

GOD'S PROPHETS

Bible Basis: Jeremiah 1:4–10; 2:21–28; 5:1–2; 16:17–19; 2 Chronicles 36:1–16; 2 Kings 25:1–12; Lamentations 1:1; 2:17; 3:21–26; 5:1, 15–21; Ezekiel 1:1–2:17; 36:22–36

Bible Verse: “I say to myself, ‘The Lord is everything I will ever need. So I will put my hope in him.’”
—Lamentations 3:24, NIV

Bible Point: God loves his people even when they did wrong. God always loves you.

Resource: *The Story for Little Ones*, Chapter 17: “God’s Prophets”

STEP 1: COME TOGETHER

Have children stand in a circle. Ask them to repeat your actions. Pat your thighs twice. Have children repeat the action. Clap your hands twice. Have the children mimic you. Pat your shoulders twice. Have the children follow. Clap your hands twice. Have the children clap. Then pat your thighs, clap hands, pat shoulders, pat thighs, pat shoulders, clap hands, pat shoulders, and pat thighs quickly. Laugh with the children when they can’t exactly follow your lead. Have them sit down and ask:

- When I only did one thing, how easy was it to follow what I did?
- What made it hard to follow what I did at the end?

Say, “Sometimes we make mistakes when we try to do too much. In today’s Bible story, God’s people made mistakes. They were too busy to hear what God was telling them.”

STEP 2: HEAR THE STORY

First, read aloud chapter 17, “God’s Prophets,” from *The Story for Little Ones*.

Follow the directions to present the following Bible story.

Jeremiah was a young man. He was one of God’s people. One day God said to him, “I have decided that you will talk to my people for me.” Does anyone remember what that job is called? (being a prophet) That’s right! A prophet is someone who gives people messages from God. Who are some other prophets we’ve talked about? (*Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah*)

God sent Jeremiah to the home of a potter. The potter was making a pot out of clay, but it wasn’t working very well. So, he pounded down the clay and started over. Jeremiah watched as the potter started over again. God told Jeremiah that his people were like that clay—they were not good now. They did not follow and obey God. They needed to be remolded and reshaped, and then they would love and follow God.

So, Jeremiah started giving people God's messages. Let's pretend that I am Jeremiah and you are God's people. When I ask you a question, put your hands to your ears and say, "I can't hear you." (Practice a few times with the children.)

Pretend to be Jeremiah.

Why have you turned against God? *(I can't hear you.)*

Why don't you love God and follow him? *(I can't hear you.)*

Why do you make idols out of wood and stone? *(I can't hear you.)*

Are you honest? If I can find one honest person, God will forgive everyone. *(I can't hear you.)*

Now, let's think about what the people should have said. I'm going to pretend to be Jeremiah again, and after I say something, you'll repeat what I say. (Practice a few times with the children.)

The Lord loves me very much. *(The Lord loves me very much.)*

I will put my hope in God. *(I will put my hope in God.)*

God is good to us. *(God is good to us.)*

But they didn't say those things to God. They didn't pay attention to God. They didn't follow him or love him. Jeremiah warned them that their sin would cause them trouble. For example, if you steal, you have to pay the consequences for that. But Jeremiah also told the people that even when they sinned and did things that were wrong, God still loved them.

God is like that with us, too. We sin and make wrong decisions and do bad things sometimes. But no matter what, God always loves us.

After the Bible story, ask:

- **What did the people do when Jeremiah gave them a message from God?** *(The people closed their ears.)*
- **What should the people have done when Jeremiah gave them a message from God?** *(They should have listened.)*

Pray with the children, thanking God that he always loves us, even when we do wrong things.

STEP 3: EXPLORE MORE

Choose from these activity options to help children explore the lesson further.

OPTION 1: THUMBPRINT BOWLS

Stuff you need: play dough (store-bought or homemade; you can find recipes online) or hardening clay, such as Crayola Model Magic; toothpicks

Give the children each a ball of play dough. Have them push their thumbs into the dough and begin to make an indent in the ball. They should rotate the ball and continue to push the indent with their thumbs until they have a small bowl. If you use hardening clay, use a toothpick to write the children's initials on the bottoms of their bowls. Let the bowls dry and send them home next week.

As the children work, remind them of Jeremiah's trip to see the potter.

OPTION 2: YOUR BEDROOM

Stuff you need: butcher paper, tape, markers

Hang up a large sheet of butcher paper. Bedrooms can get pretty messy. Draw a bed, a dresser, and a closet on the butcher paper. What makes a room look messy? Have the children give individual answers. Perhaps they'll say clothes on the floor or toys out of the toy box. Each time someone gives an answer, draw the item on the paper. Keep going in this way until no one can think of any other things that could mess up a bedroom.

Say, **"That is a messy room! In today's Bible story, God's people looked a lot like this messy room. They filled their lives with so many things they had no room for God."**

Then ask:

- **What would we have to do to clean this room?** (*dust, vacuum, pick up clothes, throw away garbage, take dishes to the kitchen*)
- **Why would we want to clean up this room?** (*make it easier to play or sleep*)

Say, **"When your room is clean, you can play on the floor, find toys you need, and sleep comfortably in your bed. Keeping things tidy makes your life nicer and easier, doesn't it? That's how our hearts are, too. God's people let their hearts get junked up. They loved idols and didn't follow God. They needed to clean out their hearts to make room for God again!"**

Say, **"What about you? In your head—don't say it out loud—think of a sin or a bad decision that is junking up your heart. Maybe you hit someone. Maybe you don't share very nicely. Ask God to help you clear out the junk and make room for him."**

Pray with the children.

OPTION 3: GOD ALWAYS LOVES ME

Stuff you need: God Always Loves Me Activity Sheet, white card stock, black crayons, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, sturdy water cups, pitcher of clean water, empty pitcher for dirty water, paper towels, wet wipes for cleanup

Preparation: Photocopy the activity sheet onto card stock. If you teach toddlers, you may want to trace the hearts for them.

Give an activity sheet to each child. Have them trace the heart in thick black crayon. Teachers may need to help with tracing. Then have them paint the heart with watercolors. The crayon will “resist” the paint and leave an artsy-looking heart—even when children paint outside the crayon line.

Remind the children, **“When you look at your heart picture this week, remember that God always loved his people, even when they did wrong, and God always loves you.”**

OPTION 4: GOD LOVES ME DOT-TO-DOT

Stuff you need: God Loves Me Dot-to-Dot Activity Sheet, pencils, crayons

Give each child an activity sheet and a pencil. Have them connect the dots and then color the heart.

OPTION 5: FLOUR DRAWING

Stuff you need: flour, 1 large baking sheet with sides per child, hand vacuum or regular vacuum for cleanup after children leave. (You can also use disposable aluminum pans.)

Scoop a few handfuls of flour onto the baking sheets. As you review today’s story, allow children to draw people or objects from the story in the flour. Tell them it is like drawing in the sand at the beach. (Some children may not want to touch the flour; you can provide paper and crayons for them instead.)

If you’d like, you can provide a few soft, large paintbrushes for the children to brush themselves off before they leave. Vacuum after the children leave. (Do not vacuum with children in the room, as some children may be frightened by the loud noise.)

STEP 4: GOING HOME

Before sending children home, give each a copy of *The Story Preschool Trading Card 17*. Say, **“The front of this card will remind you that Jeremiah told the people to have hope. Show your parents the back and tell them that God still loved his people, just like he loves you.”** Have them practice saying this before they leave.

As you are waiting for parents to pick up their children, use *The Story for Little Ones* or *The Story Preschool Trading Cards* to review past stories and Bible points.

Make sure each child takes home a copy of the Trading Card, Activity Sheet(s)/Crafts, and the Parents’ Page.