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PLEADING INADEQUACY

Jeremiah 1:4-19

If we are asked to do something that we know we cannot do, it is foolish to accept the assignment, for it soon becomes an embarrassment to everyone. God asked Jeremiah to do something he couldn't do. Naturally, he refused. The job Jeremiah refused was to be a prophet.

No job is more important, for what is more important than a persuasive presentation of the invisible but living reality—God? And what is more important than a convincing demonstration of the eternal meaning of the visible, ordinary stuff of daily life? But more important or not, Jeremiah refused. He was not qualified. He had not done well in the God courses in school. And he hadn't been around long enough to know how the world works. “‘Alas, Sovereign LORD,’ I said, ‘I do not know how to speak; I am too young’” (Jeremiah 1:6).

There is an enormous gap between what we think we can do and what God calls us to do. Our ideas of what we can do or want to do are trivial; God's ideas for us are grand. God's call to Jeremiah to be a prophet parallels his call to us to be a person. The excuses we make are plausible; often they are statements of fact. But they are excuses all the same and are disallowed by our Lord, who says: “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you” (Jeremiah 1:7-8).

Group Discussion. Describe a time when someone asked you to do something you thought was over your head. What feelings did you have about attempting the task? What reasons did you have to not try? What did you do?

Personal Reflection. What helps you feel encouraged when you have a difficult task set before you?

The book of Jeremiah begins with the story of the prophet's call and how he responded. This passage introduces us to Jeremiah's character and sets up several key themes of the book. *Read Jeremiah 1:4-19.*

| 1. Summarize God's calling to Jeremiah in this chapter.

| 2. What is Jeremiah's initial reaction to God's call on his life (v. 6)?

3. How does God reassure Jeremiah that he is capable of being God's prophet?

4. What do you think would be challenging for Jeremiah in his prophetic role? What would be fulfilling?



5. Jeremiah was appointed by God to be a prophet to the nations (v. 5). God has a unique and original adventure for each of us. What has God appointed you to do or to be?

6. We too are good at pleading inadequacy in order to avoid living at the best God calls us to. What reasons have you used to resist God's call on your life?

7. God showed Jeremiah two visions in this dialogue (vv. 11-16).
What is the significance of the vision in verses 11-12?

What is the significance of the vision in verses 13-16?

8. In verse 19 the Lord says, “They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you.” In what ways has God communicated reassurance that he will help you to become the person you are called to be—even in the face of opposition?

9. Jeremiah lived in a changing and dangerous world, much like our own. How do you see God’s hand controlling evil in the world?

10. How can you be more open to both God's call and God's reassurance to you?



Offer God your praise for his work in your life—in the past, present, and future.

NOW OR LATER

Make a list of people, experiences, Scripture passages, or symbols that remind you of God's presence in your life. Each day focus on one item on the list, thanking God for it.