

Standing for Truth Old Testament Unit

Lesson

4

Happy and Restored

STUDY TEXT

Jeremiah 31:1-40

FAMILY THEME

Joyfully Hope in God's Promise

DAILY BIBLE READING

M Jeremiah 30:10-11
T Jeremiah 32:26-27
W Jeremiah 32:38-41
T Jeremiah 33:6-9
F Jeremiah 33:14-18

ESSENTIALS

- FWTE 1-10 (handout)
- FWTE 1-11 (poster)
- FWTE 1-12 (handout)
- FWTE 1-13A (handout)
- FTWT 1-13B (teacher answer key)

THE TARGET

KNOW: God provides forgiveness and renewal for His repentant children.

THINK: I find satisfaction and joy in walking with God.

DO: Repent of all sin and rejoice in God's mercy.

CONNECT

Capture attention with one of these options.

On Our Hearts

Distribute copies of FWTE 1-10, "On Our Hearts," so that students can discover all of the ways God's Word captures our hearts and transforms them for His glory. As you read through the passages of Scripture together, challenge your students to memorize God's Word. Transition to Learn: *Jeremiah 31:31-34 is often referred to as the New Covenant. Today's lesson will help us see the importance of this covenant and how it is fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*



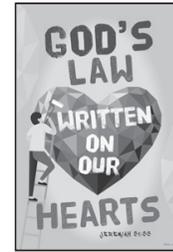
FWTE 1-10

Tracing the Covenants

Reveal the poster, “God’s Law Written on Our Hearts” (FWTE 1-11), and have your students contrast the law written on stone tablets with one written on their hearts. Which covenant would be more binding? Distribute copies of FWTE 1-12, “Tracing the Covenants,” to your group members. Give them ample opportunity to look up the various covenants in the Old Testament



FWTE 1-12



FWTE 1-11

that point us ultimately to Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. After some discussion about the covenants, Transition to Learn: *Today's lesson reveals to us the heart of God for His people. Because of the new covenant established in Jeremiah 31, we can know God personally and live with Him eternally.*

LEARN

TEACHING TIP

Ask your group members to share life experiences they have had that relate to topics you are studying in your lessons. Connecting God's truth to life experience leads to deeper learning and application.

The tragic character of Jeremiah's prophecies of sure impending judgment and his empathetic response (Jeremiah 9:1) has led many to call him the *weeping prophet*. Nevertheless, God held good news for Jeremiah to share with the sinful people of Israel.

God Will Restore Joy and Peace to His People

Jeremiah 31:1-14

In verses 1-14, God spoke to Jeremiah of His plans to restore peace and joy to His people Israel. He addressed the northern kingdom first. This area had already gone into exile 136 years before. Their southern kinsmen rejected them as traitors and half-breeds (the Samaritans of Jesus' day), but God had good news of restoration for them.

Verses 2-6 speak of building, planting, and making merry. Vineyards in particular denote a time of peace and stability, undisturbed by war or violence. Jeroboam had built golden idols in Israel to keep the people from going to worship in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:25-33). God announced to Jeremiah a time when

TEACHING TIP

Try to locate the old territories of Ephraim (in the northern kingdom of Israel) on a map to show what going up to Jerusalem to worship would involve. Point out to the group that going *up* to Jerusalem did not mean going northward, as we commonly think. It means going up in elevation, and especially going up to a place of supreme importance.

the people of the north would employ watchmen to remind them of when it was time to go to worship in Jerusalem again. God intended to do more than restore the northern and southern captives—He intended to deal with both parts of the split kingdom. We should pray and work for times of peace and stability in our homes, families, and neighborhoods. We need them in order to thrive and prosper, just as vineyards do.

God’s plan to restore included those who ordinarily did not participate in such traveling and building: blind, lame, pregnant, or already in labor. God would indeed bring them back, as a tender father restores a wayward son (verses 7-9).

Verses 10-14 look at the entire earth. The *nations* and *coastlands* frequently indicated Gentiles, people in faraway places. They too had an interest in what God would do to restore Israel. Rejoicing and plenty would mark the new life in Israel. Priests ate a prescribed portion of what the people brought to sacrifice. In the restored Israel, the priests would have plenty to eat.

EXPLORE

The Bible often uses the term *covenant*. A covenant is an agreement, but a very solemn and important agreement. In Abraham’s time, people often marked a formal covenant through the sacrifice of an animal, sliced down the middle, giving rise to the expression *to cut a covenant* with someone. This idea was in play in Genesis 15:7-18 when Abraham cut up the sacrificial animal and waited for God to pass through the two parts indicating the covenant. God’s covenant with Abraham promised that Abraham and his descendants would be His people. He promised that through Abraham’s seed, He would bless all the peoples of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3).

EXPLORE

Hebrew writers often used the chiasmic structure for presenting logical arguments, poetry, or memorable prose. A chiasm (*key-as-um*) uses parallels. A chiasm can be presented as a couplet or couplets (see Proverbs 10 for a series of couplets, for example). A good one-verse example of chiasm is Isaiah 6:10. Note the presentation of *heart, ears, and eyes*, then the parallel, mirror-image of those terms in the second half of the verse—*eyes, ears, hearts*.

Chiasms can also be used as a larger structure, where parallel truths begin and end a passage. For example, see Psalm 8, a chapter that begins and ends with similar thoughts, and uses echoes and development of ideas.

The entire book of Jeremiah can be seen as a chiasm, with the heart of its message in chapters 30-33, “the book of comfort.” In the outline below, note the parallels in its structure and message when seen in this light.

A- Introduction: Historical Setting and Jeremiah’s Commission (chapter 1, exile noted in verse 3)

- B- Poetic oracles against Judah (2-25)
- C- History: Opposition to Jeremiah Prior to Fall of Jerusalem (26-29)
- D- Hope of Restoration (Book of Comfort) (30-33)
- C'- History: Opposition to Jeremiah After Fall of Jerusalem (34-45)
- B'- Poetic Oracles against the Nations (46-51)
- A'- Conclusion: Historical Appendix (52, exile noted in verse 27)

APP^{LY}

How does this impact me?

Experience true joy by walking in a right relationship with God.

- *How do we walk in a right relationship with God? What does it mean to be in a right relationship biblically?*
- *What does it mean to be restored? How is God restoring us even now?*

Although we feel and experience much brokenness in this world, God's Word reminds us that He longs to restore joy and peace to His own. He wants us to know Him personally and experience true life-change through His Son, Jesus Christ. Only when we walk in a right relationship with Him can we have this true restoration that God promised to Jeremiah and the people of Judah.



God Will Accept Our Prayers of Repentance

Jeremiah 31:15-22

Rachel (verse 15) was the mother of Joseph, who was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, from whom two of the larger tribes of the northern kingdom would come. Jeremiah brought up the sorrow the punishment of Israel's and Judah's rebellion against God would have caused their patriarchal ancestors. Rachel's children would soon go into exile. Ramah would indeed be a staging point for the exiles, and Jeremiah himself would spend some time there after Jerusalem's fall.

Yet God had good news, even in the grief of national loss (verses 16-20). God comforted grieving Rachel, and through her, He comforted her children. There would be restoration, and indeed, Israel would return from its exile. God knew their grief. More important, He knew their repentance (verses 18-19). God's love endures, and He will gladly re-

D6 DOORPOST

The repentance and restoration God would give His people demonstrates how *God offers salvation and forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.*

member His wayward people in mercy (verse 20). Israel and Judah had committed heinous immorality on a national scale. Still, after judgment and repentance, God showered them with mercy and grace. Our sin will make Him seem distant, but He yearns to be able to shower us with mercy and grace as well.

God's restoration is so certain that He instructed Israel to mark the way by which they went out, because that is the way by which they would return. Sadly, the "faithless daughter" would be just as slow to believe God's promise of restoration as she was to believe His promise of judgment (verses 21-22). The new thing on earth seems to refer to a common proverb of the day whose meaning is no longer clear. Many scholars take it to mean, in general, the weak (Israel's captives) will overpower the strong (their captors). Still, it is unclear.

EXPLORE What about Rachel weeping in Ramah? Is this a prophecy? Matthew 2:17-18 referred back to this passage in Jeremiah. Ramah was a few miles north of Jerusalem and served as the departure point for many of the exiles headed toward Babylon. Bethlehem was a few miles south of Jerusalem and served as the lightning rod for Herod's paranoid fury after the birth of Jesus. Some scholars see a prophetic reference. Others see a reference that served to evoke, in Matthew's day, the same sense of terrible grief and loss that had taken over in Jeremiah's day. It seems that Jeremiah's phrase became a proverb used through the years whenever Jews wanted to refer to the mistreatment of Jewish children.

APPLY  

How does this impact me?

Repent of all sin and rejoice in God's mercy.

- *What does genuine repentance look like? How does Scripture help us understand this?*
- *How much comfort does it bring you knowing that God listens and responds to the sincere prayers of His people?*

The God that we serve listens and responds to the genuine, humble prayers of His people. The people of Judah called out to God to intervene and deliver them from their troubles. They repented (turned away) from their sin and experienced a beautiful restoration. This restoration can be ours too! When we pray to God, we can know that He not only hears us but has promised to forgive us of sin. We should rejoice and be glad for all that God does for us.



God Desires to Bless and Live With His People

Jeremiah 31:23-40

God had benevolent plans for Israel and Judah, and the remainder of this chapter builds the case. Even though the land would be desolate and Jerusalem demolished, new inhabitants would fill both the land and the city, and thrive there (verses 23-25). Apparently, God delivered this message to Jeremiah via a dream (verse 26). The dream of God's restoration must have been pleasant indeed.

Verses 27-30 use the image of God's filling the land with people and animals as a farmer would fill soil with seed for a rich harvest. God had been working against them; He would however work just as hard for them. In Judah's deportation, the few, the remnant who still followed God, went into exile along with the idolatrous majority. In the coming day, that would never happen.

Verses 31-34 reveal a marvelous new covenant. Israel repeatedly broke the old covenant that God had established following the Exodus from Egypt. In the new covenant, God promised to work within the hearts of His people. External prods and encouragements to obedience would lose importance—people would obey from the heart!

God then appealed to the rhythms and constants of the natural world to highlight His promise and goodwill for His people (verses 35-37). This physical world came from our Lord. The Bible often uses examples from the natural order to underline important points. The rhythm of sun, moon, and stars would wear out long before God's love for Israel came to an end. Measuring the fullness of heaven and earth would not suffice for breaking His steadfast mercy. To make it very clear, God then referred to some of the parts of Jerusalem that would be rebuilt. He even promised to extend the city (verses 38-40).

EXPLORE

What is the importance of the *new covenant* in verses 31-34? First, we should contrast it with the old covenant. The old one was broken (by Israel) many times over hundreds of years. The new one would not rely on external rules and obligations. The new one would find its roots in what had always been the problem—the human heart itself. How would God plant His law within believers under this new covenant? How would He write it on their hearts? He would do it through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Many early Jewish believers found transition from old to new very painful. Yet, the New Testament writers were quite clear that Jesus Christ inaugurated the new covenant of which Jeremiah spoke (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). Passages such as Romans 11:27, and especially Hebrews 8:6-13 and 10:14-18 point out that if the old covenant had been good enough, then God would have had no need to introduce a new one.

Walk closely with God in the new covenant written in Christ’s blood.

- *What does the establishment of the new covenant show us about our God?*
- *How does God live with His people now? What has He given us that helps us know, trust, love, and obey Him more?*

All of the various covenants God established with His people teach us one imperative truth: God desires to live with His people. From the covenant with Abraham to the covenant in Jeremiah 31, God is demonstrating His love for and faithfulness to mankind. Ultimately, all of the covenants point us to Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us. One day, by faith in Jesus Christ alone, we will enjoy God’s presence for all eternity. What a day that will be!

Covenant Crossword



FWTE 1-13A

Distribute copies of FWTE 1-13A, “Covenant Crossword” (with answers on FWTE 1-13B) to allow students to recall some important words and terms from the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Give students enough time to fill in the words in the puzzle using the clues given. They may use their Bibles to help them, or you may want to display the verses from Jeremiah. After everyone is finished, remind your



FWTE 1-13B

class that God established the new covenant with us to show us His great love for us and to show us our desperate need for a Savior to deliver us from our sinfulness. Close your time together asking God to forgive you of sin and to supply you with the strength needed to live faithfully for Christ alone.

I Will Remember No More!

Review Jeremiah 31:34 with your students, then read Psalm 32:1-2 together. Close your time together by sharing with your class the message of the gospel. After some discussion, invite members from your class to pray a prayer of thanksgiving for the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ died to forgive us of our sin and to make us His righteousness. Encourage your students to continually praise God by their actions and attitudes this week. Challenge them to memorize Psalm 32:1-2.

on OUR **HEARTS**

God's Word teaches, corrects, rebukes, and exhorts us to righteousness, so that we may be complete, lacking no good thing.

What are some other ways to describe God's Word, according to God's Word? Find a key word or phrase from each of the verses below.

Hebrews 4:12

Psalm 19:7

Psalm 119:105

Proverbs 30:5

Job 23:12

Colossians 3:16-17

John 6:63

Mark 13:31

Psalm 119:103

Jeremiah 15:16

Psalm 119:89

John 17:17

TRACING THE Covenants

What is a covenant?

A covenant is a binding agreement between two or more parties. When we speak of Biblical covenants, we are referring to instances where God has entered into an agreement with mankind that involves both promises and responsibilities for each party.

Scripture's Covenants:

START

ADAMIC COVENANT

Genesis 1:27-28,
2:16-17



ABRAHAMIC
Genesis 12



NOAHIC
Genesis 9



MOSAIC
Exodus 19-24



DAVIDIC
2 Samuel
7:12-17



New COVENANT
Jeremiah 31:31-34

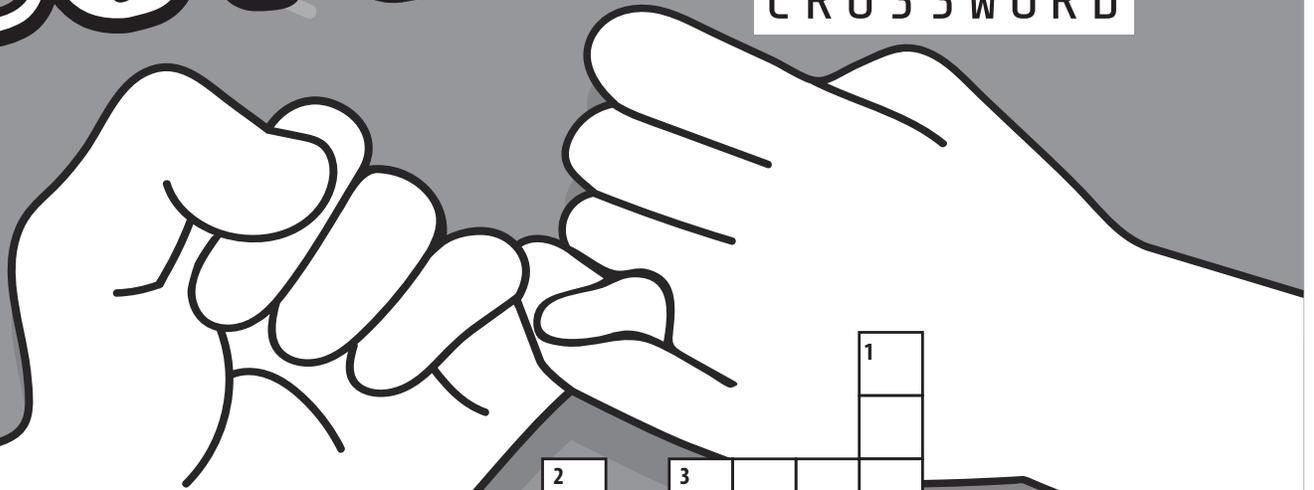


Jesus as fulfillment
of God's covenant promise
"I will be their God, and
they shall be my people."

(Hebrews 12:24, Hebrews 13:20)

Covenant

CROSSWORD



Across:

- 3. Master/Ruler
- 6. Jacob's new name
- 8. The _____ of these is love
- 10. 70 x 7
- 11. More than one person
- 13. Promise between two parties
- 14. To help others learn
- 15. Lion
- 16. Biblical term for old men
- 19. To understand

Down:

- 1. Yahweh
- 2. Compose
- 3. Smallest amount
- 4. Modern
- 5. Folks next door
- 7. To not forget
- 9. Organ that pumps blood, plural
- 12. Sin/Transgression
- 17. Anything we do against the Word of God
- 18. Rule