



[Title Slide] This past week I was reading about Malala Yousafzai; she is a Pakistani activist who was born in 1997. She is the youngest Nobel Prize winner in history; she won it when she was only 17 years old. Why? Because she is a human rights advocate for women and children in her home country, pushing back against the Taliban’s policies which at times have banned girls from even attending school. Her advocacy has turned into an international ministry; according to one prime minister of Pakistan, she has become their “most prominent citizen.”

[Slide] On her sixteenth birthday she spoke at the UN; here’s part of her speech:

*I speak — not for myself, but so those without voice can be heard. Those who have fought for their rights: Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity.*

*Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated. Dear Friends, on the 9th of October 2012, the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead. They shot my friends too. They thought that the bullets would silence us. But they failed. And then, out of that silence came, thousands of voices. The terrorists thought that they would change my aims and stop my ambitions but nothing changed in my life except this: Weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born. I am the same Malala. My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same and my dreams are the same.*

Who would have thought a teenager could have such an impact? In terrifying and hopeless times, she literally risked her life to deliver an important message. And because of her courage, people found hope. She’s made a difference.

[Title Slide] We’re going to spend the next three weeks looking at the prophet Jeremiah. Some have called Jeremiah “the weeping prophet” because of his hard life and message. The people had abandoned God, and as a result, Jeremiah was given a message of judgment from God that people did not want to hear. He was despised by the people and spent a lot of his life in danger. I think sometimes we think of prophets as people who

foretold the future, but their job was more about revealing truth. Yes, sometimes that involved statements about the future, but usually it was about calling out people for disobeying God and revealing the truth of what they had done and what God's judgement was.

Jeremiah began his ministry as a prophet at a surprisingly young age – more on that in a moment, but he and Malala Yousafzai have a lot in common. His ministry went on for decades. He actually survived five kings; granted, two of them were only kings for three months each, but the other three had long reigns.

Let's look at Jeremiah description of his calling to be a prophet:

[Slide] *Jeremiah 1:4-10 (NLT) <sup>4</sup> The Lord gave me this message: <sup>5</sup> "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations."*

*<sup>6</sup> "O Sovereign Lord," I said, "I can't speak for you! I'm too young!"*

Why would Jeremiah say he was too young? Because he was a teenager. Yeah, God saw that his people were being disobedient, that the kings had rejected Him, and decided the best person for the job to call them out was a teenager, which was absolutely terrifying for Jeremiah! How was he supposed to confront the nation? How was he supposed to stand up to the king? He was inexperienced and definitely felt intimidated by the idea of raising his voice against adults in power. It makes sense that his response would be "I can't speak for you! I'm too young!"

But God has a history of doing amazing things with young people. Samuel began his ministry as a prophet as a child. Mary and Joseph were teenagers when Jesus was born. Eleven of the twelve apostles were teens when Jesus chose them to be his disciples and eventual founders of the church. Jeremiah may have been shocked at the idea, but he was only one of many young people God has chosen to do amazing things with.

[Slide] *<sup>7</sup> The Lord replied, "Don't say, 'I'm too young,' for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. <sup>8</sup> And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and will protect you. I, the Lord, have spoken!"*

In what world does age matter if God is the one doing the sending? God is driving home the idea that Jeremiah didn't need to be afraid when God was

on his side. We'll see over these three weeks that Jeremiah didn't have an easy time, and in fact, he even went into hiding because of the danger he faced at times, but the reality is that if He was doing what God told him to do, then God would protect him.

[Slide] *<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord reached out and touched my mouth and said, "Look, I have put my words in your mouth! <sup>10</sup> Today I appoint you to stand up against nations and kingdoms. Some you must uproot and tear down, destroy and overthrow. Others you must build up and plant."*

This is a huge task, but God promised Jeremiah that He would give him the words he needed, God would direct his steps, his words, his actions. The task was huge; God didn't call him to just rebuke a few people, He called Jeremiah to stand up for truth against nations, people with real power and authority. It was big, scary, and intimidating. But Jeremiah answered the call, he accepted the mission, and incredible things happened to him and through him because of it.

What if God has something for you *now*, not later?

There are three big ideas that stand out to me from these opening verses that I want us to think about:

### [Slide] **1. Known and Called**

Jeremiah was known by God and called by God. God knew Jeremiah before he was born and had a purpose for him. Look at verse 5:

[Slide] *Jeremiah 1:5 (NLT) "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations."*

This word "knew" in the ancient Hebrew means more than just knowing of someone or knowing someone as an acquaintance. It communicates a close relationship, like between a husband and a wife. God said that He deeply knew Jeremiah before he ever even existed, God had a purpose for Jeremiah before he was ever conceived.

This idea isn't unique to Jeremiah. Look at what Paul said to the Galatian Christians:

# JEREMIAH

THE WEeping PROPHEt



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think God sent Jeremiah to speak at the Temple gate?
- How were they using the Temple like a “good luck charm”? What could that look like today?
- Have you ever thought, “I’m fine because I go to church,” even though your heart wasn’t in it?
- Why is it easier to fake faith on the outside than to deal with what’s going on inside?
- How can you tell when your faith is becoming more about doing things than your heart?
- How can you make sure your heart stays focused on God during the week, not just at church?
- How can you help a friend who’s drifting away from God without sounding judgmental?
- What does “grace that won’t give up” mean to you personally?
- What practical step can you take this week to trade “trash” for “truth”?

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