passages closely and summarize the rest in a sentence or two; encourage members to read the whole section at home.

**6. Facilitating well:** Ask the printed question, wait, and let silence work. Use the probes to deepen, not to lecture. Aim for every voice to be heard at least once each session.

### Week 1 Session Pacing at a Glance (75–90 Minutes)

| Section | Focus | Time Target |
|---|---|---|
| **Section 1.1** | Opening: The Call and the Broken Cisterns (Jeremiah 1:1–6:30) (1.1 Q1) | **10 mins** |
| **Section 1.2** | Historical & Literary Context: A Prophet Between Empires (1.2 Q1–Q3) | **12 mins** |
| **Section 1.3** | Movement 1: The Call of a Reluctant Prophet (Jeremiah 1:1–19) (1.3 Q1–Q5) | **22 mins** |
| **Section 1.4** | Movement 2: Broken Cisterns and the Call to Return (Jeremiah 2:1–6:30) (1.4 Q1–Q5) | **20 mins** |
| **Section 1.5** | Canonical Horizon: The God Who Calls and Christ the Fountain of Living Water (1.5 Q1–Q3) | **12 mins** |
| **Section 1.6** | Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer (1.6 Q1–Q3) | **9 mins** |
| **Total** | **Full Week 1 Group Session** | **75–90 mins** |

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · JEREMIAH 1:1–6:30

# Week 1: The Call and the Broken Cisterns

Scripture Scope: Jeremiah 1:1–6:30 (ESV) • Focal Passages: Jeremiah 1:4–19; 2:1–13; 3:12–15, 19–25; 4:1–4; 6:16–19 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

## Opening: The Call and the Broken Cisterns (Jeremiah 1:1–6:30)

Passage Jeremiah 1:1–6:30

### Opening

A young priest from the village of Anathoth hears the word of the LORD: before he was formed in the womb, God knew him and appointed him a prophet to the nations. Jeremiah protests that he does not know how to speak, for he is only a youth. God answers that he will send him, put his words in his mouth, and be with him to deliver him. Two visions follow: an almond branch, the tree that wakes first, showing that God watches over his word; and a boiling pot tilting from the north, showing that disaster is coming.

Then Jeremiah begins to preach. God remembers Judah's early devotion like a bride in the wilderness, but now his people have committed two evils: they have forsaken him, the fountain of living waters, and dug broken cisterns that hold no water. Again and again God calls, "Return, faithless Israel." He tells them to stand at the crossroads and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is. But they answer, "We will not walk in it."

### Week 1 At a Glance

| | |
|---|---|
| **Scripture Scope** | Jeremiah 1:1–6:30 (the call, the almond branch and boiling pot, the fortified city, the devotion of youth, the broken cisterns, stubborn guilt, faithless Israel and treacherous Judah, the call to return, circumcised hearts, disaster from the north, not one who does justice, and the ancient paths) |
| **Focal Passages** | Jeremiah 1:4–19; 2:1–13; 3:12–15, 19–25; 4:1–4; 6:16–19 |
| **Literary & Structural Anchor** | The call follows the pattern of Moses and Isaiah: objection, reassurance, sign, and commission. Six verbs, to pluck up, break down, destroy, overthrow, build, and plant (1:10), set the program of the whole book. The almond (shaqed) and "watching" (shoqed) make a wordplay (1:11–12). "Return" is the key word of chapter 3, and false "peace, peace" (6:14) will return later in the book. |
| **Big Idea** | The God who called Jeremiah calls his faithless people to return from broken cisterns to the fountain of living water. |

### Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD | **Know the Calling God:** Learn how Jeremiah's call and early sermons show God's initiative, Judah's unfaithfulness, and his repeated invitation to return. |
| HEART | **Drink from the Fountain:** See that Jesus is the fountain of living water who gives rest to the weary. |
| HANDS | **Return to the Good Way:** Identify one "broken cistern" in your life and take one step back toward the ancient paths. |

### Opening Frame: Before I Formed You

Isaiah warned that a day was coming when everything in the king's house would be carried away to Babylon. About a century later, Jeremiah is called to live through that day. Isaiah answered God's call at once, "Here I am! Send me"; Jeremiah protests that he is only a youth. He was a priest's son from the village of Anathoth, and he preached in Jerusalem for about forty years, through the reign of good King Josiah, the last failing kings of Judah, the rise of Babylon, and the fall of the city. His book mixes sermons, poems, laments, and stories, and it is not always in time order. This is an 8-week study, and in most weeks large sections will be summarized so that we can follow the book's whole message. The question for this week: what happens when God's people trade the fountain of living water for broken cisterns? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

### Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

**1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question):** When have you been asked to do something you felt too young, too inexperienced, or too unqualified to do? What happened?

### ◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.1 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 10 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 10 minutes. Opening and At a Glance, 3 minutes; Head, Heart, Hands, 2 minutes; Opening Frame, 2 minutes; Opening Entry Question, 3 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Briefly walk through the front matter before 1.1, especially the eight-part structure and the eight-week table. The icebreaker prepares for Jeremiah's protest in 1:6.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.1 Q1**: What was it? How did you feel? Who or what helped you?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not spend so long on the front matter that the call in chapter 1 is rushed.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Jeremiah follows Isaiah in this series; Lamentations follows as a companion study. Jeremiah's key verses across the book include 1:5, 2:13, 17:9, 29:11, and 31:33.

Section 1.2

# Historical & Literary Context: A Prophet Between Empires (Jeremiah 1:1–6:30)

Passage Jeremiah 1:1–6:30

## Entering the World of a Prophet Between Empires

### 1. Historical Background

Jeremiah was called in 627 BC, in the thirteenth year of King Josiah, about five years before the book of the law was found in the temple (622 BC; 2 Kings 22). Assyria was collapsing (Nineveh fell in 612 BC), Egypt sought influence, and Babylon rose under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar. Judah wavered between Egypt and the northern powers (2:18, 36).

### 2. Cultural Setting

In a dry land, families cut cisterns into rock and plastered them to store rainwater; a cracked cistern was useless, while a spring ("living water") flowed on its own. The worship of Baal and Asherah on hills and under green trees involved fertility rites, which explains the sexual imagery Jeremiah uses for idolatry.

### 3. Literary Structure of Jeremiah 1:1–6:30

- **Superscription** (1:1–3)
- **The call and two visions** (1:4–19)
- **The devotion of youth and two evils** (2:1–13)
- **Stubborn guilt** (2:14–37)
- **Faithless Israel and treacherous Judah** (3:1–11)
- **Return and be healed** (3:12–25)
- **Circumcise your hearts** (4:1–4)
- **Disaster from the north** (4:5–31)
- **Not one who does justice** (5)
- **The ancient paths and false peace** (6)

### 4. Key Themes

God's call; covenant unfaithfulness pictured as a broken marriage; idolatry as trading a spring for leaky cisterns; return; heart religion; false peace.

### 5. Theological Considerations

God's call rests on his prior knowledge and choice, not on Jeremiah's ability. Judgment is real, but God's repeated "return" shows his desire to heal.

### 6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Jeremiah 3:1 builds on the divorce law of Deuteronomy 24:1–4, which forbade a man to take back a wife he had divorced after she married another. God's offer to take Judah back goes beyond what the law allowed.

### Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

**1.2 Q1:** Jeremiah was called during the reign of Josiah, Judah's last good king, yet he warned that disaster was coming. Why might a time of outward reform still need a prophet's warning?

**1.2 Q2:** A spring flows freely, while a cistern must be dug, plastered, and filled, and it can crack. What does this picture teach about the difference between God and the substitutes we make?

**1.2 Q3:** The law did not allow a divorced wife to return once she had married another, yet God still says "return" (3:1, 12). What does that reveal about God's heart?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.2 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Context summary, 5 minutes; discussion, 7 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - A simple timeline helps: call in 627 BC, law book found in 622 BC, Nineveh falls in 612 BC, Jerusalem falls in 586 BC.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q1**: What was happening under Josiah? Why warn then? Where might reform be only outward today?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q2**: What is the difference? What cisterns do we dig? Why do they crack?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q3**: What did the law say? What does God say? How does that speak to you?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Keep the history brief; the call and the cisterns should carry the session.
- **Additional Research Notes:** 2 Kings 22–25 and 2 Chronicles 34–36 tell the history of Jeremiah's lifetime. Hosea 1–3 uses similar marriage imagery for Israel's unfaithfulness.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Plastered rock cisterns are found throughout the hill country of Judah; many show cracks and repairs. The rise of Babylon after Assyria's collapse set the stage for everything Jeremiah would see.

Section 1.3

## Movement 1: The Call of a Reluctant Prophet (Jeremiah 1:1–19)

Passage Jeremiah 1:1–19

### Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Leader summary of Jeremiah 1:1–3** — Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, a priest from Anathoth, receives the word of the LORD from Josiah's thirteenth year until Jerusalem goes into exile.
- **Reader 1: Jeremiah 1:4–10** (focal passage) — God knew Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb and appointed him a prophet to the nations; Jeremiah protests that he is only a youth; God promises to send him and be with him, touches his mouth, and sets him over nations to pluck up and to plant.
- **Reader 2: Jeremiah 1:11–16** (focal passage) — The vision of an almond branch: God is watching over his word to perform it; the vision of a boiling pot facing away from the north: disaster will break out on the land because of its idolatry.
- **Reader 3: Jeremiah 1:17–19** (focal passage) — Dress for action and speak; God makes Jeremiah a fortified city and an iron pillar; they will fight against him but not prevail, for God is with him.

### Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Jeremiah 1:5:**
>
> “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
> and before you were born I consecrated you;
>
> I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”
>
> **Jeremiah 1:7–8:**
>
> But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;
> for to all to whom I send you, you shall go,
>
> and whatever I command you, you shall speak.
>
> Do not be afraid of them,
>
> for I am with you to deliver you,
>
> declares the LORD.”
>
> **Jeremiah 1:9:** Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth.

### Teaching Narrative: The Call of a Reluctant Prophet

#### 1. Known Before Birth (Jeremiah 1:4–5)

God's call comes first.

#### 2. The Protest and the Promise (Jeremiah 1:6–8)

"I am only a youth," and "I am with you."

#### 3. Words in His Mouth (Jeremiah 1:9–10)

Six verbs for a lifelong mission.

#### 4. The Almond Branch and the Boiling Pot (Jeremiah 1:11–16)

God watches over his word; disaster from the north.

### 5. A Fortified City (Jeremiah 1:17–19)

Opposition promised, and God's presence promised.

### Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

**1.3 Q1:** "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (1:5). What does it mean to you that God knew you before you knew him?

**1.3 Q2:** Jeremiah says, "Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth" (1:6). What excuses do we give when God calls us to something hard?

**1.3 Q3:** God answers, "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you" (1:8). Why does God answer Jeremiah's weakness with his presence rather than with a boost to Jeremiah's confidence?

**1.3 Q4:** Jeremiah's mission is "to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (1:10). Why must some things be torn down before God builds?

**1.3 Q5:** "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you" (1:19). How does God's promise prepare Jeremiah for opposition, and how might it prepare you?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.3 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 22 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 22 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading, 6 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 6 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).

- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have one reader take 1:4–10 and another 1:11–19. Point out the almond and "watching" wordplay; it works best explained in one sentence.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q1**: What does "knew" mean here? How does it feel? How does it change how you see yourself?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q2**: What excuses? Why do we give them? How does God answer them?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q3**: What does God give? Why presence? Where do you need it?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q4**: What must be torn down? Why first? Where might God be doing that in you?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q5**: What does God promise? What does he not promise? How does it help?
- **LEADER FLAG 1: Known before birth (1:5)**
  - Members who have experienced miscarriage, abortion, infertility, or adoption may react strongly to this verse. Handle it gently, avoid political framing, and emphasize God's personal knowledge and care. Offer to talk privately with anyone who is affected.
- **LEADER FLAG 2: "I am only a youth" (1:6–8)**
  - Members who feel inadequate for service may relate strongly. Emphasize God's presence rather than personal confidence.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not turn 1:5 into a political debate; it speaks first of Jeremiah's calling and of God's personal knowledge before birth.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Jeremiah's call follows the pattern of Moses (Exodus 3:11–4:17) and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1–8): objection, reassurance, sign, and commission. Ezekiel 2–3 gives another prophetic call.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Yada' (יָדַע), "knew," in 1:5. In this movement it means personal, chosen knowledge, not mere awareness: Jeremiah's calling rests on God's prior initiative, not his own ability.
  - Shaqed (שָׁקֵד) and shoqed (שֹׁקֵד), "almond" and "watching," in 1:11–12. In this movement the almond tree, which blooms first as if awake, shows that God is awake to fulfill every word Jeremiah speaks.

Section 1.4

# Movement 2: Broken Cisterns and the Call to Return (Jeremiah 2:1–6:30)

Passage **Jeremiah 2:1–6:30**

### Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Jeremiah 2:1–13** (focal passage) — God remembers Israel's devotion like a bride following him in the wilderness; the people went after worthless idols and became worthless; the heavens are appalled, for God's people have forsaken the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns.
- **Leader summary of Jeremiah 2:14–3:11** — Judah runs to Egypt and Assyria; its guilt is a stain no soap can wash away; it denies its sin; its idolatry is pictured as the unfaithfulness of a wife and the restlessness of animals; Judah saw Israel's judgment and still did not return.
- **Reader 2: Jeremiah 3:12–15, 19–25** (focal passage) — Return, faithless Israel, for God is merciful and will not be angry forever; he will give shepherds after his own heart; return and he will heal your faithlessness; the people answer and confess their sin.
- **Reader 3: Jeremiah 4:1–4** (focal passage) — If you return, remove your idols, and circumcise your hearts, the nations will bless themselves in God.

- **Leader summary of Jeremiah 4:5–6:15** — Disaster comes from the north like a lion; Jeremiah writhes at the vision of invasion; no one in Jerusalem does justice; prophets and priests cry "peace" when there is no peace.
- **Reader 4: Jeremiah 6:16–19** (focal passage) — Stand by the roads and ask for the ancient paths, the good way, and find rest; but they said, "We will not walk in it."
- **Leader summary of Jeremiah 6:20–30** — Offerings without obedience are rejected; an army from the north is coming; Jeremiah tests the people like metal and finds them rejected silver.

### Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Jeremiah 2:12–13:**
>
> Be appalled, O heavens, at this;
> be shocked, be utterly desolate,
>
> declares the LORD,
>
> for my people have committed two evils:
>
> they have forsaken me,
>
> the fountain of living waters,
>
> and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
>
> broken cisterns that can hold no water.
>
> **Jeremiah 3:12:**
>
> Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, “‘Return, faithless Israel,
> declares the LORD.
>
> I will not look on you in anger,
>
> for I am merciful,
>
> declares the LORD;
>
> I will not be angry forever.
>
> **Jeremiah 3:22:**
>
> “Return, O faithless sons;
> I will heal your faithlessness.”
>
> “Behold, we come to you,
>
> for you are the LORD our God.
>
> **Jeremiah 6:16:**
>
> Thus says the LORD:
> “Stand by the roads, and look,
>
> and ask for the ancient paths,
>
> where the good way is; and walk in it,
>
> and find rest for your souls.

> But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’

### Teaching Narrative: Broken Cisterns and the Call to Return

**1. The Devotion of Youth (Jeremiah 2:1–3)**

A bride in the wilderness.

**2. Two Evils (Jeremiah 2:4–13)**

Forsaking the fountain, digging cisterns.

**3. Stubborn Guilt and Broken Marriage (Jeremiah 2:14–3:11)**

Told in brief, with care.

**4. Return, Faithless Israel (Jeremiah 3:12–25)**

Mercy, healing, and confession.

**5. Circumcise Your Hearts (Jeremiah 4:1–4)**

Return that reaches the heart.

**6. Disaster and False Peace (Jeremiah 4:5–6:15)**

Told in brief. A lion from the north.

**7. The Ancient Paths (Jeremiah 6:16–19)**

Rest offered and refused.

### Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

**1.4 Q1:** God remembers "the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride" (2:2). What does it mean that God remembers and treasures his people's early love?

**1.4 Q2:** "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (2:13). What broken cisterns are people tempted to dig today?

**1.4 Q3:** God says, "I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful" (3:12). Why is it important to hear God's mercy in the middle of his strongest warnings?

**1.4 Q4:** God tells his people to "circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts" (4:4). What is the difference between outward religion and a turned heart?

**1.4 Q5:** "Ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls" (6:16). What are the "ancient paths" in Scripture, and what keeps people from choosing that way? (Personal reflection may remain private.)

## ◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.4 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 20 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 20 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with brief retellings, 6 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 4 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have readers take 2:1–13, 3:12–15 with 3:19–25, 4:1–4, and 6:16–19. Summarize the rest yourself in a sentence or two each. Encourage members to read chapters 2–6 at home.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q1**: What does God remember? Why does it matter? What was your early love like?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q2**: What cisterns? Why do they crack? What would drinking from the fountain look like?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q3**: Where is the mercy? Why there? How does it change the warning?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q4**: What is outward religion? What is a turned heart? Where do you need the second?
  - Follow-up probe for 1.4 Q5: What are the ancient paths in 6:16? What keeps people off them? (Personal application may remain private.)
- **LEADER FLAG 3: Sexual and animal imagery (2:20–25)**
  - Tell this in brief only; do not read it aloud. Keep the explanation short and focused on idolatry, and avoid crude detail. Members who have experienced sexual abuse or betrayal may be affected; follow up privately with anyone who is shaken. If someone discloses abuse, exploitation, trafficking, coercion, or immediate danger, listen without interrogation, take the disclosure seriously, help the person reach safety, and follow applicable law and your organization's safeguarding and reporting procedures.
- **LEADER FLAG 4: Divorce imagery (3:1, 8)**
  - Divorced members may hear condemnation. Clarify that the image describes God's covenant grief and his surprising offer of return, not a judgment on divorced people.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not linger on the invasion poetry of 4:19–31 and 6:22–26; summarize it and keep the call to return in front.
- **Additional Research Notes:** False "peace, peace, when there is no peace" (6:14) returns in 8:11 and 23:17. Psalm 36:9 and Isaiah 55:1 also picture God as the source of living water. Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6 speak of circumcised hearts.

- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Meqor mayim chayyim (מְקוֹר מַיִם חַיִּים), "fountain of living waters," in 2:13. In this movement it is the image for God himself (repeated in 17:13): idolatry is trading a free spring for leaky tanks we dig ourselves.
  - Hevel (הֶבֶל), "worthlessness," in 2:5. In this movement it is the same word as "vanity" in Ecclesiastes: people become like what they worship.
  - Shuv (שׁוּב), "return" or "turn," throughout chapter 3. In this movement it plays on "faithless" (meshuvah (מְשׁוּבָה), "turning away"): God invites the "turners away" to turn back.
  - Netivot 'olam (נְתִיבוֹת עוֹלָם), "ancient paths," in 6:16. In this movement it means the long-established ways of the covenant, not mere tradition: returning to the fountain means walking God's good way, where rest is found.

Section 1.5

# Canonical Horizon: The God Who Calls and Christ the Fountain of Living Water

Passage **Jeremiah 2:12–13**

### Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

The God who knew Jeremiah before he was formed calls his people by grace, and the fountain of living water whom Judah forsook is the God who comes to us in Jesus, who gives living water so that whoever drinks will never thirst (John 4:14). Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

#### 1. Set Apart Before Birth (Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:4)

Paul was set apart before he was born, and believers were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

#### 2. Living Water (John 4:10–14; 7:37–39; Revelation 7:17)

Jesus offers living water so that whoever drinks will never thirst; the Lamb will guide his people to springs of living water.

#### 3. The Faithful Husband and Good Shepherd (Ephesians 5:25–27; John 10:11)

Christ loves an unfaithful bride and gives himself for her; he is the shepherd after God's own heart.

#### 4. Rest and Heart Circumcision (Matthew 11:28–29; Romans 2:28–29; Colossians 2:11; Revelation 21:3, 22)

Jesus gives rest for the soul; true circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit; God himself dwells with his people.

### Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Jeremiah 2:12–13:**
>
> Be appalled, O heavens, at this;
> be shocked, be utterly desolate,
>
> declares the LORD,
>
> for my people have committed two evils:
>
> they have forsaken me,
>
> the fountain of living waters,

> and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
>
> broken cisterns that can hold no water.

### Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

**1.5 Q1:** Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again" (John 4:14). How does Jesus fulfill the picture of God as the fountain of living waters?

**1.5 Q2:** Paul says God "set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace" (Galatians 1:15). Like Jeremiah's prophetic call, Paul's apostolic call was unique, yet all believers are called in Christ—how does God's saving grace in Christ anchor a believer's security without claiming an identical prophetic role? (Personal reflection may remain private.)

**1.5 Q3:** Jesus said, "you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29), echoing Jeremiah 6:16. How is Jesus himself the "good way" where rest is found?

#### ◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.5 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Canonical Horizon teaching, 5 minutes; discussion, 7 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Assign participants to look up John 4:10–14, Galatians 1:15–16, and Matthew 11:28–30 ahead of time.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q1**: What does Jesus offer? How is it like a fountain? Have you drunk from it?
  - Follow-up probe for 1.5 Q2: How was Paul's call unique, and how does God's grace in Christ anchor believers? (Do not universalize 1:5 as a specific career prediction; permit silent reflection.)
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q3**: What rest does Jesus give? How is he the good way? Where do you need rest?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not use Ephesians 5 to shame anyone about their marriage; the focus is Christ's faithful love for his people.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37). The ark will not be missed because God dwells with his people (3:16; compare Revelation 21:3, 22).

### Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

| | |
|---|---|
| HEAD | God called Jeremiah before birth and sent him with his words; God's people forsook the fountain of living water, yet God calls them again and again to return. |
| HEART | Jesus is the fountain of living water and the good way where the weary find rest. |
| HANDS | Faith answers God's call with trust in his presence, turns from broken cisterns, and walks the ancient paths. |

Section 1.6

## Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

### Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

**1.6 Q1:** What is one broken cistern you have been relying on, and how will you turn from it this week?

**1.6 Q2:** Where is God calling you to speak or serve even though you feel inadequate, and how will his presence help you take a step?

**1.6 Q3:** How can the group encourage one another to "return" when one of us drifts?

### Looking Ahead to Next Week

**Recap:** In Week 1, we heard God call a reluctant young prophet and saw a people who forsook the fountain of living water, yet heard God's repeated call to return.

**Transition:** Next week Jeremiah stands at the temple gate and exposes the people's false security, then weeps over a wound no balm can heal.

**Week 2 Overview — False Security (Jeremiah 7:1–10:25):** Movement 1, The Temple Sermon (7:1–34), covers Jeremiah's warning that the temple will not save a disobedient people. Movement 2, Is There No Balm in Gilead? (8:1–10:25), covers the prophet's grief, boasting in the Lord, and the living God compared with idols. The Canonical Horizon traces Jesus and the "den of robbers" and boasting in the Lord.

### Focal Readings to Preview

- Jeremiah 7:1–15, 21–28
- Jeremiah 8:18–9:3
- Jeremiah 9:23–24
- Jeremiah 10:1–16, 23–24

### My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

### Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

> **Closing Group Prayer**
>
> LORD, you knew us before we were formed, and you call us by your grace. We confess that we have forsaken you, the fountain of living water, and dug broken cisterns of our own. Thank you that you are merciful and call us again and again to return. We pray for those who feel inadequate for what you have asked of them, and for those carrying grief over children, marriage, or loss. Thank you for Jesus, who gives living water and rest for our souls. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### ◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.6 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 9 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 9 minutes. Application and questions, 5 minutes; Looking Ahead and Focal Readings, 2 minutes; Concrete Step and Closing Prayer, 2 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Encourage members to read chapters 7–10 at home; next week's temple sermon is one of Jeremiah's most famous passages.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q1**: What cistern? How will you turn? What will you drink from instead?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q2**: Where is God calling? What makes you feel inadequate? What step will you take?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q3**: How could we encourage each other? What would help you? How will we follow up?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not end on Judah's refusal; end on God's call to return and the living water in Christ.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Next week's key verse is "let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me" (9:24).