



Materials I Need:

Memory Verse:

This is what the Lord says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes, its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."
Jeremiah 17:5-8

The Prophet **Jeremiah**
The People **Judah**
The Prophecy **God's punishment is exile to Babylon**
The Principle **Godliness is the goal, not popularity**

Aim Questions:

1. Who is Jeremiah?
2. What is the prophecy and principle for Jeremiah?
3. How did God use a linen belt to show Jeremiah Judah's sin?
4. Whose house did God send Jeremiah to and why?
5. How easy is it for God to get your attention? How easily do you submit to God's plan and obey His word?
6. What does do you think it means to become useless?

Hook:

TREE. Bring in pictures of trees with shallow and deep root systems. Have students analyze the pictures and come up with an idea list for each. Work the Bible students answers into your Adventure time. Do roots go deep looking for water or do they go deep because the water has caused them to grow?

CLOTH. Obtain two pieces of cloth 12 inches wide and long enough to go around your waist. Ahead of time prepare the first piece of cloth by cutting slashes in it and soaking it in a heavy bleach solution. Wash and dry it. It should be nicely ruined. Demonstrate the usefulness of the ruined cloth by having one of your Bible students try on a huge pair of pants. Use the useless belt and see if it holds up the pants. Secondly, try the belt that is in good repair. Which belt would you wear in public? **DEBRIEF:** Listen to today's Adventure and find out how God used the linen belt as an illustration.

POTTERY. Bring in 3 or 4 pieces of pottery in different stages, from just made to ready to use. Again, have the Bible students analyze the pots. Place 3x5 cards in front of each pot. The Bible students should put thoughts down about each pot. What is different about each pot? What is the same? What if one of the pots has a flaw in it? Which can be fixed? Which would be useless if it had

a **crack?** DEBRIEF: Use the students analysis during the Adventure. [One pot needs to be still moldable and the other rigid and dry.]



Book:

Presentation Ideas -



POTTERY. Break the dry rigid pot during the Bible Adventure at the appropriate time. God will render us useless like this clay pot if our hearts are not willing to be changed and molded into His image.



PRE-TAPE. Pre-tape the POTTER MONOLOGUE. Use the monologue to wind up the Adventure time or as a hook. **3JER20JR.GF1**



Visual aid to use for students who do not know how pottery works. **3JER20JR.GF6**

Bible Adventure -

Since the beginning of time, God has used very many different ways of speaking to and communicating with man. Often He would take an object or event from everyday life and use it to teach a spiritual lesson. This was one of Jesus' favorite ways to teach. We find examples of this in the Old Testament, too. We will see some today as we continue to take a look at the life of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah.

If you remember from last week's story, God had sent Jeremiah to the people of Judah to tell them that He had been watching their wicked ways and was now getting ready to judge them. Judah had gone back on their promise to "walk in the ways" God had commanded them. They did not listen to God's warnings about their sin. Maybe, like people of today, they did not know or care how serious their sin was in God's eyes. God used His prophet, Jeremiah, to give Judah some word pictures, or examples from everyday life to make them understand that their sin problem was a deadly serious thing!

God first asked Jeremiah to go and buy a linen belt and put it around his waist. The Priest's belt was made of linen. The belt was a symbol of the close relationship God once had with His people. Part of the belt was God's agreement to be their God, and part of it was the people's promise to be obedient to God. Jeremiah was told not to wash this belt. After a time, God asked Jeremiah to take the belt off and hide it in a crevice in the rocks near a river. That seems like a strange thing to ask. If you or I were Jeremiah, we might have asked, "Why do you want me to do that, God?" Not so with Jeremiah, he immediately went to the place God told him to go to, and hid the linen belt in the rocks. Many days later, God told Jeremiah to go dig up the belt. Jeremiah did, and when he pulled the belt out he found that the linen had rotted and was completely useless. What did God want His people to learn from this rotten linen belt? Remember, the belt stood for the relationship between God and His people. The relationship was ruined when Israel and Judah became prideful and refused to listen to God, went their own way and followed other gods. They had become totally useless to God, just like the linen belt had become rotten in the rocks.

The other word picture God gave Jeremiah involved an everyday thing. Most of us have had fun playing with clay. God sent Jeremiah to a potter's house. Have you ever watched a potter at work at his wheel? He places a large lump of clay in the middle of the potter's wheel, and sets it to spinning very fast. He puts his hands on the clay just so, molding it as the wheel spins round and round. Depending on where the potter puts his hands, he can shape any kind of jar or pot he wishes. This was what Jeremiah was watching the potter do when suddenly the potter discovered a flaw, maybe a bump or crack, in the pot he was forming. Can you guess what the potter did? He stopped the wheel, mashed the clay into a big lump, and began to form it into another pot. As Jeremiah watched the potter do this God gave him a message to deliver to Judah. God said that His people were like clay in His mighty hands. In fact, all the nations of the world were molded by God into the shape and purpose He wanted. God does what He pleases with the nations of the world. If He announced that an evil nation would be destroyed and that nation repented of its evil, God could choose not to destroy it. If God had built up and blessed a nation, and then it turned to evil, then God would judge them.

God was now warning Judah of coming judgment, but again, they chose to keep doing evil. God told Jeremiah to go buy a clay jar and take it outside the city walls. There, in front of a group of Judah's leaders, Jeremiah smashed the jar into tiny pieces. He spoke these words: "This is what the Lord

Almighty says: 'I will smash this nation and this city just as the potter's jar is smashed and cannot be repaired.'" Because of Judah's refusal to turn from their sin, God's anger had been slowly building against them, and now there would be no escaping His judgment. Judah had become like hard, dry clay. They refused to bend to God's will and be molded by Him. As long as they were even a little willing to obey God, God could have molded them like soft clay and used them. They became hard and God could not mold them anymore. They became useless, like the clay pot. Like the linen belt. If a belt is falling apart, it's not going to do a very good job at holding your pants up.

Jeremiah gives us one more beautiful word picture to show us how different our life would be if we trusted God, or if we did not. In Jeremiah, chapter 17, God gave us this promise through His prophet, "if we trust in ourselves or other men, if we turn away from the Lord, we will be like a desert bush, withering in the heat and unable to get any water, not growing and not bearing any fruit." What about the one who trusts in God? He will be like a tree planted by the water, putting down deep roots. When hard times come, he will not fear. He will continue to grow and bear much fruit. That is a such a great promise.

As you look at your own life, which word picture fits you? Are you like the bush in the desert, drying up and struggling, or like the mighty tree, growing stronger every day? Or are you like the linen belt, useless to God because of your sin and disobedience?

We can learn a lot from the book of Jeremiah about not letting ourselves become prideful to the point of thinking we do not need God anymore. We can also learn from Jeremiah's example of always looking to God for approval, not to men. The people of Judah did not appreciate Jeremiah's prophecies. They treated him badly. We will hear more about that next week. Jeremiah never compromised or turned from what God wanted him to do. God's opinion was always more important to him than the approval of men. Can you say the same?



Look:



JEREMIAH CLAY POTS. You will need one piece of clay per student to make a Jeremiah pot. (*Be sure and order clay for the number of students you are expecting.*) Materials needed for sculpting tools would be toothpicks or popscicle sticks etc. We will allow them to dry for one week. Then next week, they will break their pots as Jeremiah broke his, as an example to the children of Israel of the coming judgment. Please use the picture of the potters hand & clay as an overhead. Then, while the students are shaping their pots, remind them of God's shaping and directing in their own lives.

3JER20JR.GF2



JEREMIAH. How many words can you make from the letters JEREMIAH? **3JER20JR.GF3**



MINI-TREE. You will need a copy of the tree page and green construction paper or a couple of leaf rubber stamps with a green ink pad. Decorate the tree page with leaves. Label each leaf on the tree with ways you trust the Lord. **3JER20JR.GF4**



HIDDEN MESSAGE. Follow the instructions on this page and find what God said He was and what He said the Israelites were. **3JER20JR.GF3**



Took:



3x5 MEMORY VERSE. Cut out the verses and attach them to 3x5 cards. Work on memorizing this scripture during the week. This will be our memory verse for the next two weeks! **3JER20JR.GF5**



AIM QUESTIONS. **3JER20JR.GF3**

1. Who is Jeremiah?
2. What is the prophecy and principle for Jeremiah?
3. How did God use a linen belt to show Jeremiah Judah's sin?
4. Whose house did God send Jeremiah to and why?

5. How easy is it for God to get your attention? How easily do you submit to God's plan and obey His word?
6. What does do you think it means to become useless?

4 P's. The four P's is a little ditty to help you remember the prophet, people, prophecy and principle of each book of the Old Testament that we are studying this year. You can jump rope to each little ditty if you can do that rhythm thing!

The Prophet is Jeremiah
 The People are from Judah
 The Prophecy . . . God's Punishment
 Exile . . . to Babylon
 The Principle . . . godliness goal
 Popularity No.
 These are the 4 P's
 Got 'em from Jeremiah
 Now it's time . . . to jump out.

[To create a rap simply remove the last line and repeat the second to the last line twice.]

BE LIKE A TREE. Attention Music Team: Start the Bible students memorizing this song, at the beginning of January. The students could perform it for the younger Bible students. In doing this they could teach them the chorus and actions to the song. They could do this for three weeks. The younger students will look up to them!!! [Literally, too.]

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I've gotta be like a tree
 Planted by the water
 Trusting in the Father
 To keep me strong
 I've gotta be like a tree
 Planted by the water
 Trusting in the name
 Of the Lord
 I have gotta be like a tree
 Planted by the water
 Trusting in the Father
 To help me grow
 I've gotta be like a tree
 Planted by the water
 Trusting in the name
 Of the Lord.

The deeper the roots go
 The better the fruits grow
 The Blessings bloom out
 For all to see
 The deeper the roots go
 The more my life shows
 That Jesus is the Lord of me.



(Repeat Chorus and verse)
 I've gotta be like a tree
 Planted by the water
 Trusting in the Father
 To keep me strong
 I've gotta be like a tree
 Planted by the water
 Trusting in the name
 Of the Lord
 Trusting in the name
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 Of the Lord
 Trusting in the name
 Of the Lord.

FAMILY FUN SHEET. In this week's Family Fun Sheet there is reference to a chart titled "Track The Prophets Chart." You may wish to use an enlarged version of this chart as a teaching tool. Each prophet has a sticker that can be placed on the maps to help families know to whom and where the prophet was speaking.

Review The Prophets. Be sure to go back and review the previous prophets and their 4P's. Give a brief quiz. See what your class remembers.

THE POTTER'S STORY

3JER20JR.GF1

SETTING: A potter's shop. Props should include at least one piece of pottery. Backdrop could be a painted shelf with pots on it. A potter's wheel and tools would be ideal.

CHARACTER: The potter. Dress in any Bible-time costume. Wear a shop-type apron. Speak slowly with appropriate pauses (maybe try a Hebrew accent). Think gossipy salesman.

- The student audience represents a single customer. The potter is having an intimate, one-sided conversation with this customer.
- This monologue could be performed by a puppet or just be read as a first-person story.

Welcome, my young friend. How can I help you? If you are interested in the finest pottery money can buy, you've come to the right place. I use nothing but the finest quality clay in all my pots. I'll make you a good deal. For you, my friend, the lowest price. You won't find such a bargain in all of Jerusalem. ...Are you looking for a present for your mother? Look at these pretty little flower pots. Perhaps you'd like a pitcher for oil. ...Oh, you're looking for something to carry water in, I see. How fortunate you are to have come to me. My water pots are known through-out Jerusalem! Ask anybody. ...But wait! Ask them later.

See? They're guaranteed not to leak. And they're almost impossible to break - unless you do it on purpose like Jeremiah. Any pot would break if you threw it down like that. ...I can see you don't know about Jeremiah and the pot. Well, yesterday he bought a pot like ... very much like this one and ... Oh. ...Jeremiah? ...Who's Jeremiah? You're not from around here are you?

Everyone in Jerusalem knows Jeremiah. He's one of our prophets; as if we need another prophet! Jeremiah is a strange one, though - not like the others. He's always alone. No one likes him. No one wants him at any parties because he ruins all the fun. He won't go anyway; even if he gets invited. He won't go to weddings or any celebrations. He won't even accept an invitation to anyone's house for dinner. He doesn't have any friends. He doesn't even have a family. He says God told him not to take a wife and have sons or daughters because of all the terrible things that are going to happen. ...Oh. What things? He says God, Jehovah, is going to destroy Jerusalem. Jeremiah says an army from Babylon will come and surround the walls of the city for a long time to keep people from going in and out. Pretty soon we'll run out of food in here and some of us will starve - so he says. Then Babylon's soldiers will come in and kill most of the people who didn't starve. Then the ones who are left will be captured and taken back to Babylon to be slaves.

...Why is God so angry? Well, some of us asked him that same question. We said, "Jeremiah, why has the Lord decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done?"

Jeremiah said "It is because your fathers forsook the Lord (that means took off and left). They followed other Gods and served and worshipped them. They left God and did not keep his law." We asked why we were being punished for something our fathers did. And then he said, "You have behaved more wickedly than your fathers." He said each of us is following our own stubborn, evil heart instead of following the Lord.

Just last week, Jeremiah was standing at the main gate of the city where the kings go in and out. You know you probably came in that way. And he was nagging everyone about keeping the Sabbath. He said we shouldn't be carrying any heavy loads or doing any work on the Sabbath day. Well, I'll tell you he just doesn't understand about business. I've heard that he won't even lend or borrow money. He's out of touch, is what *I* say. Now, don't ask so many questions or I'll never finish my story.

Three days ago, guess who came right here into my shop? Jeremiah himself, that's who. He asked if he could watch me work at my wheel. Well, I didn't want to say no, but I asked him to sit back there out of sight. I didn't want people to look in and think we were *friends* or something.

...Why? There you go with more questions. I guess you haven't heard about all the trouble he's been in lately. People have been saying all kinds of terrible things about him. In Anathoth, where he grew up, they tried to kill him. All the people who know him are watching for him to make some kind of a mistake. Then they'll report him and have him put in prison. So far, though, nobody has figured out a way to keep him quiet.

When Jeremiah was sitting there, I asked him why he keeps on saying all these things that make people so mad. He said he doesn't want to, but he can't help it. He really doesn't want all these things to happen. He told me that he begs God not to be so angry. But if he tries not to speak the message God gives him, he just can't hold it in. God's word is like a fire shut up in his chest and he has to let it out. He says he gets so tired of being alone and hearing everyone make fun of him that he wishes he'd never been born. Imagine that! He sometimes wishes that he was never even born! But then he said that God promised to be with him all the time and keep him safe no matter what happened. So even though he's sad, he's not really alone.

Anyway, while he was watching from his corner over there, I started to work on a pot. It came along nicely at first, but you know how you always make a mistake when someone is watching you? Well, that's just what happened. When I was almost done, my finger slipped and I made a big gouge in the side. So I had to start almost completely over. The second time, though, I really outdid myself. It turned out to be one of my very best pots.

Jeremiah didn't say anything when I ruined the first pot, but I didn't want him to think I made mistakes like that all the time, so I tried to explain what happened. Then he said something very curious. He said that the people of Judah were like clay in God's hands. When the people were ruined by sin like that first pot, he would send a prophet to warn them of his judgment. If they listened and turned away from sin, you know, if they would turn to God and repent, then he wouldn't destroy them. Like my clay; I could have thrown it away, but I didn't. I worked with it again and made it into something useful. He said God would restore his people and use them for something good if they would return to him and let him work with them. Just then, he really made sense. I wouldn't have minded if Jeremiah had stayed longer, but about that time, one of my regular customers went back there (point) and saw him. The guy came out and started yelling something about how the teaching of the priests and the counsel of the prophets would be lost and that I shouldn't listen to him. Some other shoppers nearby heard him and came over. They all started yelling, too. By the time everything calmed down, Jeremiah was gone.

I never expected him to come back, but yesterday, guess who showed up again? You guessed it; Jeremiah the prophet. ...What did he want? That's what I asked him; What did he want? He wanted to buy a clay jar. ...What for? That's just what I wanted to know. He said that God told him to buy it, that's all, and then go get some of our elders and priests.

Well, I couldn't stand it. I had to find out what he was up to. So as soon as he left with the jar, I put out my "closed" sign and asked my friend the baker to watch my merchandise. Then I followed Jeremiah, but not too close. Sure enough, he took along some elders and all the priests who would come, and he went outside the city to the Valley of Ben Hinnom near the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. Some people call the place Topheth. If you knew the area, you'd really be wondering why he went there. I know I was. That's where the high places of Baal are, so that's where we go to make our sacrifices to him. Sometimes we offer up our children. I don't even like to talk about that. We also burn incense to the stars out there and make offerings to lots of other gods, too. It's a busy place.

Well, when everybody got there, Jeremiah yelled, "Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and people of Jerusalem. This is what the LORD Almighty says." I could hardly recognize Jeremiah as the same quiet man who sat in my little shop. He spoke with such power! He said God was going to bring such terrible disaster on that place that when people heard about it their ears would tingle. He said our enemies would come and ruin everything.

Then Jeremiah raised up that jar he bought and threw it down on the rocks. I wish he wouldn't have done that. It shattered in a million pieces. After that, he shouted, "This is what the LORD Almighty says; I will smash this nation and this city just as this potter's jar is smashed and cannot be fixed." Then he talked about how a great number of people would starve and be slaughtered and that the dead people would be buried there in Topheth. He said that the houses in Jerusalem would be burned - just like the incense that we burn to the star Gods. He said God would do this because the people were stiff-necked and wouldn't listen to his words. That made me think of Jeremiah breaking that jar. You might say it was "stiff", too. Not like the soft clay I was working with earlier, when Jeremiah talked about how God works with us when we come to Him. If a jar is hard and it gets broken like that, you can't start over and make anything out of it. You just have to give up and throw it away. I'm not sure I like the meaning of that.

...What happened to Jeremiah after that? Well, he got into more trouble - big surprise. They beat him and held him prisoner at the temple gate over night. He's loose now, but he's not being quiet.

...Do I think he's telling the truth about Jerusalem? Boy, are you full of questions! I'm not too worried. After all, things are going along fine right now. I mean, where is this disaster that's supposed to come? I don't think there's any reason to be concerned. At least I hope not.

Now, lets help you find that water jar you were looking for. ...You like this one? Obviously, you have very good taste in pottery. The moment you came in, I said to myself, "Now there's a discriminating buyer." You couldn't have made a better choice. Would you like it wrapped for the journey? ...There. Now can I get anything else for you? Thank you very much. Do come again the next time you're in Jerusalem.



I AM THE POTTER AND YOU ARE THE CLAY.

Clay Pots

Make your own clay pot just as Jeremiah did for the Prophets.

Use the tools (tooth picks and popsicle sticks) to design your clay pot.



MINI-TREE
3JER20JR.GF4

MEMORY VERSE JEREMIAH 17:5-8

This is what the Lord says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes, its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

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This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.”
Jeremiah 18:1&2

