



THE CALL

STUDY GUIDE



Called From The Start

Jeremiah 1:4-19



While God has hard-wired each one of us to respond to His call, some of us can make the case we were set apart to serve God from the time we were conceived or born. The Prophet Jeremiah, whose name means “the Lord exalts,” was also known as the “weeping prophet.” Jeremiah’s words to the people of his time were always difficult to hear and caused grief and sadness. And yet Jeremiah stressed the Lord is creator of all, over all, and watching over all. The people, however, seemed to chase after other gods and political gains while ignoring the Lord during a period where exile was at the doorstep.

Jeremiah’s call story shows he was called to be a prophet even before he was born. Even as Jeremiah was growing up and struggled to agree with this call, the Lord allowed him to practice in preparation for the difficulty that would eventually surround him. Jeremiah’s story is one that reveals there are people who just seem born to do what they are doing, especially when times are difficult and challenging. It is the original call that can carry you during the difficult. What do you feel you are born to do? Do you feel God has a plan for you? What encourages you during difficult times?

Things for us to consider as we think about God’s call on our lives:

The Lord knows you better than you know yourself (1:4-5).

“The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’”

We find here the Lord telling Jeremiah He knew him even before he was formed in his mother’s womb. David speaks to this in the 139th Psalm when he says:

O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalm 139:1-4, 13-16)

What we need to understand is God has a purpose for each and every one of us before we were born—but we allow our free will, which He has given us, to get in the way as we rebel against His perfect will for our lives.

- Do you think we live as though we believe God knows us better than we know ourselves?
- How might we live life differently if we embraced this truth?
- What tends to get in the way?

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Jeremiah 1:4-19



The Lord sees who you can be and not just as you are (1:6-8).

"Ah, Sovereign Lord," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' 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," declares the Lord.

As soon as we begin to hear the call of God, we have excuses. Moses was a fugitive with a stutter—God didn't care. Gideon was a coward hiding in a pit—God didn't care. David was the youngest son of Jesse from the back-water town of Bethlehem—God didn't care. Mary was a teenage virgin—God didn't care. Jeremiah was too young—he hadn't earned the right—no one would listen to him—God didn't care. It's not that God didn't care—He just doesn't see our limitations the way we do. He looks past our excuses—our limitations—our self-imposed disqualification—and sees the possibilities of what He can do with a life yielded to Him. God tells Jeremiah to say whatever He tells Jeremiah to say and not to be afraid—because He will go with him and rescue him. God knows exactly who and what we can be.

- Someone once said an excuse is "the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie." How do you respond to that?
- How would you define an excuse?
- Why do you think we find it so difficult to see ourselves as God sees us?
- How might we overcome this? How can those in the group help us?
- Share a time when you sensed God calling you to do something and you sought to back away by making excuses? What was the situation? What were the excuses?
- Why do you suppose we're so quick to come up with excuses as to why we cannot respond to God's call?

The Lord equips you with all that you need because it won't be easy (1:9-10).

"Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'Now, I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.'"

God touches Jeremiah's mouth and appoints him "over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." Before we jump over this, let us be reminded: God doesn't always call the qualified—but He always qualifies the called. He's not looking for our ability nearly as much as He's looking for our availability. God has a call on every one of our lives and will give us every gift, skill, protection, and provision necessary to do what He calls us to do. Jeremiah was being called to speak God's truth at a very critical time, and God touched his mouth (anointed him to speak with authority) and appointed him to his task. Jeremiah was anointed and appointed. We need to understand God will do the same for each one of us.

- Can you recall a time when God called you to do something that was difficult? What was that like?
- Did you sense God equipping you for the task before you?
- God's not looking for our ability nearly as much as He's looking for our availability. What tends to get in the way of our making ourselves available to God?
- How available are you to God and His people?

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Jeremiah 1:4-19



The Lord gives you opportunities to practice because it won't be easy (1:11-16).

The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied. The Lord said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled." The word of the Lord came to me again: "What do you see?" "I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north," I answered. The Lord said to me, "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms," declares the Lord. "Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; they will come against all her surrounding walls and against all the towns of Judah. I will pronounce my judgments on my people because of their wickedness in forsaking me, in burning incense to other gods and in worshiping what their hands have made.

God immediately calls on Jeremiah and gives him two different visions in order to give him the opportunity to learn how to use his new gift. God gives him a vision of a branch of an almond tree and Jeremiah described it. God then gave him a pot that was boiling and Jeremiah described it. Jeremiah passed the test drive, and now he's about to get in the fast lane. God then delivers a difficult message that other kings and nations are about the lay siege to Jerusalem, and He is going to judge His people because of their unfaithfulness. Judgment is coming, and Jeremiah is God's chosen instrument to deliver some very difficult news - quite a task for someone so young. We need to understand there will be times when God calls us to do more than we could ever imagine.

- Can you think of a time when God called you to do more than you could have ever imagined?
- Was it easy or difficult to move forward with the task?

The Lord makes you stronger than you think you are (1:17-19).

"Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land – against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord.

Here we find God reminding Jeremiah He has called, strengthened, given him authority, and will protect him as he acts in obedience to say and do things on behalf of God that are not easy or popular. God has made Jeremiah like "a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land." This is a reminder: when we know what God has called us to be and do, our success is determined by obedience and not always popular applause. The call is for us to understand when we are obedient in doing what God has called us to do He promises to stand with us even when everyone else is opposing us. God wants us to know He makes us stronger than we think we are.

- Do you trust God to give you the strength to do whatever He lays before you?
- How might we live our lives differently if we trusted God for our strength in all things?
- What do you hear God saying to you in all of this?
- How can the group help you embrace God's call for your life?

Called From The CHANGE

Isaiah 6:1-8



While God has a call on every one of our lives, some of us did not become aware of that call until we came to a time of repentance and life change. The Prophet Isaiah, whose name means “The Lord is Salvation”, believed the Lord was a covenant maker and covenant keeper—and consequently, the Lord would defend the faithful. Sadly, Isaiah was surrounded by unfaithful people, leaders, and nations. Isaiah believed all the people needed was the Lord and not alliances with nations led by unbelievers and covenant breakers. Alliances, however, were made and consequences would soon follow.

Interestingly, the book of Isaiah is quoted often in the New Testament as it was used to confirm Jesus Christ as the Messiah through its prophecies of the Messiah’s birth and sufferings. Isaiah reminds us, while we are surrounded by unfaithfulness and seasons of change both personally and contextually, the Lord still saves and the Lord still calls.

Things for us to consider as we think about God’s call on our lives:

The Lord is holy and powerful (6:1-4).

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

During Isaiah’s life, God’s people were sliding further and further from God’s best as they moved away from His covenant with them and worshiped other gods. Isaiah remains faithful as he is serving and doing everything he’s supposed to do in the temple. It is while he is doing so that God shows up. The temple foundations began to shake under the weight of God’s presence. Isaiah sees the Lord! The lyrical description of God’s presence and majesty is enough to stop us in our tracks—Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord God Almighty! The whole earth is full of His glory!

- Do you think in our worship today we experience the Lord as holy and powerful?
- What obstacles keep us from doing so?
- What helps you to experience God’s presence in worship—both corporately and privately?

The Lord reveals our sinfulness (6:5).

“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

No one can stand in the presence of a holy God. His sinless, perfect holiness, His power, might, and glory are overwhelming. When Isaiah looks at himself and compares his righteousness and holiness to God’s perfect holiness, he is completely undone. Isaiah is sinful. His nation is sinful. He has seen the Lord and has nowhere to run and hide. All he can do is CONFESS his sin and ask for mercy. When we come to the place where our sin is laid bare before God, we are right at the place God can change and use us.

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Isaiah 6:1-8



- Do you see your sinfulness or do you tend to turn a blind eye?
- What might happen if we were to compare our supposed holiness and righteousness to that of God's?

The Lord provides a way for us to be forgiven (6:6-7).

Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

The scriptures are full of examples of God forgiving sin and cleansing hearts. Animals are sacrificed and blood is shed. Bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus—which, when received by faith, we experience forgiveness. Sin is confessed and forgiveness is given. In this scene, a six-winged angel takes a burning coal off the altar (the place where sin is forgiven) and touches Isaiah's lips with it burning the sin away, cleansing his heart, and sanctifying his lips. His sin was atoned for, and his guilt was taken away. Isaiah had been restored into right relationship with his creator. God wants to do the same for us.

- Share how you have experienced God's forgiveness and the difference it has made in your life.
- How might you share the forgiveness of God with someone who desperately needs to hear it?
- With whom is God calling you to share this Good News?

The Lord calls us from a place of forgiveness and change (6:8).

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Once Isaiah is forgiven and his life has been changed, God calls. "Whom shall I send? Who shall go for us?" Isaiah, fresh from his experience of atonement and salvation, responds with a resounding, "Here am I, send me!" Sometimes the first response we have to our own forgiveness and redemption is a willingness to do whatever God calls us to do or say. Sometimes, it's the first time we've ever heard the voice of God so clearly and our first response is: Send me! I'll go. I'll do it. Isaiah is called a major prophet because he spent the rest of his life speaking for God to five kings of Judah and eventually losing his life to King Manasseh. We need to understand a changed life is one that is willing to be spent for God.

- Our response to God's forgiveness, grace, and life change ought to be a willingness to answer His call to serve. How willing do you think we are to do so?
- What needs to be forgiven in your life in order to bring you closer to God and answering His call?
- What does it mean to you to know God is counting on you to be His hands and feet?
- What do you sense God is saying to you?
- How might we hold one another accountable to living out God's call?

Called To Lead

1 Samuel 3:1-21



Sometimes the call of God is to lead. The Prophet Samuel, whose name means “Name of God” or “Heard of God”, was present in the midst of one of the greatest transitions in Jewish history—the transition to the monarchy and kings. Samuel’s birth was a miracle as his mother struggled to have children. As a response to God’s faithfulness, Samuel’s mother dedicated him to the ministry and allowed him to be trained and mentored by a priest as a child. While the mentor priest, Eli, wasn’t good and faithful, Samuel grew in faith and began to learn how to listen and look for God—even during a time when hearing from God and witnessing acts of God was rare. One night, however, Samuel was able to hear God’s voice and respond faithfully to God’s call.

Samuel’s call reminds us God is always preparing people to carry on His purposes and kingdom. And while there will be seasons of change and transitions, God holds the future and has been preparing someone for a time such as this—including you. How can you be helpful during seasons of change? Who is God calling you to be during times of change? How do you listen for God when it seems God is quiet? Who are you mentoring?

Things for us to consider as we think about God’s call on our lives:

There are times when it’s hard to hear from the Lord (3:1-3).

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was.

Eli was the priest of the Lord in Shiloh, and he was assisted by his sons, Phineas and Hophni. The sinfulness of his sons, and Eli’s inability to discipline his sons, had led God to remove his hand of favor from Eli. As Eli’s family is about to be removed from God’s service, Samuel is sent to Shiloh to work as an apprentice in the Tabernacle. One of the consequences of unrepentant sin is the inability to hear God’s voice. Eli the priest was complicit in the sinful behaviors of his sons—and as a result, no one could hear God speak. Sometimes, when we find it difficult to hear from God, it’s due to unrepentant sin in our lives. At other times, it can be because we forget to ask and wait for an answer. Sometimes God seems silent because of the sinfulness of a people or nation.

- Has God ever been silent in your life?
- What was that like?

Be a person who can listen and learn (3:4-10).

Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.” And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down. Again the Lord called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for

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your servant is listening.” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

As an apprentice in training, Samuel is sleeping in the house of the Lord. His job is to make sure the lamps (symbolic of God’s presence) do not go out. Samuel is young. His heart is pure. He is teachable. He’s where he’s supposed to be and doing what he’s supposed to be doing. God calls, but Samuel hasn’t yet learned how to recognize God’s voice. He runs to Eli, who tells him he didn’t call and to go back to sleep. God calls to him a second time, but Samuel still doesn’t recognize God’s voice. Eli recognizes what’s happening. It’s been a while, but in the recesses of his memory he remembers how God used to call to him in the night. Eli sends Samuel back to his place, but tells him, “The next time he calls, say, ‘Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.’” God calls Samuel a third time, and he responds, “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.” We need to understand that God is always calling. He calls to us more often than we are listening. Sometimes our sin stops our ears, but more often than not, we’ve either forgotten what He sounds like or we’re too busy to hear His whisper.

- Do you think we take the time necessary to really hear from God? If not, why not?
- What obstacles tend to get in the way which keep us from hearing God speak to us?
- Psalm 37:7 tells us: “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him...” And in Psalm 46:10, God says: “Be still, and know that I am God...” What do these verses say to you?
- What might begin to happen if we took the time to really listen?

Transitions can be difficult and hard (3:11-14).

And the Lord said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle. At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family – from beginning to end. For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them. Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”

God’s first message to young Samuel involves the old priest, Eli. God is about to bring judgment on him because of his inability to manage his own house. This was announced in chapter 2, but now God has another person in training to be a priest who will also become a prophet—and Samuel is beginning to get a glimpse of what’s to come. Transitions can be difficult and challenging, but when God is in it, He will give you what you need.

- Do you find transitions to be a challenge or an adventure?
- Have you ever experienced a time when God was calling you into a transition?
- What was easy about it? What was difficult?

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Be a person who can be courageous and lead (3:15-18).

Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, but Eli called him and said, "Samuel, my son." Samuel answered, "Here I am." "What was it he said to you?" Eli asked. "Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you." So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. Then Eli said, "He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes."

Samuel went back to sleep—and the next morning, Eli asked him what God said. That was a moment of truth for Samuel which revealed what he was made of. He told Eli everything God had spoken. This wasn't news to Eli as he had heard it before, but this test was an important one for Samuel to pass. In the years that would unfold, God would use Samuel to make sacrifices, to deliver challenging instructions, make judgments, and both announce the removal of kings as well as anoint new ones. If Samuel was going to be trusted with great things, he needed to be faithful in little things. When he had the courage to tell Eli what God said, it was an early sign he would have the courage to lead in the future.

- Can you recall a time when God was calling you to a challenging task - perhaps to undertake something you have never done, teach a class, confront a friend or family member, to step out in faith? What was that like?
- Was it easy or difficult to move forward—trusting God to give you the strength and courage?

The Lord rewards faithfulness with faithfulness (3:19-21).

The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

What an incredible promise God never let any of Samuel's words fall to the ground unheard. God gave him favor and he was recognized as God's priest and prophet from Dan (the farthest point north) to Beer Sheba (the farthest point south) and God continued to reveal Himself and speak to Samuel in Shiloh. So after all those years of the judges when everyone did what was right in their own eyes and decades of corrupt priests, God finally had a faithful priest and prophet who would shape the hearts, minds, and lives of His people for generations. God would be faithful to Samuel for the rest of his life.

- How has God rewarded your faithfulness with His faithfulness?
- What does it mean to you that God calls you to lead?

Called To The Difficult

Ezekiel 2:1-3:19



Sometimes the call is to do something difficult. The Prophet Ezekiel, whose name means “God strengthens”, was found in one of the darkest times of Jewish history—the exile. At this point, Babylon has conquered all, Jerusalem has been destroyed, and the people are now strangers in a strange land. Ezekiel is a priest who has lost everything. Wealth, stature, honor, prestige, the temple—everything. Ezekiel, however, still saw himself as the Lord’s priest who needed to speak to the people about their sin and how to be restored by God.

Ezekiel is the voice in the midst of the difficult who tries to remain faithful while calling others to be faithful. Ezekiel never loses his call and never forgets his call. And while holding on to faith, Ezekiel is convinced God’s faithfulness and strength was with the people in the past, is with the people during the exile, and will be with the people during their restoration and new beginning. How are you able to hold on to hope in the midst of the difficult? What does your faith look like during challenging times? Is your call the same during times of ease and hardship?

Things for us to consider as we think about God’s call on our lives:

The Lord doesn’t always send us to comfortable places (2:1-5).

He said to me, “Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.” As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. He said: “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says.’ And whether they listen or fail to listen – for they are a rebellious house – they will know that a prophet has been among them.

God doesn’t sugar coat His call to Ezekiel. He’s sending him to Israel—whose hearts are hardened—and they are not likely to listen. God tells Ezekiel the measure of his success will not be whether Israel listens and repents, but that he was obedient in doing what God has called him to do. Memorial Day is a day we remember those who answered the call to serve our nation without any guarantee of success—but the full measure of their lives was their willingness to show no greater love than to be willing to lay down their lives for their friends (and us strangers).

- Can you think of a time when God has called you to a place or situation that was uncomfortable?
- What thoughts, feelings, and emotions surfaced?

Find ways to be faithful even in the difficult (2:6-7).

And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious.

Ezekiel is about to be beset on all sides by all kinds of obstacles—and when he speaks, the people likely won’t listen because they are obstinate and rebellious. Sometimes the only solace we will

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have is we've done the right thing. In those moments, it's important we remember we are not called to please the crowd, but we live our lives for an audience of one.

- How do you handle obstacles when they come your way while seeking to live out what God has called you to do or say?
- How tempting is it in those times to simply cave and quit?
- What do you hear God saying to you in those times?

Find comfort in the Word of God in the midst of the difficult (2:8-3:3).

But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

The temptation for Ezekiel to cave or shade his message must have been intense. God wants Ezekiel not to be tempted, and then fills his mouth with His word. The image of a scroll that eventually tastes like honey is fitting. When we first begin to read and study God's word is can be kind of dry—but the longer we feed on it, the sweeter it becomes. When we begin to make God's word our home, we become His disciples. We will know the truth and the truth will set us free. (John 8:31-32). It's interesting the words on the scroll were words of lament, warning, and woe—but even those words became sweet to Ezekiel in his obedience.

- How have you found comfort in God's Word in the midst of difficult times or situations?
- How has God spoken to you through His Word?
- Are there verses that you go to that bring encouragement and strength?

Speaking with people you know can be the most difficult thing to do (3:4-11).

He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them. You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel—not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you. But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate. But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house." And he said to me, "Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you. Go now to your countrymen in exile and speak to them. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says,' whether they listen or fail to listen."

Ezekiel is being sent to God's people—whose hardness of heart has lead them into exile—and they're not going to listen to him. God tells Ezekiel, "I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are. 9 I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people." He is going to have to be tough as nails to withstand their rebellion. Illus: Witnessing to our family

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- Can you recall a time when it was difficult to share faith, God's truth, or faith with a family member or a close friend? What makes that difficult? How did you overcome that difficulty?

Let the Holy Spirit guide and empower you (3:12-14).

Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound – May the glory of the Lord be praised in his dwelling place!—the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against each other and the sound of the wheels beside them, a loud rumbling sound. The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit, with the strong hand of the Lord upon me.

Ezekiel has one of the hardest jobs of any prophet, but he is not alone. The Holy Spirit goes with him, and Ezekiel is filled with righteous indignation. He's an angry prophet delivering words of judgment from God to God's own people. In John 14, Jesus gives us the promise of the Holy Spirit being with us, and in Acts 2 we read the account of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh. We are promised the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us (Romans 8), and we don't need to worry about what to say during times of testing because the Spirit will give us the words to speak (Mark 13:11).

- Can you recall a time when you were empowered by the Holy Spirit to do or say something God was calling you to do?
- Do you think we trust the Holy Spirit to empower us or do we rely too heavily upon our own resources?
- What do you hear God saying to you about allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and empower you?
- What changes need to occur for that to happen?

Be honest with what you are seeing and feeling (3:15).

I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Abib near the Kebar River. And there, where they were living, I sat among them for seven days – overwhelmed.

Being called to stand and speak difficult words of truth can take its toll. Yes you're called. Yes they're true. Yes God is with you, but it can be exhausting. In those moments, it's important to be honest about what you see and feel—it is the only way to keep your soul sane. The book of Ezekiel reminds us to seek out the Lord in those dark times when we feel lost, to examine our own lives, and to align ourselves with the one true God.

- Have you ever experienced exhaustion or even the feeling of defeat while taking a stand for godly principles or speaking His truth? How did you deal with it?
- What did you sense God was saying to you in those moments?
- What needs to happen in your life in order to align yourself with God and His Word in order to find strength in Him?