



SESSION **2**

Jeremiah



MEETING AIM

To see how God sends warning to his people to give them the chance to turn back to him – but they don't always do so.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Jeremiah 36



BACKGROUND

The northern kingdom of Israel has already been taken over by the Assyrians and the people have been taken into exile. The southern kingdom of Judah has limped on, mostly with evil kings at the helm. In 2 Kings 22 and 23, we get a flash of hope with King Josiah who follows God, but his son, Jehoiakim, is a different matter, and it's onto this stage that God's prophet Jeremiah comes. Today's story details the prophecy concerning the takeover by the Babylonians, which Jehoiakim refused to take any notice of. This is the beginning of the end for the kingdom of Judah.

CIRCLE TIME



As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass round a simple object. When a child has the object they can share a story from their week. Sometimes it's helpful to have a sand timer so that you have time for each person to share if they want to. If a child doesn't want to say anything they can just pass on the object. Pray and thank God for all the stories shared and the stories that weren't mentioned.

INSTRUCTIONS!



Staying seated in the circle and play a very simple game of Chinese whispers. Whisper a simple instruction to one child, eg: "Stand up." They pass the instruction round the circle and the last child does what they have been instructed. Play a few times, starting the instruction at different places so that different children get to do the instruction at the end.

Explain that in today's story, God gave his people a special message to warn them about something that would happen.

BIBLE STORY



You will need: a crown; two big labels that can be hung around a child's neck with a piece of string – one saying 'B' and the other 'J'; a roll of paper; a marker pen; scissors

Tell the children that God's people were still not following him and another wicked king called Jehoiakim was in charge. Ask for a volunteer to wear the crown and stand in the circle. Say: God wanted to let the people know that unless they started following him again, a disaster was going to happen and enemies would take over, so he sent a man called Jeremiah who was another prophet (someone who gives messages to people from God) to write a message for the king and the people.

Ask for two more volunteers, one to wear the 'J' label and be Jeremiah and the other to wear the 'B' label and be Baruch. Explain that Baruch wrote down the message that Jeremiah told him. Give Baruch the roll of paper and let them scribble on it to show the message. Tell the group that the message said that enemies were coming to take over. If the people started following God again, the enemies would be stopped. When the message was written, Jeremiah told Baruch to go and read it in the temple.

The important people in the temple were worried about the message; they decided to take it to the king, but they told Baruch to go and hide with Jeremiah. Ask Baruch to give his roll of paper to someone else and then go and sit back in the circle with Jeremiah. Ask your new volunteer to take the roll of paper to the king.

The officials went to the king and read the message but the king wasn't worried – not even one bit. In fact, he cut up the message and got rid of it. Cut the roll of paper into pieces and let the king screw each one up and throw it away. As you do this, talk about how silly that was – this was the king's chance to stop the enemies coming but he decided not to believe the message and not to care about what God wanted.

The king said: "Arrest Jeremiah and Baruch!" But they were hiding too well and no one could find them. God said to Jeremiah to write out his message again. He had to add that the enemies from Babylon were definitely coming now! God's people would be away from home for 70 years. And that's what happened – God's people really did get taken over by the enemies from Babylon.

CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What was God's message in the story?
- Why didn't the king listen?
- What would have happened if the king had listened?
- Do we find it easy to listen and do what we are told?
- Why is it important to follow God by doing what he says?

CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: some old distressed looking paper – or paper pre-soaked in tea and dried; pens; small pieces of ribbon (about 15cm long)

Say that you are going to make a scroll like Jeremiah's message was written on. Even though most of the children won't be able to write, they can pretend, or draw pictures of what the message was about – the enemies coming if the people carried on being bad. Talk to them about the message as they draw on their paper. Get them to think about whether they would have taken notice of a message like this. When they have finished writing and drawing, help each child to roll up their scroll and tie it closed with a ribbon.

PRAYER



Ask the children to think about the sort of things that God might say to them or ask them to do. Ask them to fill in the gaps as you pray: "God, help us to follow you by..." Pray this prayer as many times as you like, letting the children add in their ideas before you say: "Amen" together.

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