

Youth Teaching Resources

September 22, 2019



Season After Pentecost (June 16-November 24)

On the Road with Jesus

Luke 14:1-14 (RCL 1, 7-14) – “A Way to the Top”

Choices That Matter

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 – “Make the Right Choice!”

Jeremiah 4:11-28 (RCL 11-12, 22-28) – “Delay and You’ll Pay”

Jeremiah 8:18-9:3 (RCL 8:18-9:1) – “Go on and Grieve”

Jeremiah 32:1-15 (RCL 32:1-3a, 6-15) – “Never Give Up”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

Go on and Grieve

Jeremiah 8:18-9:3 (RCL 8:18-9:1)

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

We all want our students to have role models. There are even studies out now that say that for a student to be successful they need six adults in their lives that are not their parents. But how do we help our students look up to people, and emulate them, but not worship them? How do we help them take the good from an individual and help them make that their own? You may see your students take on many different personas, affirm them in those as long as they are helping them figure out who they really are. But don't pass the buck completely to other people, you are still their primary role model. You will have more to do with who they become than anyone else.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip "In Rod We Trust" from *Jerry Maguire*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) How do the emotions swing in this clip?
- 2) Why is Rod celebrating?
- 3) Why are the people celebrating Rod?
- 4) Who are all the different people celebrating Rod?
- 5) What can happen when we celebrate an individual instead of our faith?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Jeremiah 8:18-9:3. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why is Jeremiah grief-stricken?
- 2) Who are the people blaming for their despair? Who does Jeremiah know is to blame?
- 3) Why does Jeremiah hurt for his people even though he knows they are to blame?
- 4) What are the people of Israel going to have to do before their fate would change?
- 5) How do you show compassion when you know someone is wrong?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Were the people right to think that God had not helped them?
- 2) Why are lies so easily perpetuated?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": What is the balm of Gilead?

Transformation

Conclude your session by asking your students to "popcorn style" list off people who have made a difference in their lives. As they say the names, write them up so the entire group can see the names. Then ask the group to list the attributes of these people that caused them to be on the list. Write these attributes down as well. With the two lists created, distributed blank cards and writing utensils and allow time for the students to write "Thank you" cards to those people who have helped them become the people they are today.

Close with a prayer thanking God for the people in our lives that help us to be better reflections of Jesus.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Were they right?—When we read the prophecies of Jeremiah and others who foresaw looming troubles for the Israelites, we find a common connection between sin and punishment. Authors of the narrative literature from Joshua through 2 Kings (with the exception of Ruth), along with many of the prophets, believed that God would bless Israel immeasurably if the people were faithful and obedient – but would punish them if they ignored the ideals of justice and turned to other gods. Texts like Deuteronomy 28 supported their view.

Thus the prophets routinely connected Israel’s troubles with their sin: because the people were faithless, God sent enemies to defeat and oppress them.

Modern readers may wonder if the link is really so clear. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and the Greeks all had their own visions of empire, which necessitated aggression against all who resisted their rule.

Israel was a very small player in the ancient world, and had little chance of standing against the mighty armies of the superpowers around them. The Hebrews’ record of persistently adopting other gods made it easy for the author of Judges or the later prophets to interpret every defeat as a divine judgment.

Many modern readers are perfectly comfortable with this interpretation, while others find it hard to believe that the same God we know in Jesus would send slaughter and destruction on Israel because they were weak and fallible.

When we read the Bible, it is helpful to recognize that the writers were offering their interpretation of events, based on their own understanding. We can appreciate their views without necessarily adopting the same view of God as a divine executioner.

The text—The Revised Common Lectionary text stops at 9:1, and some commentators see that as the end of a short unit, while others see the focus continuing through 9:3 or even further. We’ll include 9:2-3 in our study, with an awareness that the text is part of a larger section, as noted below.

The context—Today’s text is part of a larger passage that stretches from 8:4-10:25. R. E. Clements describes the section this way:

We may note then that the entire section from 8:4–10:25 forms a larger whole and possesses a central overall message. This concerns the awful and inevitable fate that awaits Jerusalem. The message is spelled out clearly and forcefully at a number of points: “Therefore I will give their wives to others and their fields to conquerors” (8:10). “They (the enemy) come and devour the land and all that fills it, the city and those who

Digging Deeper *continued*

dwelt in it” (8:16). “I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a lair of jackals; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant” (9:11). “Thus says the Lord ‘dead bodies of men shall fall like dung upon the open field, like sheaves after the reaper, and none shall gather them’ ” (9:22).

The import of this message is unmistakably clear, even though no precise identification of the enemy is made nor time given in which they will come. Such prophecies must belong to the years of Jehoiakim’s reign and point to a Mesopotamian enemy attacking from the north (cf. the reference to the city of Dan in 8:16), which materialized in the form of the armies of Babylon under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar.

R.E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 52-53.

Translations and interpretations—The expression “my poor people,” as in last week’s lesson, is the NRSV translation of the literal phrase “daughter of my people.” While KJV and NAS95 stick with “daughter of my people” and NIV11 goes with “my people” alone, other translators interpret the phrase as an expression of endearment, thus “my poor people” (NRSV, HCSB) or “my dear people” (NET). The same expression – with the same translation – is found in 8:21 and 22.

Another interpretive difference can be seen in the couplet “Is the LORD not in Zion? / Is her King not in her?”

Hebrew does not use upper case and lower-case letters, but most translations capitalize “King” (NRSV, NIV11, NAS95, HCSB), while KJV goes with the lower-case “king.” Why does it make a difference? Because it is likely that “king” is in parallel with “the LORD” in the previous verse. Jeremiah has the people question, in poetic fashion, whether Yahweh remains in Zion, or if God the ultimate King has abandoned the city. NET adds a word for clarity, reading “divine King” to make it clear the reference is Yahweh rather than the ineffective human king who sat on the throne.

Original, or not?—The second half of v. 19 interrupts the flow of the oracle to the point that some consider it a later addition, but the vocabulary and structure provide good arguments for its originality.

Caught between—Imagine that someone you love – a child or best friend – made the deadly mistake of drinking or texting while driving and caused a crash in which someone else was killed. You would grieve both for the one you love and for the family of the one who died. Envisioning this kind of two-sided grief may help us to understand Jeremiah’s sorrow.

Lies, and those who believe them—Our society is rife with lies, blatant deceits that have become increasingly dangerous since the advent of the internet. It is a sad commentary that, like malicious gossip, it is so easy for us to believe these lies rather than checking them out or judging rationally for ourselves.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Here's one example: about 20 years ago a story began circulating on the internet, claiming that Fred Rogers, the beloved host of "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," always wore long-sleeved shirts to cover the tattoos on his arms. The tattoos, according to the story, were to commemorate the number of enemies he killed as a Marine sniper in World War II, or as a Navy Seal in Vietnam.

The story is a complete lie, from beginning to end. Rogers never served in the military. He was a vegetarian because he said he couldn't eat anything that had a mother. The idea that he could have been a cold-blooded killer is completely ludicrous – yet untold thousands of people have believed it. It breaks my heart that some people express disappointment when they learn that the story was never true: they *liked* the image of Mr. Rogers as a killer.

Sometimes we're anxious to believe bad things about other people because it helps us feel better about the lies to well ourselves about our own behavior.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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What is the “balm of Gilead”?

The “balm of Gilead” apparently describes a type of perfume that could also be used in treating some medical situations. The precise nature of the substance is unclear: some believe it was sap from a rare type of terebinth tree (*Pistacia lentiscus*), while others believe it was derived from a fragrant shrub (*Commiphora gileadensis*), and there are other proposed sources.

We do know that Gilead was a wooded area east of the Jordan river, known for its fertility and apparently as a source of the prized “balm,” which may have been derived by making cuts in the plant’s bark and collecting the sweet-smelling sap that emerged. Once the sap hardened, it could be transported across long distances.

Jeremiah’s complaint isn’t the only reference to “balm” in the Old Testament. The story of Joseph’s brothers selling him to Ishmaelite traders says the caravan was coming from Gilead, loaded down with “gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt” (Gen. 37:25).

Later, when Jacob sent his sons to Egypt in search of food, he had them carry several gifts, including “a little balm and a little honey, gum, resin, pistachio nuts, and almonds” (Gen. 43:11).

Jeremiah’s contemporary Ezekiel wrote of how Judah traded with the people of Tyre, delivering “wheat from Minneth, millet, honey, oil, and balm” (Ezek. 27:17).

A modern product known as “Balm of Gilead” is made from a balsam poplar tree and marketed for the treatment of coughs and respiratory infections in the form of a syrup.