

# Excellence: Life at its Best

FBC Small-Group Materials; Week of October 8th, 2006

Jeremiah 1:4-16; Pleading Inadequacy

## For Small-Group Leaders

*Dear Leaders,*

*As we begin our 6 week series on Excellence, let me begin by thanking you for your willingness to step out in faith to lead one of our groups. Leading a group of people in spiritual formation is never easy. If you feel "over your head," you are in good company. That is how Jeremiah felt when God called him to his ministry. Jeremiah was one in a long line of saints who felt inadequate for the task that God had called them to. Actually, if you told me the opposite; that you felt adequate for the task, I would be worried. But as it is, inadequacy qualifies you in a beautiful way for his sufficient grace. I urge you during these 6 weeks to lean hard on God as you lead your group. Let him be your strength. Be like the Apostle Paul who learned to revel in his weaknesses so that the power of Christ would be made known.*

*Praying for and wishing you all his sufficient grace,*

**Scott**

These small group materials are available at the info table each Sunday and at [www.fbcdavis.org](http://www.fbcdavis.org).

### **Before the First Meeting:**

1. Invite your group members, informing them of the time, place, etc. If you have been assigned people that have a schedule conflict with your group, please return their name(s) to Scott or Meg so we can place them in another group.
2. Generally, there are three parts to your group meeting:
  - **Fellowship:** This part of your group time gives group members a chance to get to know one another better. Each week, in these small group materials we will provide a mixer of two to help get people talking and knowing one another better. Some groups encourage fellowship by having a refreshments or dessert time. Other groups may enjoy a potluck together sometime during the 6 weeks. There are numerous ways to encourage interaction and fellowship. We will attempt to give you a few ideas each week.
  - **Bible Study:** We will be using Eugene Peterson's study guide on the life of Jeremiah entitled, "Excellence." Group members should work through a chapter each week prior to discussing it at their small group. Chapter 1 should be discussed during the first week of the series which begins on October 8<sup>th</sup>.
  - **Worship:** If someone in your group can play a guitar, your group can worship in song. You can also have a time of thanksgiving, where group members share something that they want to thank God for. You may want to close your group time in a time of group prayer. If you do pray together, encourage but don't mandate participation. Some group members will be ready to pray and others not.
3. During the Bible study portion of your evening, your task as group leader(s) is to facilitate the discovery process that is a part of learning. One important way to do that is by asking "open questions." A "closed question" is typically very limiting. An example might be, "Is Jeremiah anxious?" It is limiting because there are only two possible answers. An open question on the other hand promotes discussion and discovery. "What do you think Jeremiah was thinking and feeling?"
4. Encourage group ownership. As a group leader you can build a sense of ownership by allowing or inviting other people to share in the group responsibilities.
  - Rotate the task of bringing snacks.

- Perhaps rotate homes if others are able to open their home to the group.
  - Perhaps at some point you can ask another group member to lead a portion of the evening. Or you can break into groups of 3-4 to answer a specific question. When you do that you help people to begin to look to other group members rather than only looking to you.
5. Pray

### **At the Group Meeting:**

#### **Discussion Starters:**

Begin by going around the room, giving everyone a chance to introduce themselves to the group. To get people talking consider using one or both of the following mixers:

- **Underdogs** – Most of us love rooting for the underdog. Who is your favorite underdog to root for?
- **Over Your Head** – Share about a time when you were given a task that made you feel “over your head.”

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Introduction: As a group read Jeremiah 1:4-16

1. How would you characterize the discussion between the Lord and Jeremiah in this passage? What kinds of thoughts and feelings do you think Jeremiah was experiencing?
  2. Jeremiah is faced with a decision in this passage. How would you describe the decision that lay before him?
  3. Why was Jeremiah reluctant to step up and do what the Lord was asking of him?
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4. Read the following definition: **in-ad-e-quate**, *adverb*: inapt, incompetent; incommensurate; defective, imperfect, incomplete.
  5. Why do you think that Jeremiah felt like he was over his head? Do you think Jeremiah was right to confess his inadequacy to God? Why or why not?
  6. How does God answer Jeremiah’s reluctance?
  7. In verse 7, the Lord tells Jeremiah that he must not think of himself as a child. What is the Lord trying to communicate to Jeremiah?
  8. God clearly thinks more highly of Jeremiah than Jeremiah did of himself. What do you think the Lord saw in Jeremiah that Jeremiah failed to see?
  9. Just as Jeremiah thought too lowly of himself, so we see other personalities in the Bible who made the same mistake. Who comes your mind?

#### **Getting Personal:**

- Like Jeremiah, we too often claim inadequacy as a reason for not following Christ. What are some of the reasons we come up with that we use to excuse ourselves from living a life of excellence for Christ?
- In what ways do we think too lowly of ourselves when compared to how our heavenly Father sees us?
- How can we be more open to God’s presence and assurance in our lives?

#### **Putting it into Practice:**

- The last question in the study guide invites us to consider people, experiences, Scripture and signs that reassure us of God’s presence in our lives. Turn to a neighbor and share one or two of those with the person sitting next to you.
- Close in a time of prayer asking the Lord to fill each one with a sense of his presence and reassurance.

#### **At the End of the Meeting:**

Remind group members to work their way through chapter 2 of the study guide for next week. Make sure everyone knows where the small group will be meeting next week. Encourage people to pray for one another during the week.

#### **During the Week:**

Email is a great tool for encouraging group members during the week. Consider sending an email out to the small group members sometime during the week ahead. (Make sure you have everyone’s email address.)