



## **QUESTION:**

Why does God let bad things happen?

## Power Phrase

I will trust God even when I don't understand!

## Memory Verse

1 Peter 4:19, "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

## Supporting Doctrines

For supporting doctrines, see our Statement of Faith at [novoministries.org/statement-of-faith](http://novoministries.org/statement-of-faith).

## Goals

The child will...

- See why God sometimes allows bad things to happen!
- Know that God is always with him no matter what!
- Understand that he can trust God in all circumstances!

## Reminders

There are so many difficult things that children today have to face, so much suffering and loss. It can be very difficult to understand why God would let such bad things happen, especially to good people. It is very important that we help the children understand why these things happen and to trust God even when they don't understand.

## Acknowledgements

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The stories and photos shared in the Gospel Presentation activities are used with the permission of [www.iamsecond.com](http://www.iamsecond.com).

## Additional Resources

All Large Group or Small Group activity visuals or supply items followed by an asterisk ( \* ) may be downloaded for printing at [www.novoministries.org/resource](http://www.novoministries.org/resource).

# Jeremiah the Weeping Prophet (Bible Story - Jeremiah 31)

## Visuals

- Bible Story Visuals\*, Key Word signs\*

## Supplies

- Bible, poster board, markers, Bible Insert for Large Group\*

## Captivate #1 - Picture It!

- Choose a child or leader to draw elements of the Bible Story as you are telling it. The volunteer does not necessarily have to draw well. Even using stick figures can be fun. Focus on adding facial expressions or specific actions for parts of the story.

## Captivate #2 - Key Word!

- Identify several key words you will use in the Bible Story. Before telling the story, tell the children an action or sound effect for each of the key words. Make sure that as you tell the story you repeat these words often. Some examples would be that when you say “Jeremiah,” the children say “weeping prophet,” or when you say “prophesy,” the children say “message.”

## Introduction

- Jeremiah was a prophet who lived during the time when the nation of Israel was falling apart. God’s people, the Israelites, were not serving God and were living in sin. Jeremiah was the last prophet of God who was sent to preach to the Southern Kingdom of Israel. Through Jeremiah, God repeatedly warned the Israelites to stop worshiping idols, but they refused to listen. Their hearts had become hardened by their sin, and they no longer believed in God.

## Story

- Retell the story from Jeremiah 31.
- See Bible Story Script.

## Conclusion

- Jeremiah prophesied or warned the Israelites to turn from their sin for 40 years, but they never listened to him even once. He endured criticism, hatred, beating, and loneliness. He saw nothing positive come from the messages he spoke to the people, and the Israelites faced the consequences of their actions. Even though Jeremiah was obedient to God’s call, his life was not easy. Doing what God calls us to do isn’t always easy. We can trust God even when we don’t understand!

## Testimony

- Share an example of when you went through a difficult time but you knew God was there with you.
- Share a time you experienced difficulty that was the result of someone else’s choices.

## Challenge

### Visuals

- Key Point Visuals\*, Power Phrase Visual\*, Memory Verse Visual\*

### Supplies

- Bible, Bible Insert for Large Group\*

### Introduction

- Sometimes it is hard to understand why God allows bad things to happen. There isn't an easy answer, because we don't see all the details put together like God does.
- Jeremiah was a prophet called by God to share God's words with His people. Jeremiah was faithful and obedient to God, yet he never once saw a positive outcome from his messages. God didn't call Jeremiah to be a prophet to punish him for something he had done wrong, and He didn't hold Jeremiah responsible for the people's lack of repentance. God's heart was just as broken as Jeremiah's by the sin of the Israelites and the consequences they faced.

### Key Points

#### We can't see the big picture!

- God sees and knows so much more than we do. When we look at someone, we can see only the outer appearance — hair color, facial features, and clothing. We don't know what is going on inside. But God does.
- God sees everything. He knows all the details and reasons that we cannot see or do not understand.
- "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

#### We face the consequences of our choices!

- Each of us has the ability to make right or wrong choices. We then either enjoy the result of right choices or endure the result of the wrong choices we make. Suppose your mom asked you to take out the trash, but you didn't do it. What is the result? The trash would pile up in the corner and attract bugs. Your mom would be mad at you and might punish you. There would be consequences for your choice to not listen to your mom. In the same way our sin — anything that we think, say, or do that breaks God's Laws — is deserving of death (Romans 6:23).

#### We may experience consequences for the choices of others!

- The same can happen on a larger scale with the choices of others. Imagine a drunk driver hitting and killing someone, or a terrorist attacking our country. Those wrong choices were made by somebody else, but we might still experience the consequences of their actions. (Acts 7:59-60)

## Challenge (Continued)

### Key Points (continued)

#### We can trust God's will!

- It is hard to suffer, but if we believe in God, He promises to walk with us through suffering, all the way to His house in Heaven. In Psalm 23, King David calls God his Shepherd; the shepherd leads his sheep (his followers) home. Why do things have to be the way they are? We can't fully know. But God does, and we can trust Him. God tells us to give thanks in all circumstances because this is His will for us (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- We can't fully understand why bad things happen, but we can trust that God is in control and sees the big picture (Proverbs 15:3).
- We also need endurance to do the will of God so we can receive what is promised, which is eternal life with God (Hebrews 10:36).

### Conclusion

- Just as Jeremiah faced many difficulties throughout his life, even though he was doing the will of God, we also may face difficulties. Those difficulties may be the consequences of our own actions or of the actions of others. We may never know the reason why some bad things happen. What we do know is that we can trust that God loves us and is always there for us in every circumstance! We will trust God even when we don't understand!

### Invitation

#### For the unsaved child:

- Do you believe that God loves you and is always there for you? He sent His Son to die for your sins (John 3:16). You can be forgiven for your sins and ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life. You can make that choice today!
- Invite the children to stay behind and talk to a leader if they have any questions or would like to ask Jesus to forgive their sins and be the Lord of their lives.

#### For the saved child:

- Challenge the saved child to trust God even when he or she doesn't understand His ways. The child may face difficult times in life, but he can know that God is there and is with him.
- Encourage children if they have any questions to stay behind and talk to a leader.

## Sunburn (Arriving Activity)

### Visuals

- Picture of a bottle of sunscreen\*

### Instruction and Application

- As the children arrive, ask them if they have ever gone to a swimming pool, lake, or other summer outside activity. Ask them what item they should use if they are ever outside in the summer sun for a long period of time. Sunscreen! Regardless of how light or dark your skin is, sunscreen is a good idea. What is the purpose of sunscreen? It protects our skin from the harsh effects of the sun – like sunburns or even long-term damage like cancer. What happens if we forget to put it on? We may get a painful sunburn, and sunburns are not fun! We can also have long-term damage. Just like the exposure to the sun can affect our skin, we are exposed to the effects of a sinful world and the people around us. Sometimes we can do everything right, and bad things still happen. Today we are going to learn why bad things happen and how we can trust God even when we don't understand why the bad things are happening.
  - Review the Memory Verse together. 1 Peter 4:19, "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."
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## Footprints (Memory Verse)

### Visuals

- Memory Verse Visual\*, Footprints on the Beach Visual\*

### Supplies

- Bible

### A.G.A.I.N. Acrostic

**A — Attention Grabber** (Grab their attention with an interesting introduction, and don't let go!)

There is a poem called "Footprints." It talks about a person who had a dream that she was walking along the beach with God and seeing different scenes from her life. When the person looked back, she saw two sets of footprints – one was hers and one was God's. She realized that during the difficult times, there was only one set of footprints. She questioned why God would leave her during those difficult times. God answered her and said that it was during those times that He had carried her. God is faithful and is always with us. When we go through hard times and suffer, we can put our trust in God because He is always there.

**G — God's Word** (Show them that the concept you are teaching them comes from the Bible.)

1 Peter 4:19, "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

**A — Awareness** (Make them "aware" of the words and concepts.)

Suffer – experience difficult circumstances

God's will – what God has determined will happen

Entrust their souls – trust God with their lives - mind, will, and emotions

Faithful Creator – God Who created everything; He does what He says He will

**I — In Their Lives** (Teach them to apply the lesson "in their lives.")

**Unsaved child** (questions to ask an unsaved child)

Who do you put your trust in? Do you know that you can trust God in all circumstances? Do you know that He is the only One you can trust for salvation?

**Saved child** (questions to ask a saved child)

What can you do when you are going through a hard time? How can God help you?

**N — Number of Times** (Repeat the content again and again until the children understand it.)

Read from Scripture. Repeat after me. Play the Memory Game three or four times.

### Memory Game

Play March-a-Verse (Jog-a-Verse/Skip-a-Verse). Chant the Memory Verse as the group marches around the room. Say a word or phrase with each step you take. If you are in a small space, you can have them pat their hands on their legs instead of marching.

## Faith (Gospel Presentation)

### Visuals

- “Who is God?”, “What’s Your Choice?”, and “What to Do Now?” Foundational Gospel Truths Visuals\*, Picture of Ethan Hallmark\*

### Supplies

- Bible, paper, writing tools

### Instruction and Application

- Ethan Hallmark was just an average kid who loved playing baseball. One day he was rushed to the hospital with severe abdominal pain. They found he had a giant tumor. He was diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma, a rare type of childhood cancer.
- Why was this happening to him? He asked every hard question while clinging on to hope. Ultimately, instead of hiding, Ethan chose to face his fears and be a light in the darkness. Ethan became a beacon of hope to those who knew him. Ethan said he wanted to live a long life with his family, but he wouldn’t be disappointed if he didn’t. He knew Heaven was an amazing place, and he would trust God’s plan. Someone once told Ethan it was okay to be angry with God. Ethan wasn’t okay with that. His response was, “I can’t be angry at God. We can’t be angry at God if we love Him.” If we truly have faith in God and that He works all things for the good of those who believe in Him, we may not understand; but we won’t have to be angry at Him.
- Ethan went to be with Jesus when he was 13 years old on September 26, 2014. His story and his faith continue to touch the lives of people. There was even a film made about his life.
- We can learn so much from Ethan and how he lived for God even when he faced cancer. Ethan knew who God was, that He was the Creator of all things, that He loved him, and that He was preparing a place for him in Heaven. Use the “Who is God?” Visual to review.
- Ethan made the choice to ask Jesus to forgive his sins and be the Lord of his life. Each of us has to make that choice. Use the “What’s Your Choice?” Visual to review.
- At a time when others may doubt God, Ethan held on to his faith and chose to share that hope with everyone. Ethan had strength to face cancer and death because he had grown in his faith. We can also GROW in our faith. Use the “What to Do Now?” Visual to review.

### Discussion

- Older Team: Have the children discuss difficult things they may face in their lives and how they can stand strong in their faith and be a witness to those around them.
- Younger Team: Have the children discuss what it means to be like Jesus for them personally.
- Quiet Team: Have the children write a letter to God sharing difficulties they face and asking God to give them strength and help them to trust Him even when they don’t understand.
- Active Team: Have the children find a partner and play “Rock, Paper, Scissors.” The winner can share a time that he faced something difficult and trusted God.



## Flashback (Review Questions)

### Supplies

- Review Questions\*

### Large Group Review Questions

- Who was the last prophet that God sent to His people in the Southern Kingdom? (Jeremiah)
- What is a prophet? (Someone God sends to give a message from Him)
- How many years was Jeremiah a prophet? (40 years)
- How many times did the people repent after hearing Jeremiah's prophecy? (None)
- How was Jeremiah treated by the people? (He was hated, beaten, and they wanted him dead.)
- What was Jeremiah called? (The Weeping Prophet)
- Did Jeremiah ever want to give up? (Yes)
- What was the message that God was sending to His people through Jeremiah? (To stop sinning or face destruction)
- Why did the Israelites get taken captive? (They didn't repent and turn from their sin.)
- How long were the Israelites in captivity? (70 years)
- Was Jeremiah a failure as a prophet because Israel never listened to him? (No, he was obedient to what God was calling him to do. He wasn't responsible for the people's response.)

### Discussion Questions

- How does Jeremiah's story encourage you?
  - What is an area where you need to trust God even though you don't understand?
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## Trust (Craft)

### Visuals

- Craft sample\*

### Supplies

- TRUST paper\* (one per child), coloring tools, glue, pipe cleaners (5 per child)

### Instruction and Application

- Give each child a TRUST paper, glue, and five pipe cleaners. Have children color the paper however they would like. Encourage them to write ways they can trust God when they are going through difficult times. Then have them bend the pipe cleaners to create each of the letters in the word “trust.” Next have them glue the pipe cleaners onto the letters on the paper.
  - Remind the children that today we learned how we can trust God even when we don’t understand. We may go through difficult circumstances, but we can know that God is with us and is protecting us. We will trust God even when we don’t understand!
  - Review the Memory Verse together. 1 Peter 4:19, “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”
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## What's the Point? (Application Activity)

### Supplies

- Paper, writing tools, "What's the Point?" card\*

### Activity #1

- Give each child a "What's the Point?" card. Discuss the question in this lesson: Why does God let bad things happen? Have the children write the different things that help them realize that they can trust God even when they don't understand. Then have them write their answer to this lesson's question and why they believe it. Encourage the children to put into action what they learned today. Maybe they can encourage a friend or family member to trust God when something bad happens.

### Activity #2

- Have the children take turns acting out different ways they can encourage someone to trust God when something bad happens. If you have a group that is quieter, you could choose to have them draw a picture or make a card for someone instead.
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## Now What? (Additional Activity)

### Supplies

- Additional Activity #1: Jeremiah Coloring Page\*
- Additional Activity #2: Jeremiah Fill-In-The-Blanks\*
- Additional Activity #3: The Big Take Away Key Chain\*

### Instruction and Application

- These activities are to be used with your team as time fillers while reinforcing the lesson concepts. The children can take these home each week or do them while they are listening to you teach during Small Group. These activities require little to no explanation and can be great for moments when you are transitioning or don't have time to start another activity.
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