

- **Main Passage:** Jeremiah 1:4-10, 18-19; 20:7-18, 2 Timothy 3:12; Matthew 16:13-14
- **Purpose:** To understand that when God saves us through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit takes control of our lives, we cannot help but speak His word and influence the world for Christ. We should work to maximize our influence for Christ.
- **Session Snapshot:** Jeremiah spent his life proclaiming the word of the Lord to God's people. Jeremiah is known as the "weeping prophet" as he wept for the sinful state of Israel. His message of repentance was not well received by God's people. He suffered through ridicule and even physically punished. Jeremiah was a man of influence. He was faithful to proclaim God's word even to his earthly detriment. However, people in Jesus's time thought He (Jesus) might be Jeremiah returned. Jeremiah's influence was so strong he was mentioned in comparison to Jesus!

GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together by reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, remind the group that this is the last in your five-session study of what it means to pursue Christ-centered influence as a man. You may want to reference any meaningful interactions or takeaways from your time in the study. If you are transitioning into another session of *The Pursuit*, consider providing a little overview of the next subject you'll be covering.

As always, consider spending a moment in review, asking men what they recall from the last session or what God has been showing them in their personal time of study.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

Then, when the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Rick said Jeremiah was a man of influence. He also mentioned Jeremiah suffered great frustration and sorrow. What are the areas in which you influence others for the cause of Christ? Has that influence caused you frustration or sorrow?**
- **When you answer the first question, did you discover that you are not truly suffering or being persecuted for the cause of Christ? If not, why not?**
- **Rick asked the question, "Are you worthy of persecution?" What does it mean to be worthy of persecution? What influence are you exercising that might cause you to be persecuted?**
- **Rick pointed out that Jeremiah could not keep quiet about God. Is your testimony for God something that is like a burning fire shut up in your bones such that you cannot hold it in? Is that an accurate description, or do you find that you can easily keep quiet about God?**
- **What are two or three areas of greatest influence in your earthly life? Are you an influence for Christ in those areas? What is your greatest influence of Christ in your life?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **We are to influence our world for Christ. In Jeremiah 20, we see the influence of Jeremiah, the persecution he suffers due to his influence, and that he cannot help but be an influence because of the power of God in his innermost being.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at Jeremiah 20. As Rick stated in the video, this passage begins with Jeremiah suffering persecution for calling Jerusalem to repent. Jeremiah then expresses his frustration and sorrow but confesses that he cannot help but speak the words of God. He knows that it is impossible to contain his testimony for God.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** Though there has been some disagreement over the years, there is no compelling reason to doubt that the prophet Jeremiah is the author is indeed the author of the book that shares his name. He was accompanied by his scribe, Baruch.
- **Time frame:** Best estimates have the book completed sometime around 550 BC.
- **Purpose:** Jeremiah and Baruch wrote the book to capture the turmoil that faced them and to cast a vision for the hopeful future God had in store for Israel.

THEN, have a volunteer read Jeremiah 20:7-18. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **Jeremiah expresses some negative thoughts in this passage. What are they?**
 - o Answers will vary. He felt deceived by the Lord (v. 7). He was derided by the nations (v. 8). He was denounced by his friends (v. 10). He was distressed by his earthly life. He even went so far as to wish he had never been born (vv. 14-18)
- **Jeremiah also expressed a determination to continue serving the Lord. How did he express this in the passage?**
 - o Answers will vary. He was committed to the Lord (v. 12). The word of the Lord burned in him, and he could not keep quiet (v. 9). He had faith in the Lord. He knew the Lord would protect him (v. 11). He praised the Lord and recognized His deliverance (v. 13).
- **How does Jeremiah remain an influencer for the Lord while undergoing such personal suffering?**
 - o Answers will vary. The power of the Lord in Jeremiah is stronger than the sorrow and frustration the outside world put upon Jeremiah. A man of influence for the Lord will undergo strong opposition from the world. However, if you have the word of the Lord in you as Jeremiah did, you will always be able to overcome the influence of the world.

Before transitioning to the next question, say something like:

- **Jeremiah was a prophet called by God. God's call on Jeremiah's life came with instructions for what he was to say and a promise to stand with him when the world rejected him.**

NEXT, have a volunteer read Jeremiah 1: 4-10, 18-19. Then, ask:

- **Jeremiah was appointed a prophet to the nations in verse 5. He also commanded Jeremiah to go wherever He commanded and to say whatever He commanded (v. 7). In support of His call, God made numerous promises to Jeremiah in verses 4-10 that are applicable to his call on our lives. What are the promises made by God?**

- o Answers will vary. God formed and consecrated us before we were born (v. 5). God sends us, no matter our age (v. 7). We are not to be afraid and know that God will deliver us (v. 8). God will give us the words to say (v. 9). God set us over nations and kingdoms (v. 10). In summary, God gives us all the authority and power to carry out His call on our lives!
- **How does God describe Jeremiah in verse 18? How does God describe the efforts of those who will oppose him in verse 19?**
 - o Answer: God says he will make Jeremiah a fortified city. He even gives a strong description of iron pillars and bronze walls that will stand against all attackers. He labeled the attackers as kings, officials, priests, and all the people. Everyone will oppose the prophet of the Lord. God knew Jeremiah would be attacked and forsaken by everyone when he spoke the word of the Lord. However, God assured Jeremiah they would not prevail over him because He with Jeremiah and will deliver him.

THEN, re-read 2 Timothy 3:12 and Matthew 16:13-14. Explain that the Apostle Paul reminds Timothy that he has been persecuted, but the Lord rescued him. He then makes this bold statement – all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Explain that Paul does not say persecution may happen. He says it will happen. Say something like:

- **Paul wrote from experience as one who was persecuted for living a godly life for Christ Jesus. His words are reminiscent of the words spoken by God Himself in Jeremiah 1: 19 – that the whole land, its kings, its officials, its priests, and all its people will fight against Jeremiah, the prophet of God. However, God adds that they shall not prevail because He will stand with the prophet. These passages point out that, arguably, the greatest influencer for Christ in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul suffered sorrow, frustration, and persecution during his life. What about Jeremiah? He was one of the greatest influencers for the word of the Lord in the Old Testament, and he also suffered sorrow, frustration, and persecution. Matthew 16:13-14 makes an astounding comparison. In verse 13, Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” The answers included He was John the Baptist raised from the dead, the prophet Elijah who was taken up in a whirlwind, and then, wait for it, Jeremiah! The people looked at Jesus, heard His words and saw his actions, and thought he was Jeremiah!**

NEXT, ask:

- **Why are the influencers for Christ Jesus persecuted in Scripture?**
 - o Answers may vary. Satan seeks to attack anything that honors God and brings people to salvation through Christ Jesus. Satan rebelled against God in heaven and seeks to destroy His plan and those He loves. Anyone who stands with God and who seeks to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted like Jeremiah, Paul, and Jesus!
- **Is it possible to be an influencer for Christ Jesus and not be persecuted?**
 - o Answer: No. According to the passages we studied, it is certain that persecution comes to those who speak for the Lord and seek to live a godly life through Christ Jesus.
- **Can you think of other men in Scripture who were persecuted for being an influencer for the Lord? Study their lives and how the Lord delivered them so you will be encouraged!**
 - o Answers may vary. Joseph, David, Elijah, Daniel, etc.

FINALLY, say something like:

- **As we conclude our study of Christ-centered masculinity, we examine the influence we are called to have on the world and the influence we must have on the world if we are to be Christ-centered men. This influence guarantees we will be persecuted. This influence guarantees we will suffer frustration. Given that one follows the**

other, if we are not suffering frustration and persecution, it is an indicator that Satan does not view us as a threat – that we are not an influencer for Jesus.

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on one main takeaway from this session. Say something like:

- **Whenever we're faced with a concept like we have been studying today, it forces us to respond in evaluation. As we wrap up our time here, there are three different questions we can ask to evaluate ourselves. Consider focusing on one question as one that will guide your efforts to apply what you've learned in today's study.**
- 1) After studying these passages, we all need to ask ourselves, "Am I truly an influencer for Christ?" Does your influence sometimes create persecution for you? If not, why not? In answering this question, ask yourself how God would answer these questions about you.
 - 2) How have you backed off your commitment to Jesus to avoid persecution? Why? Are you afraid of the persecution? Do you desire to have the approval of men rather than the approval of God?
 - 3) Will you make a sincere dedication of your life, with the men around you as witnesses and encouragers, to be a Christ-centered man? Will you be an influencer for Jesus in such a way that the enemy always views you as a threat? Will you be a man who has the word of the Lord "burning in his bones" such that the world and the forces of hell will take notice? Will you trust the Lord to be your deliverer?

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves on this spectrum of evaluation. If it feels appropriate, allow there to be some discussion about the kind of evaluation they find themselves considering.

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them, and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.