



The stories of the great heroes and heroines of the Bible inspire and instruct us in our own lives. Each one has a “who knows?” moment when God’s story seems to break into regular, everyday life—a critical moment offering a sense of calling or purpose. It’s as true for us as it was in ancient days. Who knows? Maybe God has plans to use you for His glory. Who knows? Maybe God put you where you are, with the influence you have, for a reason. Who knows? Maybe the things you suffer today will make sense in time. When God shows up, a sense of mysterious discovery enters our lives. Who knows what God has planned?

WHO KNOWS? • JEREMIAH 1:6-19 • Tim McConnell • May 20, 2018

God is in my story. My story is in God. But what's my story about? What's your story about? Every great story has a challenge to overcome. Every epic tale has a villain that must fall. As we hit on Jeremiah today, we are going to see that you don't get a story without a vision, and you don't get vision without something to overcome and you don't figure out what it is God wants you to overcome until you let your heart break with the things that break the heart of God. What's your story about? It begins with this question: What breaks your heart?

What breaks your heart? And I don't mean the sarcastic kind of "you're breaking my heart." I missed Mother's Day with you last week, but it was because I had been invited to a pastor's trip with Compassion International hosted by the President, Jimmy Mella-do. We traveled all over Peru visiting sites where kids get fed and supported in the name of Jesus. At one point the guys were razzing me that my hair seems to stay in place no matter what we're doing—bus rides, windy walks through dusty streets, hat hair, whatever. I don't see the problem. I said, "Yeah, but there's a little less of it these days," I was trying to complain about some thinning and graying up there. But I said this to John Ortberg. John said, "Oh yeah, Tim! You look awful! If I were you I'd just stay in my hotel room all day!" He's a great pastor. Majors in empathy. "Oh you're breaking my heart!" What really breaks your heart? Do you let anything seep in that deep? Compassion only works with kids who live on less than two dollars a day. If you woke up this morning and had clean, hot water from a tap, chose between multiple pairs of shoes and clean clothes, climbed into a car to drive paved roads all the way here... you know the drill. Most of the world doesn't live like that. Sometimes our faith loses fire because we are not letting ourselves get in touch with the painful needs of the human condition. Places where we can't solve the problem without hitting our knees before Jesus. We are too surrounded by fluff and comfort to feel anything. What breaks your heart?

Jeremiah is a guy who allowed his heart to be broken by God. He's sometimes called the Prophet of Tears. He rose to his position with early success, during the reign of King Josiah—a great leader who helped put everyone back on track with God and really set up a good culture. You can read in 2 Kings 22-23 how King Josiah found the Word of God, literally found a Bible, and said "We're going back to the Word of God," and how healthy it all was to raise the common good of the whole nation. Jeremiah was part of all that as young man. He had early success. That can be a burden. You know people with early success, maybe they sell their

business at age thirty. I wasn't cursed with that burden myself! Well, Jeremiah's early success turned into a long life of trying to keep people faithful to God who didn't want to be, and it just got harder and harder as people listened to him less and less, and he watched them fall into the pits of their own self-destruction. That's what burdened his heart. That's what broke his heart. Do you have a burden for the spiritually lost? Does it burden your heart to see people walk away from the Lord? It did Jeremiah's.

Let's dig in. Verse 6: "'Alas, Sovereign Lord,' I said, 'I do not know how to speak; I am too young'" (Jeremiah 1:6). We think Jeremiah was around twenty. "But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am too young.' 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" (Jeremiah 1:7-8). You are never too young to do what God is asking you to do. You graduating seniors, you're never too young. But look at what God does. God is with you. Yours is to obey and set fear aside; God's is to provide the power and the outcome. Now Jeremiah receives his commissioning from the Lord, verse 9-10: "Then the Lord reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, 'I have put my words in your mouth'" (Jeremiah 1:9). Jeremiah receives from the Lord, a vision, a purpose, a mission—a commissioning. The Lord says to Jeremiah, "I am with you," I will be with you. That's the Spirit of God. God is with you wherever you go because the Spirit of God is wherever you go, and dwells within. God says, "My words are in you." Word of God. Word and Spirit.

Today is Pentecost. Pentecost was a festival of the gift of God's Word, the Pentateuch to be exact—the first five books of the Old Testament. But when Christians were gathered for the Pentecost festival in Jerusalem, that's when the Holy Spirit came over them like fire. They were lit up with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, and we mark that every year as the birth of the church. Celebrating the Word, the Spirit is poured out. Receiving the Word, Jeremiah hears that God will be with him by His Spirit. Word and Spirit; Spirit and Word. If you want a vision for your life, if you want God's purpose for your life, if you want to know what it is that you are to go up against in your story, it is found in the celebration of the Word and the outpouring of the Spirit. You say, "I haven't found my passion yet. I don't know where my heart breaks with the things that break God's heart. I don't know what my story is supposed to be about." Return to the Word. Call out to the Holy Spirit. Word and Spirit, that's where Jeremiah's commissioning comes from. If you want vision in your life, it comes by Word and Spirit.

Here it is, verse 10: "See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). This is the mission statement for Jeremiah's ministry, it's the vision statement for his life, and it comes in two emphases: tear down and build up. God tells Jeremiah there are things he has to tear down.

The people are prone to turn from God. As Jeremiah later says, they turn from the springs of living water found in God to building their own cisterns that don't hold water. "They are going to turn away from Me and toward false gods, and Jeremiah, you have to tear that stuff down. You can't leave the people enslaved to false gods, false hopes, empty trash—you have to show them they are chasing after things that are just not worth chasing after. Tear down. Then you can build up. Give them truth. Give them visions of My goodness, My faithfulness, My covenant promises that I will never turn away from." Tear down what's false so you can install what's true. Jeremiah saw a new covenant coming. "'This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people'" (Jeremiah 31:33). Tear down; build up.

Then God gives Jeremiah a few more pictures. I won't break those down for you today, but the vision is filled in a little more here and Jeremiah is off to the races. When God gives you vision, when you see where God has you going, the vision makes you strong. Look at the end, verse 18-19: "'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" (Jeremiah 1:18-19). When you have a picture of what is worth fighting for, when you can see what God has you to overcome, when you let God break your heart, and show you what is and what needs to be, it makes you strong, it gives you conviction, passion. When you see what God wants you to see, you will be strong. "I have made you a fortified city." They will push against you, but they won't be able to push you over or push you off of this vision. Why? "Because," God says, "I am with you. I am within you. I will hold you firm and rescue you."

Does your life with Christ feel numb, passionless? You need a vision, you need your heart broken with the things that break the heart of God. What breaks your heart? I've started to notice my heart breaks for a lot of stuff. I cry at every movie I see. I've seen *The Greatest Showman* twice—cried both times. I watched *Darkest Hour*, that movie about Winston Churchill, when he goes

down into the underground and talks to the people down there, and asks them, "Do you think we should surrender, you know, to the Nazis?" I was blubbering. I was on a plane recently watching *Jumanji*, the new one with Dwayne 'the Rock' Johnson. I was saying to myself, "Tim, do not cry. Do not cry right now, on a plane, watching Dwayne 'the Rock' Johnson in *Jumanji*. Come on!" What breaks your heart?

Maybe this graduation season your heart breaks for our high schools. I remember two years ago when Colorado Springs was suffering a rash of suicides. Someone said to me, "Oh yeah, we're back in suicide season." I thought, No! We don't do that. We don't do suicide season; this doesn't get to be normal. Now, this weekend we move again through the trauma of ten students killed by a seventeen-year-old fellow student in Santa Fe, Texas. Back then, I asked you to pray every time you drove by your high school. My old friend David Strehlow contacted me and told me about a prayer meeting he's been running for years to pray for our schools and teachers. If you know Dave, you know this has been on his heart since he came to Christ as a high school coach. Two weeks ago, I was participating in a National Day of Prayer event here in town and there was Dave. He had been asked to come pray for our schools. It was known, that's where his heart is. Move into what breaks your heart and God will start to use you to overcome.

My heart breaks for kids in poverty here and around the world. Last week I met this young lady working in the Compassion office in Lima, Peru. Her name is Adela. She grew up in extreme poverty outside of the city. When she was eight, she contracted a skin disease. Something you and I would quickly get taken care of at the doctor's office, but her family had no money for medicine or a trip to see a doctor. The skin disease grew and grew. It was more and more painful. Then all her hair fell out. Adela said, "At that time, I wanted to die. I asked God if I could please die." God had other plans. Compassion partnered Adela with a woman from New Jersey; she got a letter about God's love. Adela received nutrition, medicine, education and the Gospel. She gave her life to Christ and grew to a healthy, mature young lady following Jesus. She works in the central office of Compassion in Lima processing the sponsor letters for the 80,000 Compassion kids of Peru, and Adela smiled to tell us: "Now I have my own Compassion child. Emmanuel. A boy in Kenya." From the chains of dehumanizing poverty, without the resources to care for her own basic needs, she is now part of ministering to a nation of children—and one special boy.

What breaks your heart? What is it that you are going

to get involved with and overcome in the power of God? God is in your story, but what's your story going to be about? What is happening in your world that you just can't stand a minute longer? Broken marriages. People struggling in spiritual darkness. Students and teachers. Homeless and jobless. Police who have to walk into danger without the proper protective gear. Soldiers facing long deployments. You young graduates among us; you older and wiser among us. You are never too young, and you are never too old to find the passion and be moved by the vision, and walk into what God has called you to overcome—to tear down, to uproot, to overthrow, and then to build and restore. Vision emerges from a broken heart and a spirit of tears.

Jeremiah had a hard run. It just gets worse and worse. People scoff at him, throw him in a well, burn the Scriptures in front of him. We think he died in Egypt among exiles. Not easy. He was the prophet of tears. So much so, he wrote Lamentations! The next book of the Bible. "My eyes fail for tears," he said. "I cry so much I can't even see straight!" But he saw something else coming. "Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:21-23). And this: "[The Lord says] They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me and that all will then go well for them and for their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul" (Jeremiah 32:38-41).

Can you hear that from the Lord this morning? I will never stop doing good to you. I Myself will come to you. That's Jesus. I will gather My people. That's Jesus. I will make a New Covenant. Jesus said, "Look this cup is the New Covenant, in My blood poured out for you." It's in Jesus we know the new covenant. It's in Jesus we find our purpose and passion and the call to overcome. It's in Jesus we know what our story is about. In Him, in Jesus Christ, you are a city fortified and able to stand, never toppled, never destroyed, able to move against the forces of evil and confusion that break your heart and bring tears to your eyes, able to move against what is wrong, and able to establish what is right, even in small measure, even just a seed. In Christ, who knows? In Christ your story has a purpose.

STUDY GUIDE

WHO KNOWS? • JEREMIAH 1:6-19

UP: Connect With God Through Spending Time in God's Word

Read the passage for the week: Jeremiah 1:6-19. Allow a few moments to silently reflect on what you read. Underline or note words or phrases that seem meaningful. Read it one more time. Pray for your study of God's Word.

- What objections does Jeremiah make to the Lord? What do you think was going through Jeremiah's mind as he made these objections?
- Re-read verses 7-9. How do you think Jeremiah felt when the Lord said this to him?
- Re-read verse 19. In the face of a difficult task, what comfort do you think these words would have brought to Jeremiah?
- If you were in Jeremiah's shoes, what would you have said or done in response to God in this moment?
- Who or what encourages you to remain faithful to the Lord even when things are hard?

Going Deeper: Where in your life do you need encouragement right now to keep going even when it is hard?

OUT: Connect With the World Around Us by Joining God in God's Mission

Spend some time praying for our world. Pray for Christians who are facing persecution. Pray that the name of Jesus would be proclaimed even in the darkest places.

IN: Connect With the Family of God

Pray for the youth of our church. Pray that they would hear God's voice and respond to God's leading. Pray that they would grow in the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.