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# THE LOOKOUT

JULY 2023

## Unit: Jeremiah (Part 2)

### Theme: Hope for the Hopeless

**Overview:** In darkness there still can be hope—like when grade-school students come into a classroom and see the blinds pulled and the projection unit on. A movie beats homework any day. Jeremiah sounded warnings, but he also sounded hope. From the potter, students will learn the hope in repentance. From a letter, students will learn the hope of God’s plans. From a new covenant, students will learn the hope of God’s loyal love. From the purchase of a field, students will learn the hope of God’s promise. From restored land, students will learn the hope of God’s faithfulness.

## HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

Screenshot of a lesson page. At the top, it says 'WEEK OF JULY 2, 2023'. Below that, 'LESSON AIM: Repent when you feel hopeless, and trust God to relent.' Underneath, 'SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah (Part 2)', 'THEME: Hope for the Hopeless', 'LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 18:1-12, 24:1-10', and 'SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 Kings 18:16-19, 22:16-18; Exodus 18:25, 27; Isaiah 12; Matthew 4:12; 2 Corinthians 1:18; Ephesians 4:1'. To the right, there is a 'STORY' section titled 'HOPE IN REPENTANCE BY ANDREW GIBBY' with several paragraphs of text.

Arrows point to the lesson aim, lesson text, and supplemental text. A vertical tab on the right side of the page is labeled 'WEEK 1'.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

Screenshot of a lesson page. The top section is 'CLAY IN THE POTTER'S HANDS BY MARK HENRY' with several paragraphs of text. Below that is 'BY MICHAEL C. FRACK' with a list of 10 numbered questions for discovery. The questions are: 1. In what ways does the potter and the people of Judah resemble each other? 2. How does the potter's work resemble the people? 3. In what ways does the potter's work resemble the people? 4. How does the potter's work resemble the people? 5. How does the potter's work resemble the people? 6. How does the potter's work resemble the people? 7. How does the potter's work resemble the people? 8. How does the potter's work resemble the people? 9. How does the potter's work resemble the people? 10. How does the potter's work resemble the people? A vertical tab on the right side of the page is labeled 'WEEK 1'.

Arrows point to the application and discovery sections. A vertical tab on the right side of the page is labeled 'WEEK 1'.

WEEK OF JULY 23, 2023

**LESSON AIM:** **Hope in God's promise  
even when it seems  
impossible.**

**UNIT:** Jeremiah (Part 2)

**THEME:** Hope for the Hopeless

**LESSON TEXT:** Jeremiah 32:2, 6-9, 16-27, 36-41

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Jeremiah 33:7-11; Matthew 19:25-26;  
Luke 1:35-38; Romans 4:18-21

## STUDY

# HOPE IN GOD'S PROMISE

BY MARK SCOTT

Kids say, "Promises, promises." The interpretation is, "Talk is cheap; you make promises, but you do not deliver on your promises." But in contrast to kids (and adults), God does deliver on his promises. In the case of Judah's captivity in Babylon, God promised to bring his people back to the Promised Land, and he did. Against all odds, Jeremiah was calling on his people to believe in the promises of God (cf. Romans 4:18-21; Hebrews 11:13-16).

The setting for the lesson is established in the first five verses of Jeremiah 32. Zedekiah was in the 10th year of his reign and had turned against Nebuchadnezzar. He had imprisoned Jeremiah *in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace of Judah* (Jeremiah 32:2). He did not like what he considered to be the treasonous prophecies of Jeremiah about surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah did not like hearing that he would be deposed and shipped off to Babylon.

### A Time to Invest

Jeremiah 32:6-9

While in prison, Jeremiah received word from God that his uncle Hanamel (God is gracious) would visit him. God told Jeremiah that Hanamel was going to offer to sell a field to him. Why would anyone want to buy a field when the country was about to surrender? During such chaos, is it a good time to invest in real estate? However, this was in keeping with Mosaic Law (Leviticus 25:25-28); plus, an example of this is in the book of Ruth (4:1-6). In fact, to perpetuate a family's viability, the *nearest relative* bore the responsibility to purchase the land.

Sure enough, Hanamel visited Jeremiah and made him the offer. This field was at *Anathoth* (the name means "answers to prayer"), just miles from Jerusalem—an area that may well have already been in control of Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah obeyed the Lord and purchased the field. Jeremiah 32:10-15 (not part of the lesson text) affirmed that the deal was sealed. Jeremiah paid *seventeen shekels of silver* (about seven ounces) for the property. This investment would make sense only if God kept his promise about bringing his people back to possess this land. This explained why Baruch was given the deed to care for after the transaction (32:16).

### A Time to Pray

Jeremiah 32:16-27

Jeremiah must have thought the property transfer rather absurd. So, he prayed that God would make good on it all. In his prayer, Jeremiah acknowledged God's *great power and outstretched arm* and admitted *nothing was too hard* for the Lord. This phrase occurred again in question form (v. 26).

Jeremiah's prayer contains a juxtaposing of elements. On the one hand, he knew that God showed *love (chesed—loyal love) to thousands*. But he also knew God allowed the ripple effects of the sins of parents to be felt by their children. While God is *open to the ways of all mankind*, still he *reward(s) each person according to their conduct*. God had brought Israel out of Egypt with miracles (which continued) and gave them the land *flowing with milk and honey*. But Israel did not obey or follow God's law, so now God was at the precipice of bringing *disaster* on them.

Jeremiah admitted in his prayer that this judgment had more than begun. The Babylonians had brought siege ramps, sword, famine, and plague to Israel's doorstep. Buying land did not seem wise to Jeremiah, but he did it anyway because nothing was *too hard* for the Lord.

### A Time to Return

Jeremiah 32:36-41

The verses that precede this paragraph offer a gruesome picture of the burning of Jerusalem. It looked bleak. But God promised to *gather* his people from the land of their oppressors and bring them back to *let them live in safety*.

Once back, God would restore their relationship. They would be his people and he would be their God. He would give them *singleness of heart and action* (one heart and one way), and they would experience peace for themselves and their children. God would make an everlasting covenant with them. God would do good by them to the point of inspiring the people to properly *fear* God and *never turn away from him*. God would not be passive in this. He would do it *with all his heart and soul*. No matter how glum the circumstances seem, God will make good on his promises. ■

## WHAT SOME CALL FOOLISH

BY DAVID FAUST

God stretched my faith when I became a parent. I was 24 years old and my wife, Candy, was 23 when our first child was born. Matt surprised us by arriving a few weeks early, weighing only 3 pounds 14 ounces at birth. Later, when our daughters came to us by birth and by adoption, a God-given mix of awe, joy, and holy fear again filled my heart.

God stretched my faith when our little family moved to New York to lead a new church on Long Island. Skeptical friends questioned our judgment and asked, “Do you really want to raise your family in that environment?” But we never regretted our decision. Our decade of ministry in New York brought us lifelong friends and we witnessed God’s faithfulness as our fledgling church began to thrive and grow.

The Lord stretched my faith again when Candy and I bought our first house there on Long Island. By today’s standards, the price we paid (\$35,000) sounds modest, but for us it was a huge step. We didn’t qualify for bank financing, so the seller agreed to hold the mortgage himself. My hand trembled a bit when we signed the papers and closed the deal, but for the next 10 years, that little house sheltered our family and enhanced our ministry.

### Jeremiah’s Redefinition of Success

My small steps of faith pale in comparison with the steps Jeremiah took. He didn’t buddy up to powerful people; he spoke hard truth that offended the king. Instead of dressing for success and polishing his public image, Jeremiah carried around a rotten linen belt to show how the people had ruined their relationship with God. Another time he wore a wooden ox yoke around his neck to illustrate how the Babylonians would bind the Jews with the yoke of slavery.

Jeremiah didn’t hang out in trendy places, either. He preached at the city dump. The Lord told him not to get

married, have children, or attend parties and feasts. His preaching got him beaten and put in stocks, threatened with death, and lowered into a muddy cistern. By worldly standards, Jeremiah was a failure. We call him the weeping prophet for good reason. But genuine success is not defined by popularity, image, wealth, and comfort—nor by outward appearance and public accolades—but by faithfulness to God.

What some call failure, God considers success. What some call foolish, God calls faith.

### Jeremiah’s Field of Dreams

Jeremiah 32 describes a real estate transaction a Bible commentator calls “one of the most remarkable examples of personal faith found in the Bible.” It appeared routine: Jeremiah bought a field, then signed and sealed the deed. But if, as Jeremiah predicted repeatedly, the Jews were going to be driven from their land, buying property there didn’t look like a wise investment! It was, however, a bold demonstration of faith and hope.

Jeremiah believed in an impossible-looking dream—that someday in the distant future, God would restore the people to their land. The prophet prayed, “Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you” (Jeremiah 32:17). Jeremiah put his faith into action and backed up his words with his money. Are we willing to do the same?

**Personal Challenge:** Looking back over your life, when and how has God stretched your faith? What steps of bold faith have you taken recently? How will you put your faith into action this week? ■

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# DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. With whom have you proclaimed God's Word over the last week?
2. What is the riskiest investment (whether financial or otherwise) you've ever made?

Ask two people to read aloud **Jeremiah 32:2, 6-9, 16-27, 36-41** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize those verses.

3. In what ways do you see Jeremiah's faithfulness to God throughout this Bible text?
  - How did God reassure Jeremiah when things in his life didn't make sense?
4. Look at Jeremiah's prayer and all it included: words of worship, declaration of his trust in and surrender to God, praise for God's love and power, and recognition of the people's unfaithfulness. What can we learn about prayer from this?
  - What does Jeremiah's prayer tell you about his faith?
5. Though God had loved and provided for his people, they did not obey him, which brought about these dire consequences. What do you learn about the importance of obedience from this?
6. Imagine you were one of the people of Israel and Judah. You're losing your home and city, which will "be given into the hands of the king of Babylon" by the sword, famine, and plague. "But," God says, he will bring you back . . . and much more. How do you feel about and respond to his promises?
7. What do you learn about God from this Bible text?
  - What do you learn about people?
8. God always desires to bring his people back home (think of the prodigal son, for example). With whom in your life will you share God's yearning to have a relationship with us?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. When you can't yet see how a life situation will turn out, what do you need so you can obey God regardless of the circumstances?
  - How can we as a community of believers help one another in this regard?

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **Jeremiah 33:1-11, 15-26**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. 📖