



October 21, 2018
"Broken Cisterns"
Jeremiah 1-2
Pastor Gary Hamrick

There are a lot of people in the world who try many different kinds of things in an effort to find satisfaction and fulfillment, only to end up feeling empty. Does that describe you? Truth is, only God can satisfy the deepest longings of our soul, and without him, life can feel pretty unfulfilling. This was the situation concerning the Jewish people in the time of Jeremiah – they tried to do life without God, but it was futile and unsatisfying. In this message, Pastor Gary talks about this problem that many people face today.

Historical Background

1. Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet.
 - a. **Jeremiah 1:5** – *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."*
 - b. God has foreknowledge of each person, and he knows, he loves, and he has a purpose for each person, even before he or she is born.

2. Jeremiah felt inadequate for the task
 - a. **Jeremiah 1:6** – *" 'Ah, Sovereign LORD,' I said, 'I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.' "*
 - b. Bible scholars believe that Jeremiah was probably about 17 years old when God called him.
 - c. Pastor Gary said: "[God] always knows what he's doing. And, God always looks at the heart, and he selects people [who] are not necessarily able people, but they are available people. [God] is most glorified when he uses people who are often less qualified, because then God is exalted. [If] people steal the glory because they are so polished [and] 'put together' then it doesn't often testify as greatly as to the character and nature of God, than when [God uses] someone who is [inadequate] and not really qualified. [This]

is a reminder to us: you are never too young, and you are never too old to be used by God. He just wants available people, ordinary people, to do his extraordinary work for the Kingdom.”

3. The time span between the book of Isaiah and the book of Jeremiah is approximately 60 years, but Jeremiah picked up on Isaiah’s message.
 - a. The people of Judah were in a more spiritually destitute situation when Jeremiah became a prophet, because they had not heeded the words of Isaiah.
 - b. God continued to send his messengers, but the people of Judah just moved farther and farther away from God, having put their trust in idols and false gods, instead of the living God.
4. God was getting ready to bring judgment on the nation by bringing the Babylonians from the north to besiege Jerusalem, who would destroy the Temple of God.
5. Thousands of people were exiled to Babylon, throughout the 70 years of captivity.
6. Pastor Gary said: “God [would] use the Babylonians to ‘spank his kids.’ [He] put them in a 70-year ‘time out’ in Babylon. That’s the way God works with us sometimes. If you’re drifting from the Lord and you’re not walking with him [and] you’re being unfaithful to him, [remember that] God loves [you] enough never to allow [you] to remain as [you] are. ... As a loving Father he always knows what’s best for us, [and] when we start to stray he’s going to give us a little ‘spanking’ and put us in a little ‘time out.’ ”
 - a. [Hebrews 12:11](#) - *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*
7. Jeremiah’s ministry spanned the years between 626BC until about 586BC.
8. Pastor Gary said: “Jeremiah [gave] the tough truth through tender tears, and therefore, Jeremiah would be known as the weeping prophet.”
 - a. [Jeremiah 9:1](#) - *“Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people.”*
 - b. In the New Testament, Jesus is likened to Jeremiah because of his great compassion for the hurting and lost people that he ministered to.
9. Jeremiah’s message from God enraged the people of Judah, and their anger resulted in Jeremiah being beaten, imprisoned, thrown in a pit, in addition to the fact that they considered him to be a traitor!

- a. The threat against Jeremiah was so great, that God told him not to get married and have a family, because God didn't want his wife and children to experience the judgment that he was about to bring upon the people of Judah.
 - i. **Jeremiah 16:1-2** - *"Then the word of the LORD came to me: 'You must not marry and have sons or daughters in this place.'"*
- b. Jeremiah lived long enough to see God's judgment, including the exile of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in 606BC.

The Sins Of The People

10. **Jeremiah 2:13** - *"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."*
11. The people had forsaken God, the spring of living water.
 - a. Jerusalem was unique in the sense that it wasn't built on or near a fresh water source, like many great cities throughout time.
 - b. The only water sources for Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day were the Gihon Spring and an unnamed spring in the northern part of the city that filled the Pool of Bethesda.
 - c. The people of Judah rejected God, who was their only source of "living water."
 - d. Pastor Gary said: "Every cell in your body is dependent upon water. [Do you] get the analogy here? God is saying, in effect... that we should be as dependent on God as the human body is dependent on water. God is the source of life, he is the author of life, and he is the sustainer of life, and we should need him like we need water. [Unfortunately], a lot of people don't see their need for God. They are spiritually dehydrated. ... This was the case for people of Judah in Jeremiah's day."
 - e. The Hebrew word for forsake is azab, which means to disregard, turn away from, or let go.
 - f. **Revelation 21:6b** - *"[Jesus said,] To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."*
12. The people had dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that were incapable of holding water.
 - a. Jeremiah was illustrating the fact that the people had, metaphorically speaking, dug cisterns that were broken, leaking, and worthless.
 - b. Archeologists have discovered at least 50 ancient cisterns in or near the city of Jerusalem.
 - c. Pastor Gary said: "[Jeremiah was saying to the people,] 'Listen, you are

expending a lot of effort and energy on something that will never quench your thirst or satisfy you, because they have a hole in the bottom! ... This is the way your life is! You're living your lives in such a way that you are trying to find satisfaction apart from [God]... only to realize it's empty.' ... What an exercise in futility!"

- d. Pastor Gary said: "Back in [those] days, they used the term 'living water' for water that naturally [bubbled] up from the ground, so they understood the difference between a cistern and living water. [The water in cisterns] would become stagnant, [and algae and bacteria would be present.] ... You would have your choice, you could either drink out of a dirty hole in the ground or you could be drinking living water that bubbles up out of the ground!"
- e. Pastor Gary summarized [John 4:1-26](#), which provides the account of Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman.
 - i. Jesus was sitting alone by the well at Sychar, when a woman came to get water.
 - ii. It was typical for women to come in a group to get water in the cool of the morning or the evening, but this woman came by herself in the middle of day, which indicates that her past and present were known to the women of the town.
 - iii. Jesus asked the woman to give him a drink of water.
 - iv. The Samaritan woman initiated a conversation regarding the way Jews and Samaritans had mutual dislike for each other.
 - v. Jesus, when he told her that she had been married five times and the man she was with wasn't her husband, cut straight to the point that she had been drinking water from a broken cistern.
 - vi. Pastor Gary said: "She thought she would find satisfaction in a relationship, and when [the first one] didn't work out, she tried another one, and when that one didn't satisfy, she tried another one. ... She [must have thought that finding love from one of these men would satisfy her.] ... [Jesus wanted her to know that outside of a relationship with God, she would never experience real love.]"
 - vii. [John 4:13-14](#) - "Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' "
 - viii. This woman came to the well with an unsatisfied soul, but she left completely satisfied in terms of the deepest longings of her heart.
 - ix. [Revelation 7:16-17](#) - "*Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*"

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Jeremiah 1: 1-10](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. In who or in what have you tried to find satisfaction for your life?
3. Spend time talking about Jeremiah's call to ministry, as well as his feelings of being inadequate. (See #1 and #2 above)
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the way God calls available people. (See #2c above)
5. Spend time talking about the message God sent through Jeremiah of a coming judgment. (See #3 through #5 above)
6. What are some of the ways you believe the Lord has disciplined you? (See #6 above)
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about Jeremiah's message of "tough truth through tender tears." (See #8 above)
8. How has the Lord used you to speak to people in a similar way?
9. Do you have a tender heart toward those who don't know the Lord?
10. How do you think you would react to the ill-treatment Jeremiah suffered, and the fact that the Lord told him not to marry or have a family? (See #9 above)
11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's points in his outline concerning forsaking living water, and broken cisterns. (See #10 through #12)
12. Read [John 4:1-26](#) before discussing the way people will try anything and everything to find fulfillment and satisfaction in life. (See #12e above)
13. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about the ways the Lord has brought fulfillment and satisfaction to their life because they have a living and vital relationship with him.
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).