

Small Group Guide

Jeremiah Series | Week 5 | Jeremiah 21-24

September 27, 2026

Big Idea

Human kings, leaders, and false shepherds cannot save God's people; only the righteous Branch from David's line can restore a remnant through judgment.

Before You Begin

Open your time together in prayer. Ask God to give your group honest hearts and open ears as you work through this material together. Encourage group members to bring their Bibles and to speak freely. There are no wrong observations, only unexplored ones.

Context and Overview

Jeremiah 21-24 shifts the focus of the book from the people of Judah as a whole to the leaders who were responsible for them. Kings, prophets, and priests are placed under the spotlight, and the verdict is devastating. But the passage does not end in despair. It ends with a promise: God Himself will provide what human leaders never could. A righteous

Branch from David's line is coming, and His name will be called "The Lord Our Righteousness."

Key Takeaways

- God will not bless resistance to the very discipline He has ordained. Sometimes the way of life is humble submission, not defiant resistance.
- Good theology and moral responsibility cannot be separated. Sound doctrine must produce righteous living, especially toward the vulnerable.
- No human shepherd, no matter how gifted, is the savior of the flock. Placing messianic expectations on leaders sets a community up for destruction.
- False prophets are dangerous not because they sound immoral, but because they sound hopeful in a way that leaves people unchanged.
- God often does His deepest work not in seasons of strength, but in seasons of struggle. Discipline is not the end of hope; it is frequently the path toward knowing God more deeply.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Use this question to help your group ease into the conversation. It does not need to go deep right away.

- Think of a time when you were in a difficult situation and wanted God to fix it on your terms. What did that look like, and how did it turn out?

Section 1: Leadership and Accountability (Jeremiah 21-22)

1. The sermon pointed out that whenever a people are in spiritual decline, leadership must be evaluated, and that the problem is never only "out there." How does that challenge the way we typically think about cultural or spiritual decline?

2. In Jeremiah 22, King Jehoiakim is condemned for using his neighbor's labor without paying wages, while his father Josiah is remembered for judging the cause of the poor and needy. The sermon drew a connection between knowing God and reflecting His character in everyday life. In your own words, what does it mean to know God in a way that shows up in how you treat people?

3. The sermon said, "In too many ways modern conservative Christianity has become deeply orthodox and ethically shallow." Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Where do you see this tension in your own life or in the church broadly?

4. The sermon listed specific groups of people who are often overlooked: single parents, young couples struggling in marriage, the disabled, the mentally ill, widows, widowers, lonely college students, and young working adults. Which of these groups does your church or small group have the most natural connection to? Which feels most distant?

Section 2: False Shepherds and True Shepherds (Jeremiah 23)

5. The sermon described a false shepherd as someone who uses the sheep, neglects the sheep, flatters the sheep, or abandons the sheep. Without naming individuals, what patterns of false shepherding do you think are most common in the church today?

6. The sermon noted that false prophets are dangerous because what they say does not sound immoral, it sounds hopeful. It is a kind of optimism that leaves people unchanged. How do you personally discern the difference between genuine encouragement and false comfort?

7. God asks in Jeremiah 23:18 who has stood in the council of the Lord. The sermon described the true prophet as someone who speaks what God actually says, rather than speaking from dreams, impressions, social correctness, or personal bias. What practices in your own life help you stay anchored to what God actually says rather than what you want Him to say?

8. The sermon said, "Any church that places messianic expectations on gifted leaders is setting itself up for destruction." Have you ever seen this play out? What does it look like in practice, and what guards against it?

Section 3: The Righteous Branch (Jeremiah 23:4-6)

9. The name given to the coming King is "The Lord Our Righteousness." The sermon emphasized that Judah could not manufacture its own righteousness, so God promised to provide it through the coming King. How does this promise speak to you personally when you feel the weight of your own moral failure or inadequacy?

10. The sermon said, "We do not survive this world and all its temptations by way of self-made moral performance. We survive only because Christ, the righteous Branch, becomes

righteousness for His people." How does this truth change the way you approach your spiritual life on a daily basis? Does it feel freeing, uncomfortable, or both?

Section 4: The Two Baskets of Figs (Jeremiah 24)

11. The good figs in Jeremiah 24 were the exiles, the ones who appeared to be under judgment, while the bad figs were those who remained and felt secure. The sermon said, "Outward circumstances do not always tell the truth about spiritual reality." Where in your life have you seen this principle proven true?

12. The sermon closed with this statement: "God often does His deepest work not in our seasons of strength, but in our seasons of struggle. For the exiles in Jeremiah, Babylon is not the end of hope. It is the furnace in which false hopes are burned away." What false hopes have seasons of difficulty burned away in your own life? What did God build in their place?

Practical Applications

Choose one or two of the following to discuss as a group or to commit to individually before your next meeting.

- Identify one person or group from the list the sermon mentioned (single parents, isolated widows or widowers, struggling young couples, lonely college students, the disabled or mentally ill) and take one concrete step this week to serve or connect with them.

- Examine your own relationship to spiritual leadership. Are there any leaders, pastors, or public figures in whom you have placed a level of trust or hope that belongs only to Christ? Bring that to God in prayer this week.

- Spend time this week reading Jeremiah 23:4-6 and reflecting on what it means that Christ is your righteousness. Write down what that truth changes about how you see yourself before God.

- Ask yourself honestly: Is there an area of your life where you are asking God to bless your resistance to something He may have ordained for your growth or correction? Bring that question before God and, if appropriate, before a trusted person in your group.

- Evaluate your intake of spiritual content this week. Are the voices you are listening to leaving you genuinely changed, or are they offering comfort that requires nothing of you?

Closing Prayer

Close your time by praying together. You may want to pray specifically for the following:

- Discernment to recognize false comfort and the courage to pursue honest self-examination

- Gratitude for Christ, the righteous Branch, who provides what we cannot provide for ourselves

- A heart that reflects God's character toward the vulnerable and overlooked

- Wisdom for the leaders in your church and in your nation

- Faith to trust God's hand even in seasons of difficulty and discipline