

Excellence: Life at its Best

FBC Small Group Materials; Week of October 29th, 2006

Jeremiah 15:10-21; Honesty

For Small-Group Leaders

Dear Leaders,

In our day and age of virtual TV, our drive to see "real life" is propelling us in some strange directions. People buy entertainment magazines in the hope of getting the "real" scoop on celebrities. Journalists sift through tons of information to find tidbits of interesting information on our politicians and sports heroes. All these efforts are designed to find out what these cultural icons are really like when they are out of the public eye. Do their private lives match their public lives? We want to know.

What about our spiritual leaders or mentors? What are they like when no one is looking? Take Jeremiah for example. Many have held him up as an example to the point of naming their children after him. But what was Jeremiah like when no one was looking? When he was out of the public eye, was his private life consistent with his public life? Seven times in the book of Jeremiah we find what we call "confessional" passages in which we find Jeremiah opening his heart, thus allowing us to see him as he is. This week we take a sneak peek into the private life of the prophet by looking at one of those passages.

May the Lord call us to a more authentic way of life as we consider the ways Jeremiah interacted with his God.

Blessings,

Scott

These small group materials are available at the info table each Sunday and at www.fbcdavis.org.

Before this Week's Meeting:

As you consider the three aspects to your group time, here are some ideas to consider:

- **Fellowship:** Here is yet another mixer to help people in your group get to know one another better. First, before the meeting, find a large rock in your yard (the rock should be at least the size of your fist). Using a Sharpie or felt pen, write a question on the rock (e.g. What part of a big parade would you like be?; If someone could give you anything in the world for your birthday, what would you like?). Then pass the rock around the room asking people to respond to the question without revealing what the question is.
- **Bible Study:** This week we continue our look into the life of Jeremiah by looking at chapter 4 of Eugene Peterson's study guide on Excellence. If you are reading the companion book, Run with the Horses, you should read chapter 8 in preparation for this week.
- **Worship:** Try this exercise if you are looking for something different. Pass out 3X5 cards or slips of paper. Have everyone write on their piece of paper their favorite attribute of God (e.g. mercy, kindness, love, etc.) Then, go around the room giving everyone a chance to share what they wrote.

At the Group Meeting:

Discussion Starter:

- **Presence of God** – Ask your group if 2 or 3 people would be willing to share their answer to the opening question in this weeks study guide: “Recall a time when you felt deserted by God. What were the circumstances that helped you to sense God’s presence again?”

Discussion Questions:

Leader’s Note: In verses 11-14, it is difficult to know who the Lord is referring to. In verse 11, the Lord is referring to Jeremiah but then he transitions in 12-14 by speaking about the nation of Israel.

Introduction: As a group, read Jeremiah 15:10-21. If it seems appropriate to introduce the study, read the opening introduction to the group (above).

1. How would you describe the tone of Jeremiah’s prayer in verses 10, 15-18?
2. What are Jeremiah’s concerns in this prayer?
3. Considering how Jeremiah felt, what were his other options (other than confiding in God)?
4. When we are down and discouraged we can be tempted to go to lots of other people, places, or vices instead of going first to God. What are some of those?
5. What do you think drove Jeremiah to take his hurt and frustrations to God? What enabled him to be so honest?
6. What is God’s response to Jeremiah’s heartfelt prayer (question 5 in study guide)?
7. What did God mean when he called Jeremiah to repentance?
8. It is not uncommon for Christians to feel abandoned by God in times of need. Read Psalm 42 together. Psalm 42 is a popular song that has often been put to music, but a closer look reveals the prayer of someone who is deeply hurting. How does the writer of this Psalm feel?
9. It is important for us to know why God might allow us to go through such times as Jeremiah and the Psalmist went through. If our lives always went well and we always were on a spiritual high, what life lessons would we miss out on? What lessons can God teach us in the difficult times that he cannot teach us during the happy times?

Optional Question: Do you think Jeremiah was too honest with God? Do you think he stepped over the line in his honesty? Why or why not? (Leader’s Note: It is hard to say whether Jeremiah did or did not step over the line in his prayer to God. There are aspects of this passage that indicate both possibilities. For our discussion it probably does not matter. Either way, God honored Jeremiah’s honesty and in his grace led Jeremiah by inviting him to repent and thus restore his relationship with God.)

Getting Personal:

- What things keep us from being honest and authentic with God?

Putting it into Practice:

- What is one thing you can do this week to be more honest and authentic with God?
- Close in a time of prayer asking the Lord for the strength and grace to live with him in more authentic and honest ways.

At the End of the Meeting:

Remind group members to work their way through chapter 5 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.