

God's Guidance for My Future

Quarter 4 | Lesson 4 | Spiritual Formation

1. **Connecting:** Do an activity to learn about friends.
2. **Teaching:** Learn how Jeremiah trusted God with his future (Jeremiah 1—38).
3. **Responding:** Consider future plans.

SUPPLIES

- Bible

Optional Supplies:

- Memory Verse poster
- *The Action Bible*, image of Jeremiah
- Prayer journals from last class
- Paper and a stapler (for teens who have not yet made prayer journals)
- Pencils
- Student Pages

Teacher Devotion

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.
Proverbs 16:9

When you consider yourself, what do you see? Someone filled with hopes and dreams? Or someone broken down by the realities of the world? When God sees you, He sees possibility. He sees all the potential and beauty in you. He has equipped you with gifts to be used. He knows your hopes and desires for your future—and He is still working to shape you into the person He has planned for you to be. He has an amazing future planned for you! God is not done with you yet!

Whether you recognize it or not, God is using you in incredible ways. He has carefully and confidently placed you in a position of influence. He knows the meaningful things you can and will do in the lives of those around you. He has given you the life-changing responsibility of introducing the teens in your group to Him. He knows how you will use the gifts He has given to you—and He knows how the impact you are making will change the world ... 1 life at a time. May He open your eyes to see all that He is establishing in your life—and all He is establishing through you in the lives of your students.

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Lesson Time

1. Connecting: Do an activity to learn about friends.

Teacher Tip: Often children in at-risk situations lack hope. Children who battle to overcome the obstacles of poverty, hunger, abuse, and neglect think that every day will be the same as the last. They do not plan on or even hope for a bright future. You can help them see that they are specially created by God and that He has wonderful and amazing plans for their lives!

As the teens arrive, welcome them and ask them what their plans for the future are. As they share with you, encourage them to have hopes and dreams.

Pick 4 students as volunteers for the first activity. Pull these students aside, and ask each student to tell you 1 thing that most will know about him and 1 thing that no one will know about him. For example, a student might share that his favourite food is pilau and that he is named after his uncle. If you have paper available, write these down to help you remember them. Have the volunteers stand at the front of the class.

- **Do you think you know these friends well?**

Read 1 of the clues that everyone will know about 1 of the volunteers, but do not name that student. Allow 3 students to guess who it is. If a student guesses correctly, congratulate her for knowing the others in the group well. If none of them guess correctly, identify the volunteer the clue describes. Then repeat this process with the other clues about the remaining volunteers. Once 3 clues have been read, the group will know the answer to the fourth clue, so allow 1 of the students to say it aloud.

You know a lot about your friends! But you probably do not know everything about them.

Now read 1 of the clues that will be unknown about 1 of the volunteers. Allow 3 students to try to identify who it is about. If no one guesses correctly, reveal who that fact is about. Repeat the process above for all of these clues.

There are some things you do not know about your friends. In fact, there are some things no one knows about them—except for God. He has known each of you since before you were born. He created you and knows everything about you. He has a wonderful plan for your life, and He can guide you to understand and follow that plan.

2. Teaching: Learn how Jeremiah trusted God with his future (Jeremiah 1—38).

We can learn how to trust God with the future through the example of Jeremiah in the Bible. Jeremiah lived in the southern part of Israel, in the country known as Judah. In Jeremiah's time, the Israelites in Judah had almost completely abandoned God. They worshipped idols and did not follow His laws. They took pride in their own accomplishments instead of thanking God for what He had done for them. To turn His people back to Him, God sent Jeremiah to them as a prophet.

Jeremiah was a young man who did not know what his future held—until he was called by God to bring a message to the people of his country. He knew that his people were not following God, and he knew that straying from God would destroy Judah.

Teacher Tip: If possible, ask a student to read all verses directly from the Bible. If that is not possible, the verses are printed in this guide for you.

*The word of the LORD came to me, saying,
"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."*

Jeremiah 1:4–5

This verse tells us that God knew Jeremiah before he was born, and even then God had a plan for his life. God knows you and has a plan for your life, too.

- How does it make you feel to hear that God knows you and has a plan for your life?

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet, someone who gives messages from God to His people. Most of the book of Jeremiah is a record of the messages that God gave Jeremiah to share with His people.

- How do you think you would respond if God called you in this way?

Jeremiah responded in the way many of us would. Listen to what he said.

"Alas, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am too young."

Jeremiah 1:6

Have you ever felt that way? Like you cannot do anything important because you are young? Or that you do not have the skills or talents you need? God has an answer for that. Listen to what He said to Jeremiah.

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

- What does God's response to Jeremiah teach us about God's guidance for the future?

He will help us, and promises to be with us.

Trust is the first thing we can learn from Jeremiah's story. Jeremiah trusted God to do what He had promised. He will do the same for us. When we allow God to guide our lives, we can trust Him to help us and be with us.

Jeremiah warned the people of Judah that God's judgment was near. He told them that God would stop blessing their country if they did not begin to follow Him. Listen to God's warning:

This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 9:23–24

- **What does God’s message to Judah tell us about His guidance for the future?**

Following God delights Him. We should know that God is kind, just, and righteous.

Love is another thing we can learn from Jeremiah’s story. God sent Jeremiah to share His message with the people of Judah because He loved them. He knew what was best for them. God loves you just as much as He loved the people of Judah. He wants what is best for you—now and in the future.

Jeremiah’s message from God did not make the people happy. In fact, they beat him, mocked him, threatened him, and mistreated him. His own relatives betrayed him. Once Jeremiah was even lowered into a cistern, where he sank into the mud and was left to die.

- **How do you think Jeremiah felt about God’s plan when bad things were happening to him?**

Optional: If you are using *The NIV Action Study Bible*, your students can read more about cisterns in the “Ancient Archives” section on page 697.

This persecution actually caused Jeremiah to trust in God’s love and plan for his life even more. Though it meant more persecution, Jeremiah continued to share God’s message. He still followed God’s plan for his life.

Faithfulness is something else we can learn from Jeremiah’s story. Though the people of Judah did not want to hear about God’s judgment, Jeremiah continued to do what God had called him to do. He faithfully shared God’s truth with the people, including the fact that they would be in exile in a foreign country for 70 years because of their disobedience. Still, even when what Jeremiah had to share was difficult, he was faithful to God, and God was faithful to Jeremiah. In all of Jeremiah’s difficulties, God brought peace and perseverance, just as He had promised. Listen to the message He gave Jeremiah to share with the people of Judah—particularly the next generation.

Show the Memory Verse poster, if you are using it.

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart..

Jeremiah 29:11–13

- **What does this verse tell us about God's plan?**

God has great future plans for His people. When we call on Him, He will help us and give us hope.

- **Do you think what God planned for Jeremiah was good? Why or why not?**

Guide the students to understand that God's calling to Jeremiah involved many difficulties, but God used him to bring a message of hope to the people of Judah. These experiences caused Jeremiah to grow closer to God.

Hope is another thing we can learn from Jeremiah's story. Even as he delivered messages of judgment, Jeremiah brought hope to the people of Judah. Through Jeremiah, God told the people that He loved them and that He would forgive them. He told them He had great plans for their lives.

This message is for us, too! God loves us and has great plans for our lives, too! Though it may not be as dramatic as what He planned for Jeremiah and the people of Judah, His plans are still good. He created you for a purpose—and He can do great things with your life!

Jeremiah served others. He cared about his fellow Israelites and brought them messages from God so they could be saved. If you are a Christian, you can trust God and look to Him for guidance. You can know that His plans for you are the very best!

If you are not a Christian, you can also learn something else from Jeremiah's story. Even when the people of Judah were not close to God and were not following Him, God cared about them. Jesus talked about God's care for everyone—Christian and non-Christian. Listen to what He said:

[God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:45

God cared for the Israelites even when they were not following Him. He still cares about each person—including those who have not yet chosen to follow Him. He wants you to know His plan for your life, and that starts with knowing Him.

Jeremiah's message from God to the people of Judah contained another promise also—a promise that God fulfilled many years later. This promise is for all of us.

In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land.

Jeremiah 33:15

- **What do you think the righteous Branch is?**

Allow students to share their thoughts.

The righteous Branch is Jesus, who is God's Son and a descendant of David. He will bring justice and righteousness. He gave us the ultimate hope that God has a wonderful future planned for us. We can trust His guidance for the future because His plans for us lead to eternal life with Him!

Teacher Tip: If students want to hear more about Jesus and God's promise of salvation, invite them to talk with you after class. You can use the Salvation Path in this guide to help with the discussion.

3. Responding: Consider future plans.

Most of us will never receive a call from God like Jeremiah did. We may never hear God's voice speaking to us, and we may not be prophets. But He still can help guide our lives. He calls us in many different ways. He may use our skills and talents to help us serve Him through our work or through our service to our church or area. He may lead us through prayer or Bible reading. He may give us a wise counsellor, such as a pastor or another trusted adult, who can help us to find God's path. If we ask God to guide us, He will lead us to His plan for our lives, which is always the best for us.

When we ask for God's guidance for the future, we can trust that He knows us and that His plans for us are good. But how do we know what those plans are? In our first lesson about God's guidance, we learned some things to help us make wise choices. These things can also help us as we seek God's guidance for the future.

When you wonder what God wants you to do, you can ask these questions. They can help you to make wise, God-guided choices for your future.

- What are my plans for the future?
- Will this decision cause others to respect me?
- What do others think I should do?
- Will my choice bring glory to God?
- What is the wisest, most God-honouring decision?

Give the teens 3–4 minutes to think about their answers. Then give them 2 minutes to share their answers with their partners.

Jeremiah taught us about trust, love, faithfulness, and hope as we see God's guidance for our future. God knew Jeremiah, and He had a wonderful plan for Jeremiah's life. Even though God's plan may not have seemed wonderful to Jeremiah at times, His plan brought a message of salvation to the people of Judah and brought Jeremiah closer to Him. God wants what is best for us, even when we are experiencing difficulties. His plans for our future always bring hope!

Maybe you have never thought about your future. Maybe you think that you are too young to do anything for God. Maybe you think your future holds only disappointment or hurt. Maybe you think His plans for you are small or unimportant. But the Bible says that God's plans for you are good! Whether He calls you to share His message with many people like Jeremiah did or to serve in ways others may never notice, God can guide you.

Now I will ask you some questions and give you a chance to think and pray. After each question, take a step forward if you want to show that you are taking a step toward that future. If you want, you can pray and ask God for His guidance in the future in this area.

- What is 1 thing in your future you would like to trust God with?

Pause to allow the students to think, take a step, and pray about this.

- What is 1 thing in your life that shows you God's love for you and His hope for your future?

Pause to allow the students to think, take a step, and pray about this.

- **What is 1 thing that you can begin to be faithful to God with now?**

Pause to allow the students to think, take a step, and pray about this.

- **What is 1 thing you have learned that gives you hope for the future?**

Pause to allow the students to think, take a step, and pray about this.

Optional:

Give the teens their prayer journals and pencils. If any of the teens do not have prayer journals, allow them to make journals now. Give the teens a couple of minutes to write or draw their answers to the questions.

Teens will not be using their prayer journals again, so send them home with the teens as a reminder of God's guidance in their lives.

If you are using the Student Pages, the teens can write or draw their responses on these pages.

End of Option

Close with a blessing over your students based on Jeremiah 29:11.

Blessing: May you see God's guidance in your life as you think about your future. He knows you and loves you! May you be filled with the hope of knowing that He will give you a future that is good and is the best for you.

Family Connection: Encourage teens to ask their family members, "What are your plans for the future?" They can then share that God's plans for us are always good and always bring hope.

Lead the teens in singing this quarter's song, if possible.

"Reckless Love" by Cory Asbury: <https://youtu.be/Sc6SSHuZvQE>