



SESSION **2**

# Jeremiah



**MEETING AIM**

To discover that God wants us to listen to him.



**BIBLE PASSAGE**

Jeremiah 36



**BACKGROUND**

It's the sixth Century BC and the Jewish people in Judah are heading for total disaster. They are surrounded by powerful enemies; worse still, they have turned away from God, ignored his laws and forgotten the promises they made to him. A succession of kings have done little to turn the people back to God. In 598 BC, King Jehoiakim is still on the throne when the Babylonian army conquers Judah. This invasion leads to the catastrophe the Jews have always feared: in 587 BC Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed. God sends a series of prophets, including Jeremiah, to warn his people about this imminent disaster. Jeremiah tells the unpopular truth, God's people urgently need to turn back to God and renew their faith in him, before the worst happens.

**CIRCLE TIME**



As the children arrive, sit everyone down in a circle. Ask the children about listening to each other; who listens to you when you really want to tell them something? Share something from your own experience, too. Have you ever been told off for not listening? Chat together about what it's like when someone doesn't listen to you.

**GAME**



Sit in a circle and play this listening game, which has the same rules as 'I spy': 'I hear with my little ear, something beginning with 't.' The harder you listen, the more likely you are to win!

**BIBLE STORY**



**You will need:** clip of *WALL-E* (0:25 to 1:23) and the means to play it; pictures of the ancient Egyptian army and the Babylonian army; two warning triangles (road signs) on paper or card: one standard, and the other with a double exclamation mark; two blank scrolls; red and black marker pens; a plush cushion or velvet cloth

Show the clip from *WALL-E* and ask: "I wonder what has happened to this city?" Imagine if you knew this was going to happen to the place where we live. If you were shown the future like this, who would you warn? (*Invite responses.*)

This was what happened to a man called Jeremiah, who lived a long time ago in Judah. Judah was surrounded by enemies; the Egyptians (*show picture*) and the Babylonians (*show picture*) were fierce and terrible, and they both wanted to beat the Jewish people and grab their special city, Jerusalem. Worst of all, the people themselves had stopped trusting in God. They had turned their backs on him and forgotten all their promises. They were heading for total disaster!

God picked Jeremiah to be a prophet; a prophet is a truth-teller whose job is to give God's people a great big warning. Who would like to be Jeremiah? (*Pick a volunteer and give them the warning triangle. Ask the group what it means and explain if necessary.*)

Your job is to warn God's people about how bad they are being – but that doesn't

make you very popular, so they have thrown you in prison. (*Everyone should help to create a 'prison' out of chairs around Jeremiah.*)

Now, even though you are in prison, God still has a message for you. You need to write this down quick! Have you got a pen and paper? (*When Jeremiah says: "No," ask for a volunteer to write down God's message to Jeremiah. Give them a scroll of paper and red and black pens. Ask them to copy the warning triangle that Jeremiah is holding. While your volunteer is drawing, introduce them to the rest of the group.*)

This is Baruch – he is Jeremiah's secretary. Jeremiah told him to write down everything God said and tell everyone! First Baruch took Jeremiah's scroll to the temple on a special holy day, when loads of people were there praying. He opened the scroll and read God's warning: "Watch out! The king of Babylon is coming to destroy Jerusalem and everyone in it! Turn back to God and say sorry for being bad, and he will forgive you!"

Everyone heard God's warning, but they weren't sorry. An important man from the palace heard God's warning, and he said to himself: "All the important people need to hear this!" Baruch took Jeremiah's scroll to the palace, where lots of palace officials were busy being important. He opened the scroll and read God's warning: "Watch out! The king of Babylon is coming to destroy Jerusalem and everyone in it! So turn back to God and say sorry for being bad, and he will forgive you!"

Everyone heard God's warning, but they weren't sorry. They were worried. The important officials looked at each other and said: "The king needs to hear this!" And they told Baruch to go into hiding with Jeremiah. (*Jeremiah hides in prison, Baruch hides behind it.*)

So, an important official took Jeremiah's scroll to the king. (*Place the scroll reverently on a cushion or velvet cloth.*) He opened the scroll and read God's warning: "Watch out! The king of Babylon is coming to destroy Jerusalem and everyone in it! So turn back to God and say sorry for being bad, and he will forgive you!"

The king heard God's warning, but he wasn't sorry. He was angry. He grabbed Jeremiah's scroll, tore it up and threw it into the fire! (*Invite a volunteer to tear up the scroll into little pieces.*)

The important officials all gasped in horror! (*Encourage everyone to gasp.*) "Bring me that prophet and his secretary!



Now!” yelled the king, but Jeremiah and Baruch were hiding, and no one could find them.

At that very moment God spoke to Jeremiah in prison. *(Give Jeremiah the warning triangle with the double exclamation mark. Give Baruch a new scroll of paper and the red and black pens, and ask him to copy the warning triangle that Jeremiah is holding.)* God said: “Take another scroll! Write down all my words that the king has just burned. Then write: ‘You burned the last scroll. So now the Lord says: “No one is going to sit on your throne after you! You are going to die in the dirt, along with all your family and servants! Everything I warned you about is going to happen, and worse – because you did not listen!’”” With a shaking hand, Baruch wrote down every word of God’s warning on a new scroll. *(Show the film clip again.)*

Sure enough, before that king was much older, the Babylonian army did come to destroy Jerusalem and everyone in it! The city was left in a heap of ruins.

the planet!”). Write or draw warning words, messages or symbols on the scrolls before making them into megaphones and trying them out.

## + PRAYER



Explain that when we pray, we often spend a lot of time talking to God, saying thank you, saying sorry, asking for help and telling him our worries. All these kinds of prayer are good, but sometimes it’s important to say nothing and just listen. For today’s prayer, we’re simply going to give some listening time to God. Explain that it’s OK if you don’t hear anything special, it’s the listening itself that’s important to God.

Invite children to lie down on the floor and close their eyes. In a gentle voice, guide them to breathe deeply and steadily. Say: “Lord, we give this listening time to you.” Pause for about one minute; less if children are unused to silent prayer, more if they are settled. Say: “Amen” together. Children may or may not want to talk about what they heard / didn’t hear.

## + CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- What is your favourite bit of this story?
- Is there anything you didn’t like or found surprising?
- If you were in this story, who would you be and why?
- What would you like to ask God about this story?
- What does this story tell us about God?

## + CREATIVE RESPONSE



**You will need:** the scroll with the warning sign from the story; A3 sheets of paper; sticky tape;

felt-tip pens

Show children how to make a scroll into a megaphone (by rolling it into a cone shape and securing it with sticky tape) to make your voice louder. This was Jeremiah’s job, to take God’s warning and broadcast it so lots of people would hear it. Give everyone a scroll of blank paper to turn into a megaphone. Before you roll and stick it, talk about what warnings God gave in the story (eg: “Say sorry!”) and what warnings God might give us today (eg: “Look after

### CLAIRE BENTON-EVANS

writes for Kevin Mayhew and is the youth and children’s officer for Edinburgh Diocese.

► [clairebentonevans.com](http://clairebentonevans.com)