



# Lesson Nine

## *Obey God and Be Strong*



### Growing as a Teacher

#### Scripture

Jeremiah 37–39

#### Bible Truth

God gave Jeremiah strength to obey even when it cost him everything to do so.

#### Lesson Aim

To learn to ask God for courage to obey him when it is hard.

#### Memory Verse

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

PSALM 23:6

Under ordinary circumstances, obeying God is a struggle for us all. But it is much harder to be obedient when it involves great courage and sacrifice! Throughout his long ministry, the prophet Jeremiah understood what it meant to obey God in hard circumstances and openly declare his message with unswerving courage. His godly words and actions were often misunderstood. His own people mocked him, plotted against him, put him in stocks and imprisoned him. Yet in spite of all the abuse, Jeremiah felt and expressed God's deep sorrow for his people's sin and its results.

Jeremiah was a sensitive, sympathetic man, given to tears and melancholy—yet God picked him to deliver a stern and uncompromising message of judgment. Sometimes the prophet despaired and wanted to give up. Nevertheless, God strengthened him and he persevered, obedient and true to the Lord and his Word.

Ask God to strengthen you and your students so that you might reflect Jeremiah's kind of obedience, courage and faith!

#### Bible Background

God commanded Jeremiah, a prophet, to give a final warning to the disobedient people of Judah. During Jeremiah's 40-year ministry, startling changes took place among God's people and the nations around them. Assyria, which had dominated the political scene for centuries, was challenged by Babylon. At first, Palestine enjoyed relative peace—and even religious revival—under King Josiah while the superpowers battled it out. But after Babylon became victorious, Judah was threatened again.

God told Jeremiah to tell the people to submit to Babylon and explained that Babylon was the instrument God had chosen to punish them (the Jews) for their unfaithfulness. His warnings went unheeded, and Jeremiah was seen as a traitor. Through graphic symbols, images and object lessons, Jeremiah declared his message of impending doom. In return, he was ridiculed and punished.

The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy that the Jews would serve the Babylonians for 70 years is told in this lesson: Jerusalem falls, King Zedekiah is captured, Jeremiah is protected by the Babylonian king and only a remnant of God's people are saved.

Jeremiah predicted that restoration would come after Judah had been disciplined, and the people would renew their faith in God (Jeremiah 31:33). The old covenant would fade away to make way for the new kingdom of God that would extend throughout the earth.

## Lesson Nine at a Glance

Step	Minutes	Children's Activities	Supplies (complete list, p. 11)
<b>1</b> Welcome	5–10	Play a matching game to review previous lessons.	<input type="checkbox"/> TA 9a Sheep Review* <input type="checkbox"/> Zip-lock bag
<b>2</b> Bible Time	15–20	Listen to the story of Jeremiah, his ministry and the fall of Jerusalem.	<input type="checkbox"/> TA 9b Jeremiah*
<b>3</b> Memory Verse	5–10	<b>4</b> Learn Psalm 23:6 and make a memory verse cube. Learn the song “Hold Me, Jesus” (Songbook, p. 10).	<input type="checkbox"/> TA 2b Psalm 23 poster** <input type="checkbox"/> SA 9 Psalm 23:6 cube** <input type="checkbox"/> Glue or tape, scissors <input type="checkbox"/> Songbook* <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Optional:</i> song poster, Younger Elementary Vol. 2 CD
<b>4</b> Activities	10–15	Do activities that help us remember that sometimes it takes courage to obey God.	<input type="checkbox"/> At Home 9** <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils <input type="checkbox"/> Markers or crayons
<b>5</b> Final Focus	5	Ask God to give us strength and courage to obey him.	

Total time: 40–60 minutes

\* Younger Elementary Teaching Aids Pack  
 \*\* Younger Elementary Student Activities Pack



### Enrichment

Provide paper or index cards, pencils and a list of the Bible figures studied so far this quarter. Have students write or draw their own matching pairs for a game similar to TA 9a Sheep Review.

Example: a picture of two men and a picture of a jug and a spear = David and Abishai took King Saul's water jug and spear.\*

**4** “Hold Me, Jesus”  
 Younger Elementary  
 Vol. 2 CD



## Practical Preparation

Gather all the materials you need for Lesson 9. Ahead of time, punch out all the sheep on TA 9a Sheep Review. Be familiar with the picture matches to complete the sentences. Set the pictures aside in a zip-lock bag for use during Welcome. Separate the four pictures on TA 9b Jeremiah to use in Bible Time.

Memorize Psalm 23:6. Each child will receive a SA 9 Psalm 23:6 cube in Memory Verse. If the children have not made one in class previously, assemble one ahead of time to show them. If there's no time in class to make them, they can do it at home. Learn the song “Hold Me, Jesus,” including the hand motions (Songbook, pp. 10–12). It is a gentle ballad that the children will quickly learn and enjoy. Consider making a song poster (see p. 10).



# Welcome

5–10 minutes

Before the children arrive, put the shapes from **TA 9a Sheep Review** on the table in a random arrangement. When you are ready to play the game, explain to the children that each shape has part of a sentence and picture on it. Ask them to find the pairs of sheep that belong together. Each matched pair will have a complete sentence about one of the Bible stories the children have heard over the past several weeks. Show the children how to find a match and then let them play the game. Have readers work with non-readers or read the words yourself. When all the pairs have been found and each complete sentence has been read aloud to the class, you may scramble the pictures and have the children play the game once more if there is time. The sentence segments should be paired as follows:

- Jonah did not . . . . . want to go to Nineveh.
- Solomon asked God for . . . . . wisdom.
- Elijah was fed by . . . . . ravens.
- Saul disobeyed God and it cost him . . . . his kingdom.
- God protected David from . . . . . King Saul.
- When David confessed his sin, . . . . . God forgave him.
- When Jehoiada died, Joash turned away . . from God.
- Elijah obeyed God because . . . . . he trusted him.

Playing this game will help the children remember the Bible stories they have heard in Sunday school. (At the end of the lesson, store the game pieces in a zip-lock bag and return them to the **Teaching Aids Pack**.)

*Tell the children* **You have done a good job remembering the Bible stories we have been studying. Today we are going to hear about a young man named Jeremiah.**



# Bible Time

15–20 minutes

Open your Bible to the book of Jeremiah and show the children chapters 37–39. Keep your Bible open as you tell the following story. Begin this time in prayer, asking the Lord to use this story to help you and the children be even more willing to obey him.

**God told a young man named Jeremiah that he had been chosen to be a prophet. God told Jeremiah that, even before he was born, God knew him and set him apart for the job. Jeremiah was very surprised. He told God that he was too young and he didn't know enough to be a prophet. But God had a very good answer for Jeremiah. *Read Jeremiah 1:7–10 to the class.***



9a

## Early Arrivals

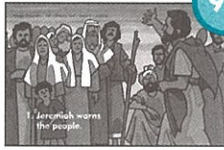


Children may wish to finish working on a class mural showing several scenes from Bible stories they have heard this quarter. When it is complete, display the mural for everyone to see and enjoy.



## Teaching Tip

If this story seems too complex for your children to follow, simplify it to meet their needs.

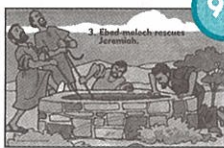


Keep TA 9b for Lesson 13.



### Teaching Tip

Repeat Bible truths, stories and verses often. Children need to hear the Word of God many times over in order to learn it well and make it a part of their lives. Repetition reinforces the learning experience.



Being a prophet of the Lord was going to be a hard job for Jeremiah, but the Lord promised to lead him and protect him, and Jeremiah never forgot those words. He was willing to obey the Lord, even if it meant suffering, because he knew that he could count on God. *Make sure the children know what the word suffering means. Show them the picture of Jeremiah on TA 9b.*

God told Jeremiah to tell the Jews that he was going to send the Babylonians to punish them because God's people had once again turned away from serving him. The people became angry with Jeremiah and would not listen to him. They did not believe that the Babylonians would come to rule over them.

So the Babylonians came against Jerusalem and camped right outside the city walls. Jeremiah warned the people that the Babylonians would attack the city and burn it to the ground. After speaking out, Jeremiah started to leave the city. People called him a traitor for leaving and had him arrested, beaten and thrown in prison. The people believed that Jeremiah had become a friend of the king of Babylon.

But Jeremiah did not stop speaking the truth and obeying the Lord. He told the people that they would die if they stayed in Jerusalem. "Soon Jerusalem will be in the hands of the Babylonians and only those who leave now will live," he said.

The army officials complained to King Zedekiah (*ZED-ub-KI-ub*) about Jeremiah. "He is full of bad news," they said to the king. "He doesn't care about the good of the people, and he doesn't speak the truth." The king told the people that it was up to them to decide what to do with Jeremiah.

So King Zedekiah's men grabbed the prophet and lowered him by ropes into a deep, dark cistern (a deep well) with a muddy floor, where they left him to starve to death. *Show the picture of Jeremiah in the pit on TA 9b.*

Ebed-melech (*EE-bed MEL-ehk*), an official in the palace, heard what had happened to Jeremiah, and he went at once to the king. "They have thrown Jeremiah into a cistern. He is going to die there if we don't get him out," he told Zedekiah. The king agreed to have Jeremiah lifted out of the pit. So Ebed-melech went along with 30 men, and they gently lifted the prophet to freedom. *Show the picture of Jeremiah being lifted out of the pit on TA 9b.*

King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah, the man of God. He wanted to know what he should do and what was going to happen to Jerusalem.

"King Zedekiah," Jeremiah said, "Nebuchadnezzar (*NEB-uh-kubd-NEZ-urb*), the king of Babylon, will soon be here. If you want to save the people and the city of Jerusalem, give up and let him take you to Babylon. You will be safe there, and God will bring his people back to this land after many years. If you do not give up, the soldiers will kill many of our people, others will die of starvation and still others from sickness."

### Cistern:

an artificial reservoir for storing water, usually a tank, especially underground

But Zedekiah whined and complained against the word of the Lord and chose to disobey. He would not surrender to the Babylonians.

Shortly after, Nebuchadnezzar invaded the city. Zedekiah managed to escape but he was soon captured and led like a slave to Babylon. After that, the great city of Jerusalem went up in flames, just as Jeremiah had prophesied. *Show the picture of the conquest of Jerusalem and the capture of King Zedekiah on TA 9b.*

Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem, and God protected him from harm. God also protected Ebed-melech, the kind officer who saved Jeremiah from death in the cistern!

God did not turn his back on the rest of his people either, even though they were now scattered. He vowed to take care of them and turn their hearts back to him so that they would want to obey him. And he promised to bring them back to their own land after many years.

To conclude, help the children understand that God did not punish his people because he had stopped loving them. Point out that he loved them very much, and his punishment was intended to correct them and to turn them back to him in obedience.



## Memory Verse

5–10 minutes

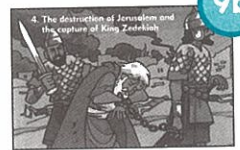
Direct everyone's attention to TA 2b Psalm 23. Point to the words as you say Psalm 23:6. Then have the children say the verse with you. Explain to the children that the verse tells us that David, the psalmist, believed he would experience God's covenant love forever. **Say This verse also means that God's goodness and love will always be with each one of his children.** *Ask* What is "the house of the LORD"? (*It is the place where God is.*)

Help the children memorize the verse, then review the entire psalm. If children have learned sign language to represent words in Psalm 23, have them make the signs as they say the words. Tell the children that they will learn additional signs next week.

Pass out SA 9 Psalm 23:6 cubes, scissors and glue or tape. Show the children how to cut out the cube and fold each panel and flap. Then tape or glue the cube together. Reinforce with tape on the outside, if necessary. Encourage the children to put them in their rooms at home and say the Bible verse when they see the cube each day.

If there's not enough time for the students to make their cubes in class, they can assemble them at home.

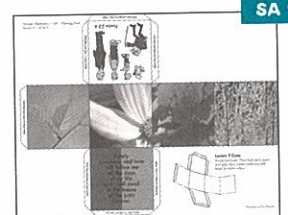
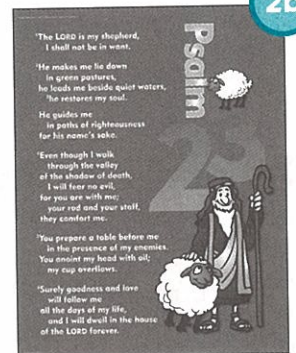
Introduce the song "Hold Me, Jesus." Teach them the words of the verse and the chorus. Show them the accompanying motions (p. 12 of the Songbook). The children will enjoy doing the motions as they sing the words. Sing the song with the children once or twice; you will have opportunity to learn it more thoroughly in the coming weeks.



## A New Covenant

After the thunderstorm of judgment would come the bright rainbow of promise. God would not only deliver His people; He would take away their hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh. . . . He would establish a New Covenant with them.

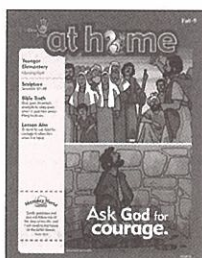
Edmund P. Clowney,  
*The Unfolding Mystery*



See page 19 for alternate cube activities.



"Hold Me, Jesus"  
Songbook, p. 10



## Teaching Tip

An alphabet strip with picture cues can be useful when working with emerging readers.



## Optional Activity

Match the children in pairs. Have each say to the other, “*Child’s name*, God knew you even before you were born. God has a plan for your life.” You may need to model it for them, and then say it in phrases for them to repeat after you.



## Items to Send Home

- *At Home 9*
- SA 9 Psalm 23:6 cube

# 4

## Activities

10–15 minutes

Give each child a copy of *At Home 9*. Make sure that there are pencils and crayons or markers for everyone. Read aloud the title and directions for the part(s) you choose to do.

In *It Takes Courage*, read the message out loud after all the letters are filled in.

In *Being Obedient*, read and discuss Susan’s problem with her friends and the story ending options. This activity will help the children understand that obeying the Lord may result in being hurt. Ask how they would feel if their friends treated them the way Susan’s friends did. Especially emphasize the importance of praying for those who mistreat us because we are Christians. Remind them that the Holy Spirit will help us to love people who are not kind to us. Conclude by encouraging the children to talk about the way Susan must have felt after she obeyed the Lord, even though she had to suffer for her obedience.

Conclude this step by pointing out to everyone that Jeremiah obeyed God even when he had to suffer. Ask the children to think about being willing to obey the Lord even if others give them a hard time. Ask if anyone has had to do this and if he or she would like to share it with the class.

# 5

## Final Focus

5 minutes

**Say God wants you to obey him and not be afraid because he will always love and protect his faithful children, just as he loved and protected obedient Jeremiah.** Close in prayer, asking the Lord to give the children strength and courage to obey him this week.

Before the children leave, direct their attention to the “read-to-me story” on the back page of *At Home 9*. Tell them to have their parents read the story at home this week or enjoy reading it themselves. Remind the children to share their papers with their families and to show them their memory verse cubes.