

Suggestions for Individual Study

1. As you begin each study, pray that God will help you to understand and apply the passage to your life.
2. Read and reread the assigned Bible passage to familiarize yourself with what the author is saying. In the case of book studies, you may want to read through the entire book prior to the first study. This will give you a helpful overview of its contents.
3. A good modern translation of the Bible, rather than the King James Version or a paraphrase, will give you the most help. The New International Version, the New American Standard Bible and the Revised Standard Version are all recommended. However, the questions in this guide are based on the New International Version.
4. Write your answers in the space provided in the study guide. This will help you to express your understanding of the passage clearly.
5. It might be good to have a Bible dictionary handy. Use it to look up any unfamiliar words, names or places.

Suggestions for Group Study

1. Come to the study prepared. Follow the suggestions for individual study mentioned above. You will find that careful preparation will greatly enrich your time spent in group discussion.
2. Be willing to participate in the discussion. The leader of your group will not be lecturing. Instead, he or she will be encouraging the members of the group to discuss what they have learned from the passage. The leader will be asking the questions that are found in this guide. Plan to share what God has taught you in your individual study.
3. Stick to the passage being studied. Your answers should be based on the verses which are the focus of the discussion and not on outside authorities such as commentaries or speakers. This guide deliberately avoids jumping from book to book or passage to passage. Each study focuses on only one passage. Book studies are generally designed to lead you through the book in the order in which it was written. This will help you follow the author's argument.
4. Be sensitive to the other members of the group. Listen attentively when they share what they have learned. You may be surprised by their insights! Link what you say to the comments of others so the group stays on the topic. Also, be affirming whenever you can. This will encourage some of the more hesitant members of the group to participate.
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. We are sometimes so eager to share what we have learned that we leave too little opportunity for others to respond. By all means participate! But allow others to also.
6. Expect God to teach you through the passage being discussed and through the other members of the group. Pray that you will have an enjoyable and profitable time together.
7. If you are the discussion leader, you will find additional suggestions and helpful ideas for each study in the leader's notes. These are found at the back of the guide.

Introducing Jeremiah

As a teenager, I was delighted when my pastor started a series of sermons on prophecy. I hadn't been a Christian very long, and I had the impression that the Bible was a mysterious book that spoke about the future. I suppose at that time you could say that I put the Bible, Edgar Casey and the works of Nostradamus in the same category. My pastor brought some cold water to my youthful fancy. I learned that the future the prophets spoke about wasn't primarily some distant utopia that had to be deciphered by hocus pocus and hidden wisdom. Instead, I learned that the prophets of the Old Testament were only partly concerned with the future. Their primary focus was on calling God's people back to faithful obedience and worship. When the prophets spoke of the future, they did so to let Israel know that they could expect defeat at the hands of their enemies if they didn't repent. This was not at all what I expected. As my pastor developed the series, the prophets seemed to me to be strange characters wandering around thundering the message of an angry God to people who refused to obey him. After that series, I wasn't so eager to talk about prophecy anymore. I wasn't sure I liked the prophets or their message. Eventually I got back to the prophets in my personal study. I was convinced that if the prophets were in the Scriptures, then I needed to study them. What I discovered at that time was that, yes, many of the prophets did strange things and proclaimed of lots of wrath. What was off in my understanding, however, was the impression I got of God.

The thundering message of judgment came not because God is a short-tempered despot shouting angry curses at people who break his rules, but because he is so intensely caring for those he gave himself to. In and through

the message of the prophets as they proclaimed the coming judgment is a message of love. I like the way the prophet Jeremiah says it: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness" ([Jeremiah 31:3](#)).

In this guide we will find the prophet Jeremiah behaving strangely—proclaiming wrath and impending destruction. Jeremiah lived and wrote in a dark time. For over 250 years God had been sending prophets to warn his people to change their ways. And for over 250 years the prophets were ignored, persecuted or killed. As Jeremiah began his ministry somewhere around 620 B.C. God had already sent the northern half of the kingdom into exile a hundred years previous. Jeremiah was the last messenger for the southern kingdom, their very last chance to turn things around. God and Jeremiah knew that it wouldn't work, but they rebuked and proclaimed anyway.

Studying the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah, you will get a glimpse of what it is like to have a personal relationship with God. God called Jeremiah to a painful ministry. But with that great burden he gave Jeremiah a great gift, the gift of himself. When you study Jeremiah you get a glimpse of what it can be like for God and a human to be together. You will see a message of love that grows from a relationship of love—a hard love, a demanding love, but love nevertheless. What you will also discover, if you pay attention, is how you can grow in your own personal relationship to God. You will be stronger and more deeply open to the love of God than you were before.

The Shape of the Study

The book of Jeremiah is challenging. It is the second longest of all the prophetic works, with fifty-two chapters. There are three major sections:

- [Jeremiah 1-20](#) The Impending Judgment
- [Jeremiah 21-45](#) Living in the Midst of God's Judgment
- [Jeremiah 46-52](#) Oracles of International Judgment

We will study the first two sections. The last section is a collection of sermons on various topics. We can get at the heart of Jeremiah's message by focusing on the first two sections.

How shall we select among the forty-five chapters of the first two sections? One of the ways that Jeremiah sought to get his message across was through the use of symbols. At one time he stands at the door of the temple and uses it as a backdrop. At another time he uses a linen belt, another time a potter's house, then a clay jar, later a basket of figs and then a yoke. We will look at these symbols and the messages that accompany them.

As we ponder the symbols of Jeremiah, we will touch on the following themes of his ministry:

- * the defamation of the temple and the false practice of religion
- * the breaking of the covenant bond with God
- * the right of God to judge Judah for their sin
- * Judah's spiritual adultery with the gods
- * the failure of Judah's spiritual leaders
- * God's promised blessing for the captives
- * God's judgment of all the nations
- * Jeremiah's experience of opposition from the false prophets
- * God's promise to restore people to the land after the period of judgment

Through all the symbols and themes and the proclamations of judgment there is a commitment of love. Through Jeremiah, God says:

I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

This is what the LORD says: As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them. ([Jeremiah 32:40-42](#))

When you stop to think about it, the prophets do speak of the future. God promised Israel a future on the other side of judgment and sin. It will be a time of peace, love and prosperity. A time of joy beyond which we can hardly imagine. The good news is that he invites those who have joined his people through faith in his son, Jesus Christ, to that future as well.

1 The Call of Jeremiah: Prophet to the Nations

[Jeremiah 1](#)

Maybe it's because I was in college in the sixties, but I've always wanted to do something significant with my life, to change the world. For this reason, coming into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ after my freshman year was exciting. What could be more meaningful than giving my life to God?

I've been following him for a couple of decades now. I have found it meaningful and fulfilling. But I discovered something else. Doing something significant wasn't quite what I thought it would be. Somehow I thought that making a difference would feel good and elicit loads of affirmation and appreciation from others. Well, sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't!

Jeremiah was called by God to a life of great meaning and significance. He also found lots of trouble. Why then did he do it? Read on and see.

1. Describe a time when you were given the opportunity to do something important. How did you feel?
2. Read [Jeremiah 1](#). [Jeremiah 1:1-3](#) sets the historical context. Jeremiah's ministry lasted about forty years, through one good king and then two wicked ones. From [Jeremiah 1:1-3](#) alone, what do you think his ministry might have been like?
3. [Jeremiah 1:1](#) begins, "The words of Jeremiah." [Jeremiah 1:2](#) begins, "The word of the LORD." What insight does this give you into the book you are beginning to study?
4. Describe Jeremiah's call in your own words ([Jeremiah 1:4-10](#)).
5. How does the word of the Lord shape Jeremiah's identity ([Jeremiah 1:6-9](#))?
6. God's Word shapes the identity of all who hear it. How has it shaped you?
7. God addressed Jeremiah's fears of being too immature and inadequate. Are there ways that God has addressed your fears?
8. Jeremiah gets practice learning to see and hear God's word. What two pictures is he given, and what challenges does each present to the young prophet?
9. According to the second vision, Jeremiah is going to deliver a message of destruction. What is going to happen, and why will it take place?
10. Jeremiah's message will not be well received. What is the meaning of God's warning ([Jeremiah 1:17-19](#))?

11. How might God's promise of protection and expectation of obedience be helpful for the challenges you face?

12. As Christians, we are called to witness to Jesus Christ. In what way is that also a call to a prophetic ministry of judgment and grace?

The Temple of Doom: Empty Religion

[Jeremiah 7:1-20](#)

I am an ordained minister. I love the church. But there are days when I have my doubts about "organized" religion. I'm not exactly proud of the Crusades, the treatment of the Jews in the Middle Ages or the more recent fundraising scandals of the television evangelists. There are times when it seems that politics, power and social concerns are the primary moving and shaping forces of our churches.

I am reminded on occasion that all that is done in the name of the Lord is not from the Lord. Jeremiah called the people of Judah to examine their motives for their religious pursuits. One day his challenge took place in front of the newly renovated temple. What a shock it must have been for those who heard.

We would all do well to stop and evaluate our motives for our spiritual pursuits. Jeremiah calls us to ponder: "Why do I serve God? Why am I going to church?"

1. What would you do if someone stood at the door of your newly renovated church and told you and everyone who entered that you were hypocrites under the judgment of God?

2. Read [Jeremiah 7:1-11](#). Jeremiah stands at the door of the temple and confronts those who enter. What is his message?

3. In [Jeremiah 7:4](#) Jeremiah repeats the phrase "The temple of the LORD" three times. What do you think he is getting at?

4. Jeremiah says that the words "The temple of the LORD" are deceptive. What is deceptive about them?

5. Under the reign of Josiah, Judah's last good king, the temple had been renovated and the law, which had been lost, was rediscovered. How "law abiding" do the people seem to be ([Jeremiah 7:5-11](#))?

6. In [Jeremiah 7:11](#) God declares that he is watching. If God were to tell you that he was especially watching your church, what do you think he would see and say?

7. Read [Jeremiah 7:12-20](#). How does the experience of Shiloh illustrate Jeremiah's message?

8. God, not the temple, should have been the object of their faith. How is it possible that focus could shift from a person, God, to an object, like the temple?

9. Jeremiah confronted the social injustice that made their worship unacceptable. In [Jeremiah 7:16-20](#) he confronts their idolatry. How widespread was it?

10. God was angry with their idolatry and promised to judge it. Why do you think he was so upset with their false worship?

What does this say about his relationship to his people?

11. God charges that the whole family was involved in idolatrous worship. In light of our study of Jeremiah's message, what can we do to see that our family worships in a way that is pleasing to God?

12. What can we do to see that our own personal worship is pleasing to God?

3 The Linen Belt: Spoiled Bond

[Jeremiah 13:1-17](#)

Firm commitments are an important part of our lives. The bank you borrow money from wants to know your credit record and your assets to see if you can keep your commitment to repay your loan. And be careful about your business partners. Can they keep a commitment? You sign a binding contract with someone who has a history of breaking them at your peril. Think long and hard about the commitment marriage involves. Marry someone who has series of former partners and the chances are good that you will end up with a broken heart. God especially doesn't like those who make commitments of convenience. He has high standards for us and for himself. When he makes a commitment, he stakes his life on it. Jesus Christ is the evidence. He expects the same sort of fidelity in return. Just as there are painful consequences when a business contract is broken or when a marriage partner cheats, so there are painful consequences when we default on our commitments to God.

1. What were the consequences of someone failing to keep their commitment to you?

How did you feel?

2. Read [Jeremiah 13:1-17](#). Describe the task that God gave to Jeremiah in [Jeremiah 13:1-11](#).

3. What is the point of this object lesson?

4. What is God's complaint ([Jeremiah 13:9-11](#))?

5. One purpose of a belt is to tie things together. What things might come apart in your life if you were no longer bound to the Lord?
6. A linen belt was more than functional; it was an ornament of dignity and pride. How might Israel and Judah have been a source of pride to God?
7. God wants to take pride in a relationship with his people. How can this insight enrich your relationship with him?
8. In contrast to the previous study, Jeremiah's message in [Jeremiah 13:12-17](#) is directed at the leaders. In what ways is pride and arrogance a problem?
9. What do the images of drunkenness and darkness ([Jeremiah 13:13](#), [16](#)) communicate about the coming judgment?
10. What could be the remedy for the coming judgment ([Jeremiah 13:15-17](#))?
11. Giving glory to God puts the focus back on him and puts us in our proper place. Consider giving glory to God for yourself, your family, your work and your whole course of life. How does this alter the way that you think about them?
12. Jeremiah calls the leaders to turn from arrogance by listening to the Lord ([Jeremiah 13:15](#)). How can God's Word be a remedy for our inclination to foolish pride?
13. How can God's Word strengthen our bonds and commitments?

4 The Potter's House: God's Shaping Hand

[Jeremiah 18:1-17](#)

One of my sons just got braces. He is not happy about it. For the next three years his mouth is going to be full of metal and rubber bands that push and pull his teeth and jaw back into shape. Three years seems like a long time, but moving flesh and bone is difficult. Braces are inconvenient and painful, but they will improve my son's mouth and health for the rest of his life.

God is interested in shaping us, not just our teeth, but our whole being. It's a big task. Shaping souls is difficult, takes time and requires divine power and skills. Unlike gums, teeth and bone, souls don't always yield to the shaping pressures of the divine hand. If they do, it takes a lifetime of God's pressures to conform to the end goal, the image of Christ.

Jeremiah didn't know about braces, nor did he know the name of Jesus Christ, but he did know that God is in the business of shaping our lives.

1. Recall one or two major events that have been a significant shaping influence in your life. How did they affect you for good or for ill?

2. Read [Jeremiah 18:1-17](#). What did Jeremiah see and hear at the potter's house ([Jeremiah 18:1-10](#))?

3. God draws a comparison between himself and the potter, who can do what he likes. How would you think God might respond to someone who objects that this isn't fair?

4. God makes it clear that his pronouncements and promises are conditional. How do you think God might respond to someone who objects that this makes him untrustworthy?

5. Jeremiah draws an analogy between human nations and clay in the potter's hand. How does the difference between humans and clay make this an analogy of hope?

6. Being reshaped by the divine potter isn't always a pleasant experience. Describe one or two times when you have been aware of God's shaping hand in your life.

7. In order to be reshaped by the potter, the clay has to be soft. How well is Judah going to do under God's hand ([Jeremiah 18:11-15](#))?

8. Israel had a reputation of being protected and cared for by its powerful God. How is Israel's reputation going to change?

9. In [Jeremiah 18:12](#) Judah responds to God's warning with the reply "It's no use." What do you think that means?

10. A primary cause of Judah's coming judgment was a determined forgetfulness ([Jeremiah 18:15](#)). How might forgetfulness be an expression of disobedience and unfaithfulness?

11. Judah was a nation with a hard heart that expressed itself in disobedience and idolatry. How would you describe the behavior of a person with a hard heart? a person with a soft heart?

12. God is the one who shapes us. How has God spoken to you in this passage about the way he is shaping you?

5 The Righteous Branch: A Divine Coup

[Jeremiah 23:1-24](#)

During World War II, the Japanese experimented with effective ways to run their prison camps. At one camp they removed the five percent of the prison population that had any experience in leadership or who could articulate a defined set of religious beliefs and moral behavior. The results were amazing. There were less attempted escapes and more docile prisoners at that camp than at any of their others.

We need leaders and we need beliefs. But what happens when the leaders become corrupt or intentionally lead in an immoral way? Judah faced just such a crisis. The whole nation was headed for a cliff, and the leaders weren't doing anything about it. In fact, they were leading the way to the edge. How will God respond? Jeremiah has some bad news for the leaders and some good news for the people.

1. Recall someone who has been an influential leader in your life. What did they do and how did it affect you?
2. Read [Jeremiah 23:1-24](#). [Jeremiah 23:1-8](#) describes what could be called a second exodus. How will it be different from the first one?
3. God promises a new ruler from the line of David ([Jeremiah 23:5-8](#)). How will his reign be different from the current leaders' ([Jeremiah 23:9-22](#))?
4. God himself promises to provide new leadership as Israel's shepherd king. How is that promise fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
5. The shepherd king is called "The LORD Our Righteousness" ([Jeremiah 23:6](#)). How is that promise also fulfilled in Jesus Christ?
6. What one or two ways have you experienced the benefits of the Lord as your shepherd and your righteousness?
7. What charges are brought against the religious leaders ([Jeremiah 23:9-24](#))?
8. What are the results of their leadership?
9. How will the punishment fit the crime for Israel's leaders ([Jeremiah 23:1-4](#))?
10. If God were to bring charges against the spiritual leaders of today's church, what do you think they might be? What effects might such leadership be having on the life of the church and individual Christians?
11. The prophet and priest look to the Baals and their own conjured-up dreams, rather than to the Lord. What false gods might wayward spiritual leaders be looking to today?

12. God charges the religious leaders with failing to stand in his council ([Jeremiah 23:18, 22](#)). We may not be prophets or priests, but we can learn from their example. How do you receive the counsel of the Lord?

What benefits might that bring in your life and in those around you?

6 The Basket of Figs: Living with God's Judgement

[Jeremiah 24](#)

After the evening service, a visiting preacher was invited to spend the night at the home of one of the wealthy members of the church. The host was proud of his new house and showed it off with obvious pride. He attributed his good fortune to the Lord, saying that God had blessed his business in the previous year with a fourfold increase in profits.

The guest was not impressed. With a dismissive gesture he asked his host, "How do you know that your prosperity is not a trick of the devil to cause you to become proud, materialistic and greedy?"

Although the challenge of the preacher seems harsh, it's a good question. What appears to be good fortune at the present may not be so in the end. In Jeremiah's message to the exiles and those who stayed in the land after the first deportation in A.D. 596, he turns the concept of good fortune on its head and provides a different perspective.

1. When have you changed your mind about what you initially thought was a great opportunity or positive development?
2. Read [Jeremiah 24](#). Jeremiah is shown a vision of figs. What is the historical context in which Jeremiah sees this vision ([Jeremiah 24:1](#))?

How does this vision of the figs display the continuing presence and power of God in the midst of a time of military defeat for Judah?
3. How does the vision of the figs change the way you might think about those who were taken in captivity to Babylon and those who got to stay in Jerusalem ([Jeremiah 24:5-10](#))?
4. God says that he is going to regard the exiles as "good" ([Jeremiah 24:5](#)). What might that mean?
5. What commitments does God make to the exiles?
6. How is God's watching, mentioned in [Jeremiah 24:6](#), different from the references to his watching that we studied in [Jeremiah 1:12](#) and [Jeremiah 7:11](#)?

7. Christians are to consider themselves blessed by God in the midst of difficult circumstances. What can we learn from the experience of the exiles that can help us experience God's blessing in difficult times?

8. What are some of the benefits that you have received from trying times?

9. How might those who escaped captivity feel about themselves, the exiles and God ([Jeremiah 24:8-10](#))?

10. Look at the description in [Jeremiah 24:9-10](#) of what will happen to those who stay. Why do you think God is harsh with them?

11. The experience of good fortune now doesn't always reflect ultimate reality. What wisdom can we draw from this act of God's judgment?

12. God's ultimate act of judgment that turns everything upside down is the resurrection. How does that affect the way Christians are to consider the terrible experience of death and the struggles of this life?

7 The Cup of God's Wrath: International Judgment

[Jeremiah 25:15-38](#)

I know lots of people who want to believe in "the God of the New Testament." He is described by those people as a God of love. In contrast, many do not want to believe in the Old Testament God. He is thought of as a God of wrath who punishes people for disobedience and sends wars on those who don't obey him.

In [Jeremiah 25](#) we face the issue of the God of wrath head-on. Through Jeremiah, God proclaims a war caused by the "cup of God's wrath" that will bring death and destruction among the nations. What you are about to read is painful and unsettling.

What most people who want to dismiss the Old Testament God don't know, however, is that the cup of wrath sent by God in the Old Testament continues right over into the New Testament. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus takes the cup and drinks it for us ([Matthew 26:39](#)).

As painful as this passage is, we need it to understand the work of God in his world.

1. How do you respond when you hear someone say that God is a God of love but not a God of wrath?

2. Read [Jeremiah 25:15-38](#). The central image of this portion of Jeremiah is the cup of God's wrath. Who is the cup for?

3. There is an extensive list of nations in [Jeremiah 25:18-26](#). What is God's point in mentioning them one by one?

4. The nations don't have a choice about this coming war. What is the reason for God's wide-ranging judgment ([Jeremiah 25:27-29](#))?

5. What does it say about God that he is willing to judge his own people as well as the rest of the nations?

6. [Jeremiah 25:30-33](#) emphasizes the sounds of war. What will be heard, and what will the sounds mean?
7. War is a terrible thing. How is it merely a symptom of the real problem of the human race?
8. What justification can there be for God to cause such terrible experiences?
9. In most wars, one or even both sides claim that God is on their side. How might you respond to such a claim in light of Jeremiah's prophecy?
10. Jeremiah uses the images of a shepherd and a lion to describe the leaders and God. How does that help the leaders understand their situation ([Jeremiah 25:34-38](#))?
11. Consider wars in the twentieth century—World War I, World War II, Vietnam, the Gulf War or other wars that come to mind. How do you think leaders of the nations involved viewed their participation in them?
12. Those who were to experience the impending war were in for a terrible experience. What consolation is there as we read these words of Jeremiah?

8 The Yoke of Babylon: How to Prosper Anyway

Jeremiah 27

Hiking along a narrow ledge on a path in the Alps, a tourist slipped and fell. Just before sliding off a cliff and down into the deep ravine below, he grabbed a tree root and hung on. About five minutes later, across the ravine, he heard a voice calling out, "Let go of the tree and swing to the left."

That didn't sound like a good idea, so he continued to cling to the tree. His hands were beginning to ache and his grip was slipping. The voice called out again: "Let go of the tree and swing to the left. From where I am standing I can see a ledge about twenty feet below you and just off at an angle. If you drop down you can get back to the path and walk down."

The hiker had to make a decision. Did he trust the voice or not? After all, how did he know that the voice was telling the truth? From where he hung it looked like a straight drop of hundreds of feet down to certain death. On the other hand, he couldn't hang on much longer.

Judah was in a difficult situation, hanging from a cliff, as it were, and getting strange advice from Jeremiah. Like the voice from across the ravine his message went against common sense and everything they understood about being the special people of God. Would they believe him and let go?

1. How do you evaluate and respond to advice from others?
2. Read [Jeremiah 27:1-11](#). Jeremiah continues to function as a prophet to the nations. What is his message, and who is he speaking to?

3. Jeremiah also continues his use of images and object lessons. What was the purpose of giving the leaders in the Jerusalem counsel an object lesson with the yoke and a message about the coming power of Babylon?

4. How do you think the counsel of kings and envoys would have responded when Jeremiah walked in with a yoke on his neck?

5. Describe the difficult situation that Jeremiah's message puts the leaders in.

6. Read [Jeremiah 27:12-22](#). Zedekiah received the same message as the nations. Why would this be especially upsetting and confusing to the nation who considered themselves to be God's chosen people ([Jeremiah 27:12-15](#))?

7. What challenge does Jeremiah issue to the prophets ([Jeremiah 27:18](#))?

8. According to Jeremiah, the remainder of the temple furnishings were going to be taken to Babylon. How would you feel if the pulpit, cross and other important items of worship were taken from your church?

9. How does God communicate that he is in charge of the whole experience of Judah's defeat ([Jeremiah 27:21-22](#))?

10. God is both the source of Judah's judgment and the means of their deliverance. How then could this knowledge provide wisdom and guidance for the leaders and the people?

11. When you are going through difficult times, what comfort and wisdom does the knowledge of God provide for you?

12. Jeremiah called the counsel members to risk going against common sense to receive God's deliverance. What risks has following God meant for you?

How can Jeremiah's courage be an example for you in the challenges you face?

9 The Yoke of False Prophets: Destroying False Hope

Jeremiah 28

How do God's people handle hostility? John the Baptist told his listeners they should go the second mile. Jesus told the disciples to turn the other cheek.

There is a tension here. We may be inclined to think that Christians should be doormats, giving way to the forces of hostile opposition. But that is not the point. Jesus confronted the religious leaders with their hypocrisy and called for the judgment of God on them. [Matthew 23](#) records some of his hot rhetoric. Yet, while Jesus confronted, he didn't lead a jihad, a holy war, to destroy the opposition. He trusted God to bring judgment and justice in his way and his time.

Jeremiah's ministry was full of confrontation and hostility from the opposition. In this study it becomes physical and deadly. As we watch Jeremiah, we can learn how to trust God's guidance and power in threatening situations.

1. What would you do if someone confronted you in public and tried to humiliate and discredit you?
2. Read [Jeremiah 28:1-9](#). The conflict begins when Hananiah confronts Jeremiah in the temple. How would you describe the interaction between Jeremiah and Hananiah?
3. How do you think Hananiah's message was received by the priests and people ([Jeremiah 28:1-4](#))?
4. How would you characterize Jeremiah's initial response to Hananiah ([Jeremiah 28:5-9](#))?
5. Summarize Jeremiah's rebuttal to Hananiah.
6. The people who hear Jeremiah and Hananiah must choose who they believe is actually speaking the word of the Lord. What test does Jeremiah give for discerning a true prophet?
7. According to Jeremiah, how is Hananiah's prophecy different from all the other prophets who preceded him?
8. How can we know that the words recorded in the Bible are really words from God and not merely human words of empty hopes and dreams?
9. Read [Jeremiah 28:10-17](#). Shortly after Hananiah broke the yoke off Jeremiah's neck, the Lord gave Jeremiah a stern rebuttal for Hananiah. Why might he have waited for a period of time instead of speaking when Hananiah broke the yoke?
10. Jeremiah's rebuttal sets up a stark test of his ministry. Why do you think God's response was so harsh?
11. What do you think those who heard the encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah might have learned?
12. What have you learned in this passage about being faithful to God's Word in your life?
13. What insight does this incident between Jeremiah and Hananiah provide in spotting false prophets or misleading messages given by false teachers?

10 The Field of Hope: The Promise of Renewed Land

[Jeremiah 32:1-25](#)

Sociologists have discovered a set of behaviors which they call "deferred gratification pattern." It describes the practice of putting off a purchase or action in hope that better dividends would come in the future. Most everyone who lives by deferred gratification expects to get a good return. But what if the benefits don't come in your lifetime?

In [Jeremiah 32](#), Jeremiah makes a real-estate deal that on the surface looks foolish. It is the ultimate in deferred gratification. In the transaction he demonstrates the depth of his character, the strength of his maturity and the quality of his obedience to God.

1. How do you feel when you have to put off buying something that you really want immediately?
2. Read [Jeremiah 32:1-25](#). Jerusalem is in a state of siege. How might Jeremiah's willingness to purchase a field have been a means of comfort to the threatened citizens?
3. Why is Jeremiah imprisoned in the courtyard, and why is Zedekiah shut up in Jerusalem?
4. Into this state of siege, Jeremiah is offered a real-estate deal from a relative. Why might it have been wise for Jeremiah to turn it down ([Jeremiah 32:6-12](#))?
5. Jeremiah's purchase of the field didn't fit with his message about sure and certain judgment. How do you think he felt about buying it?
6. Jeremiah records in detail the process of the legal transaction for the purchase of the land. What impact would this have on those who watched?
7. Why would Jeremiah make a transaction from which he would never personally benefit ([Jeremiah 32:14-15](#))?
8. What can we learn from Jeremiah's model about Christian service and character?
9. After the purchase Jeremiah offered a prayer ([Jeremiah 32:17-25](#)). Under the circumstances, how might this have been a source of comfort for Jeremiah?
10. What themes are woven throughout the prayer?
11. How can prayer be a source of comfort for us in times of trouble and doubt?
12. Jeremiah's prayer shows a familiar knowledge of God's past actions. How can this study of Jeremiah be a resource for your prayers?

11 The Sure & Certain Promise

[Jeremiah 33](#)

When John the Baptist was in prison, he sent messengers to Jesus asking if he was the Messiah or not. The question probably came from confusion and despair. After all, hadn't John proclaimed the Coming One who would take away the sins of the world? Surely the Messiah's coming would bring freedom and fulfillment for everyone. How then could John be confined to prison? Something seemed wrong.

God had warned Jeremiah from the moment of his call that his ministry would be difficult. Even so, like John the Baptist, there must have been hard days of frustration and despair. He was ignored, rejected, despised and imprisoned. In the midst of that darkness, God comes to Jeremiah with a candle of light.

Sometimes God doesn't rescue us. Sometimes he does. Either way, he extends his love and grace.

1. When things look dark and depressing, what do you do to gain encouragement and hope?
2. Read [Jeremiah 33:1-9](#). Jeremiah is imprisoned in Jerusalem with the Babylonian army at the gates. What does God do to offer him comfort?
3. The Hebrew meaning of the Lord's name used here is "Promise Keeper." Why do you think God repeats his name four times in two verses?
4. Have there been times in your life when you felt confined, trapped or limited? How could or did the knowledge of God help?
5. God invites Jeremiah to call out for assurance and then immediately offers his response ([Jeremiah 33:4-9](#)). In what way would God's words be comforting?
6. God's answer gives both the bad news of Judah's defeat and the good news of its restoration. How have you experienced both good and bad news in your own relationship with God?
7. Look at [Jeremiah 33:9](#). God is concerned about his reputation. How is that a good thing for both God and his people?
8. Read [Jeremiah 33:10-26](#). Describe the restoration promised for the city ([Jeremiah 33:10-11](#)).
What is promised for the countryside ([Jeremiah 33:12-13](#))?
9. What is God going to do to fulfill his promises to Judah and Israel ([Jeremiah 33:15-18](#))? How are those promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ?

10. The destruction of Israel and Judah could lead to the accusation that God was a covenant breaker. How does God answer this ([Jeremiah 33:20-26](#))?

11. What is the difference between a trustworthy God and a god who is fickle and impulsive?

12. God's people at the time of judgment had a restoration to look forward to. As Christians, what do we have to look forward to in times of trouble?

12 The Not So Final End: Sunk in the Mud

[Jeremiah 38](#)

With this passage we come to the end of our study of Jeremiah. Although the book goes on for another thirteen chapters, it is a fitting place to end because the chapter concludes with the final destruction and deportation of Judah in 586 B.C.

What a hard time it has been for Jeremiah! God warned him it would be difficult. Certainly it was, more than he ever imagined. In this passage we see Jeremiah thrown into the mud of a deep well and left for dead. Although he gets out of the well, he is not released from confinement and is imprisoned in Jerusalem until the very end. The faith hall of fame is found in [Hebrews 11](#). Jeremiah certainly qualifies. It is a record of godly men and women who trusted God when things looked dark or impossible. The author of Hebrews writes: "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect" ([Hebrews 11:39-40](#)).

Jeremiah's ministry of faithfulness to God and God's people helped prepare the way for you and me. We can know God in ways that are deeper, richer and more powerful because Jeremiah had the courage to be faithful and the wisdom to record his words.

1. What sort of spiritual legacy would you like to leave for your friends and family?

2. Read [Jeremiah 38:1-13](#). As Judah was being besieged by Babylon, what were Jeremiah's enemies concerned about?

3. If you were in leadership and heard Jeremiah's message, what would have to happen before you would be willing to surrender to your enemies?

4. Jeremiah ends up in the well, sunk down deep into the mud. How had God prepared Jeremiah for just such a situation?

5. In what ways can Christians end up in wells today? How has God prepared us?

6. How did Jeremiah get out of the well ([Jeremiah 38:7-13](#))?

7. After giving permission for Jeremiah to be put in the well, the king gave Ebed-Melech permission to take Jeremiah out of the well. Why do you think he changed his mind?
8. Read [Jeremiah 38:14-28](#). Zedekiah the king calls Jeremiah to ask for his advice ([Jeremiah 38:14-23](#)). What personal and political reasons does Jeremiah give for Zedekiah to surrender?
9. How might Jeremiah's experience in the cistern be a lesson for the king?
10. As Jerusalem faces its final destruction, the king and the prophet face each other. What do they have in common? How are they different from each other?
11. Our study concludes with the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586. How would you evaluate the success of Jeremiah's ministry?
12. What lessons for your own life will you take from this study of Jeremiah?