



CONNECT GROUP GUIDE

FROM
JUDGEMENT
TO HOPE

Jeremiah the Prophet

Connect Groups at ACN...

The goals set out in **Vision 26** cast it like this ...

Living to love and proclaim Jesus we will...

- meet in Connect Groups to study the Bible together and equip one another to be faithful disciples
- pray together in our groups. We will make a space for those not used to praying in a group and provide opportunities for people to become more comfortable with group prayer
- have a missional focus, both local and global
- pastorally care for one another especially when people are facing difficult times in their lives
- invite new members to our groups. As groups grow we will encourage multiplication by identifying potential leaders who can be trained to lead new groups
- gather Connect Group leaders together regularly for prayer, training and encouragement

INTRODUCTION

For many Christians, the book of Jeremiah is uncharted territory. We know it's in the Old Testament, but we may not know much about what's in it!

The book of Jeremiah is about Yahweh's goodness and his people's refusal to follow his ways. It also portrays Jeremiah's persistence in following his prophetic call despite indifference and opposition.

Jeremiah warned Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel, of God's judgement - which culminated in 587BC with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. But Yahweh ultimately provides hope, promising to renew his covenant with his people.

Jeremiah proclaims that God had long ago established an agreement with them and will restore that relationship.

We have more information about Jeremiah than any of the other writing prophets.

He experienced opposition throughout his ministry; from book burning (Jer 36), accusations of treason and imprisonment {for preaching!} (Jer 37).

Jeremiah had a clear calling, but he also experienced the sadness and loneliness of speaking to an unrepentant people. He told God's people that their approaching exile was a consequence of their disregard for God's law. Their only protection would be to return to God.

Although he prophesied disaster, he also prophesied hope. Jeremiah offers us a model of what it means to be faithful despite hopeless circumstances.

August 14

Jeremiah 1

Opening

*Share around the group what you already know about Jeremiah, and what you are hoping this series will give YOU, as we all grow together. ***

Read Jeremiah 1

1. How does the knowledge that God knew you before you were born affect you?
2. In what ways is the call of Jeremiah the same and different from God's call on your life?
3. In verses 12 and 13 the Lord gives Jeremiah poetic images to convey his message. What would these images have meant to the people of Judah? How might we use poetic images today to convey God's message?

***check out the bottom of p.26*



YOUR NOTES

4. Judgement will come because the people were "burning incense to other gods". (v.16).
In what ways do people burn incense to other gods today?
5. In vv. 17-19 God warns Jeremiah that he will face stiff opposition. What does Jeremiah's ministry teach us about responding to opposition?
If you are not familiar with Jeremiah you might like to read ahead. As we go through the series keep this question in mind and grow in your understanding.
6. What does it mean to be a prophet to the nation of Australia compared to Jeremiah's call to be a prophet to Judah?
7. God does not call the equipped. He equips the called. How does this encourage you in your Christian life today? Are there ways in which you need to take the plunge and speak for God as you trust in him to help?
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PRAYER

Pray for God to renew his call on your life, making clear the work he still has for you to do.

Pray too for our upcoming Alpha, especially that we might all take courage to be God's mouthpiece as we pray for our friends and issue invitations.



YOUR NOTES

August 21**Jeremiah 2**

Opening

How have you seen your Christian life and devotion change over the years/decades?

Read Jeremiah 2:1-13

Poor young Jeremiah is put into the deep end right from the start. God is acting as a prosecuting attorney, bringing a charge of faithlessness and idolatry against his people.

1. vv.1-3. Why do you think this is an important place for the prosecution case to begin?
2. vv.4-8. As the cross-examination begins, how has God treated Judah, and how has Judah treated God?
3. Think about what the opposite of each of God's accusations might look like. How should Israel/Judah have responded to God's kindness towards them?
4. vv.9-13. What are the charges the Lord brings against his people?



YOUR NOTES

5. What is the great tragedy of turning away from the true God?
6. Has sin lost its shock value for you? Have you grown accustomed to it? Why does this matter?

Read Jeremiah 2:25-28

We all serve something, or somebody, as what we think will give us what we need.

7. What idols are competing for your devotion - for your love, trust or hope? What will this be able to do for you in your time of greatest need?
8. v.27. What have the people treated as a god?
9. How does God respond to their cry for help? Why is this justified?

PRAYER

Before you pray, read together 1 John 1:5-10.

Pray prayers of confession, asking God to help you recognise and be honest about where you have worshipped idols.

Thank God that we can confess our sins confident of forgiveness!



YOUR NOTES

August 28

Jeremiah 14

Opening

Share a time in your life when you felt that there was absolutely no help for your situation.

Read Jeremiah 14:7-22

1. The modern cry might be, "Lord please don't judge us, our sins are not that bad."
What is Jeremiah's plea for God to withhold judgement? vv.7-9.
2. Jeremiah suffered severe persecution from the people because they thought his message of judgement was too severe.
How do vv.7-9 show that Jeremiah's heart is not against the people?
3. vv.10-12. "They greatly love to wander ..."
How do Australians wander? Judah was offering sacrifices according to the Torah. In what ways do Australians show outward signs of allegiance to God even when their hearts are far from him?



YOUR NOTES

5. Where is the danger for us who are in the church of only offering lip service to God?

6. vv.13-18. Who are the false prophets today?

7. How does the message of judgement fit with the message of good news? In what ways might we be like the false prophets?

8. vv.19-22. What can we do to develop a prayer life like that of Jeremiah?

PRAYER

Intercede for Australians in general, and also particular people you know, that they might repent and acknowledge the Lordship of Christ before judgement day.

Pray that Alpha would be a way of this happening.



YOUR NOTES

September 4

Jeremiah 18

Opening

*Have you ever had to change your plans half way through a project/DIY project/piece of art?
Share it with your group.*

Read Jeremiah 18:1-6

1. Is it fair for the potter to reshape, or remake the clay as seems best to him? Why / why not?
2. Is it right for God to reshape, or remake his people as seems best to him? Why / why not?

Read Jeremiah 18:7-12

3. What do you like about God's sovereignty as depicted here? Is there anything you struggle with in this image of God?

Read Jeremiah 18:7-12

4. Talk together about how Jeremiah might have felt announcing this to the people.



YOUR NOTES

God's promise was to bless his people, Israel, to make them more numerous than the stars in the sky and give them a promised land to dwell in (Genesis 12 and elsewhere).

5. Jeremiah thought that the idolatry and rebellion of God's people made his judgement inevitable. But how could God be a promise-keeping God if he was ejecting them from the promised land?

6. How does Jeremiah 18:1-12 give clarity about God keeping or breaking his promises to Israel?

Read Jeremiah 18:18-23

7. How do the people respond to Jeremiah?

8. Jeremiah fears for his future and prays against the people who would harm him. How is Jesus like Jeremiah? And how is Jesus a better prophet than Jeremiah? (Can you give examples?)

PRAYER

Pray for God to shape and reshape his church to be more like him. Pray for one another that we may see how great and faithful God is.



YOUR NOTES

September 11

Jeremiah 29

Opening

What has been your experience of living somewhere very different? Have you ever dealt with culture shock?

Read Jeremiah 29:1-9

1. Who carried the people into exile? How would you expect to live in exile?
2. If you were exiled away from your home, history and environment, how might you react to the people who have captured you and taken you from your home?
By contrast, what does God want his people to do while in exile?
3. Like the exiles, your true home is not this place. While we wait for our true home, how do you think we ought to live?
4. How can we best 'seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which [God] has carried [us]' (v.7)?
5. Are there any people prophesying lies or deceiving us today who we should not listen to?



YOUR NOTES

Read Jeremiah 29:10-14

God is completely upfront with carrying his people into exile. He doesn't say, "What a surprise that Babylon came and took you into exile!" No, he says, "I carried you into exile."

6. Is God sovereignly responsible for where you were born, where you have been, where you have 'chosen' to settle?
As Christians in Australia today how are we similar or different to Israelites exiled in Babylon?
7. Verse 11 has been plastered on coffee mugs, tea towels, 'Christian' wall hangings and fridge magnets. Is this a promise we can claim today? Why / why not?
8. God breaks down the sacred/secular divide by having his people seek the good of the city of their exile. This means that almost all 'secular' work is 'sacred' too. How should Christians live and work in 'secular' employment/clubs/friendship groups?
9. What promises of God do you hold on to while you wait for the New Creation?

PRAYER

Pray for wisdom and insight to know which voices and ideas are godly and which we should reject. Pray for a strong sense of vocation - doing God's work, whatever we are involved in.



YOUR NOTES

September 18

Jeremiah 31

Opening

How have you experienced God's love being beyond anything you could have imagined.

Read Jeremiah 31:1-6

After all of Judah's sin, you'd expect that God would wash his hands of them. The more we become aware of our own sin, the more we might expect God to wash his hands of us, too! But God's love is far greater than we could ever imagine.

1. How does God describe his own love?
Why does Judah desperately need God to love like this?
2. Does this mean that God doesn't care about obedience/disobedience? Why/why not?

Read Jeremiah 31:4-14

3. List all the different things God says he will do for his people.



YOUR NOTES

Read Jeremiah 31:27-34

A covenant is an agreement between two parties that governs the way they relate to each other. The Lord promises to make a new covenant with his people. This is a big deal! The covenant at Sinai (almost a millennium before) was the founding document of the nation, written on stone tablets.

4. What was the problem with the old covenant? (v.32).
Whose fault was that?
5. How does God describe the new covenant and how will it differ from the old one? How does it solve the problem that derailed the old covenant?
6. Read Luke 22:19-20. How would the disciples have understood these words of Jesus, knowing Jeremiah 31:31-34?
7. Read 2 Corinthians 3:2-6. How is the new covenant written on human hearts?

Take some time to reflect together on the wonder of Jesus and all that he has done for us in being the fulfilment of this new covenant.

****Thinking back to the opening of Week 1 - what have you gained from this series?**

PRAYER

Thank God the Father for his new covenant with his people.

Thank God the Son for bringing you into the covenant.

Thank God the Holy Spirit for giving you a new heart, able to love and obey the Father.



YOUR NOTES

