

## THE CALL OF JEREMIAH: A BIBLE STUDY

- To examine a biblical call passage
- To consider the personal struggles and the empowering of one called by God
- To relate the passage to one's own sense of call
- To share with others who are also considering their call to ministry

*Have you ever had a sense of call? Do you know what God has appointed you to do? Have you ever questioned your own ability to fulfill this call? How does God equip people to do ministry?*

**STUDY GROUPS WITH ENABLERS:** This resource focuses attention on a single call passage, but provides a framework which could be adapted to other call passages (e.g. Isaiah 6:1-13; Exodus 3 & 4; Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 4:18-22). Experience indicates that persons with seminary training will approach the study differently from those in early inquiry, suggesting the formation of experience-specific study groups.

45 minutes

### A. FORM STUDY GROUPS OF 4 TO 10 PERSONS

*(Designated small group enablers may help the process.)*

#### 1. Begin with a unison prayer for illumination:

*Focus our vision and sensitize our hearing, Creator God,  
Create bridges from past to present...from word to deed,  
So that we may hear a Word for us as we speak one to another  
and discover your Spirit at work within and among us. Amen.*

#### 2. Ask two people to read aloud the words of Jeremiah and the LORD

#### 3. Read to self the Commentary Notes

#### 4. Review the passage by responding to the following questions:

When was Jeremiah appointed? When was he called?  
What was Jeremiah's response to his call?  
How did God react to Jeremiah's protest?  
How was Jeremiah empowered? What was he called to do?

#### 5. In light of the passage, reflect together on the following:

a. Have you ever felt like Jeremiah in being anxious and unready to follow your calling? What other feelings have people (Biblical or modern) expressed as they described their call?

b. Do you have a sense of call by God? How long have you had it? How specific is it? Should everyone have a Jeremiah-like experience?

c. In what ways does God enable and empower people to do ministry today? How are persons in the 1990's equipped "to pluck up and to break down...to build and to plant?"

d. R.E. Clements said of Jeremiah's call: "No one could confirm or deny that he possessed this calling; it was between himself and God." Do you agree?

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) holds that a valid call has three components: the call of the Spirit, the invitation of a church/institution to a specific work, and the concurrence of the Presbytery. How could your own call be confirmed or denied?

JEREMIAH 1: 4-10 (NRSV)

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

*"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."*

Then I said,

*"Ah, Lord GOD!  
Truly I do not know how to speak,  
for I am only a boy."*

But the LORD said to me,

*"Do not say, 'I am only a boy';  
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,  
and you shall speak whatever I command you,  
Do not be afraid of them,  
for I am with you to deliver you,  
says the LORD."*

Then the LORD put out [a] hand and touched my mouth;  
and the LORD said to me,

*"Now I have put my words in your mouth.  
See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,  
to pluck up and to pull down,  
to destroy and to overthrow,  
to build and to plant."*

Commentary Notes: (Interpretation Commentary by R.E. Clements, 1988, *Jeremiah*, p. 16-19)

1. Passage reveals a sense of divine authority, compulsion, and empowering.
2. Book goes on to show how this divine call and empowering had been tested, almost to the breaking point at a number of crises in his work.
3. No one could confirm or deny that he possessed this calling; it was between himself and God.
4. Jeremiah protested to God his readiness and unfitness for such a high responsibility.
5. One utterly clear and totally relevant feature: God had given him the authority and strength to be a prophet.