

Small Group Guide

Jeremiah Series | Week 2 | Jeremiah 3-6

August 28, 2026

Big Idea

God calls His faithless people to genuine repentance from the heart, not superficial religion, and warns that refusal will bring judgment.

Before You Begin

Open your time together in prayer. Ask God to give your group honest hearts and the courage to examine not just the condition of the culture or the church at large, but your own lives specifically.

Key Takeaways

****1. Repentance is directional, not just emotional.****

The Hebrew word *shuv* means to turn back, to reverse direction. Real repentance is not a mood, a moment, or a statement. It is a turning away from what God condemns and a returning to where you belong.

****2. God sees through pretense.****

Judah had reform movements and external signs of change, but the heart remained unmoved. The idols were not truly renounced. God was not impressed then, and He is not impressed now. Outward religious adjustment without inward transformation is not repentance.

****3. Hard ground must be broken up.****

Busyness, neglect, habit, compromise, and self-protection can compact the heart until it becomes resistant to truth. Jeremiah calls the people to stop treating hard-heartedness as normal and stop making peace with spiritual neglect.

****4. Covenant signs do not replace covenant obedience.****

External markers of belonging to God's people are not a substitute for a heart that is genuinely soft and yielded to Him. What people see on the outside can be real or it can be false, and only God and you know the difference.

****5. The ancient paths lead to rest.****

God calls His people to stand at the crossroads, ask for the ancient paths, and walk in them. Soul rest is not found through compromise or by reducing the offense of truth. It is found through submission to God's revealed way.

****6. True repentance is a gift of grace.****

When God says "Return," He is not pretending sinners can heal themselves. He is summoning them into the very mercy that must change them. In Christ, God does not merely tell faithless people to come home. He opens the way home.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Go around the group and answer this briefly: When you hear the word "repentance," what is the first thing that comes to mind? Where did that idea come from?

Section 1 | The Call to Return (Jeremiah 3)

1. The sermon pointed out that God does not soften the seriousness of Judah's sin before calling them home. He intensifies it, naming it as adultery, rebellion, and faithlessness, and then calls them back anyway. What does that tell you about the nature of God's mercy?
2. The sermon described repentance as directional rather than emotional, a turning rather than a feeling. How does that definition challenge or correct the way repentance is typically talked about in your experience, inside or outside the church?
3. God compared Israel and Judah as two sisters. Judah had more light, more warning, and more opportunity to learn, and still followed the same path. In what ways does greater spiritual knowledge or church experience increase rather than reduce our accountability?
4. The sermon warned that because we know the right language, it is possible to imitate repentance. We can confess in general terms but never get specific. We can denounce the culture and never examine ourselves. Where do you think that temptation shows up most subtly in your own life?

Section 2 | The Nature of True Repentance (Jeremiah 4)

5. Jeremiah 4:1 says that returning to God means throwing away detestable idols. The sermon stated plainly that repentance is not compatible with intentional ongoing rebellion. How do you think about the relationship between genuine repentance and the ongoing presence of sin in a believer's life? Where is the line between struggling with sin and protecting it?

6. The image of fallow ground is a picture of a heart that has gone hard and unworked through busyness, neglect, habit, and self-protection. What are the things in your life that, if you are honest, have contributed to hardness in your heart toward God?

7. The sermon explained that circumcision of the heart means the inner life must be cut, that stubbornness must be dealt with, and old resistance must be put away. What does it look like practically for someone to submit the inner life, not just the outer behavior, to God?

8. The sermon said: "Covenant signs do not replace covenant obedience." A person can attend, give, serve, and agree with biblical doctrine and still have an uncircumcised heart. How do you personally guard against the drift toward external religion while the inner life goes unexamined?

Section 3 | The Warning of Judgment and the Failure of False Peace (Jeremiah 5-6)

9. The sermon noted that Jeremiah was not a disconnected commentator on national decline. He was genuinely broken by what he saw. He spoke hard truth, but with tears. How does Jeremiah's example challenge the way we think about sharing difficult truth with people we love, whether in evangelism, in friendship, or in the church?

10. In Jeremiah 5, the people had reduced God to a concept or a tradition. They said, in effect, that He would not act and that nothing would happen. The sermon connected this to why so many churches look just like the world. Where do you see that kind of functional unbelief, the belief that God will not actually act, showing up in your own life or in the broader church?

11. The sermon described false peace as preaching that will not confront rebellion, name idols, or prepare people to meet a holy God. It relieves the conscience without addressing the cause. Have you experienced that kind of false peace, either offered to you or something you have offered to someone else? What was the result?

12. Jeremiah 6 records the people's response to God's call to walk in the ancient paths: "We will not walk in it." The sermon listed specific areas where parts of the church today have given that same answer. Which of those areas do you find yourself most tempted to soften, avoid, or quietly set aside in order to remain acceptable to those around you?

Closing Questions

13. The sermon closed with this question: "Is your repentance real, or is it pretense? Have you genuinely turned, or just changed how things appear?" Take a moment of silence before answering. What is your honest answer?

14. The sermon ended not with condemnation but with hope: God still says "Return." He still receives the guilty who acknowledge their guilt. He still breaks hard ground. Where do you need to hear that invitation personally right now?

Practical Applications

****This Week, Choose One or More of the Following:****

****Examine your repentance.****

Set aside fifteen to twenty minutes in a quiet place. Ask God to show you whether there are areas of your life where your repentance has been pretense rather than genuine turning. Write down what He shows you. Be specific rather than general.

****Identify the idols you are still carrying.****

Jeremiah 4 makes clear that you cannot return to God while holding onto what competes with Him. Ask yourself honestly: What are the things in my life that I am unwilling to surrender? Name them. Bring them before God.

****Pray for a soft heart.****

The sermon acknowledged that human beings cannot redeem themselves by effort and that only God can truly heal a faithless heart. Make it a daily prayer this week: "Lord, break up the hard ground. Give me a heart that is soft and yielded to You."

****Speak truth with tears.****

Think of one person in your life who does not know Christ or who is living in unrepentant rebellion. Pray for them daily this week. Ask God to give you Jeremiah's combination of courage and genuine brokenness for that person.

****Return to the ancient paths in one specific area.****

Identify one area of your life where you have drifted from God's revealed way, whether in relationships, habits, speech, finances, or priorities. Take one concrete step this week to walk back in the right direction.

Closing Prayer

Close your time by praying together. Confess any areas of pretense or hard-heartedness that came up during your discussion. Thank God that His call to return is still open. Ask Him to do the deep work that only He can do, breaking hard ground, circumcising hearts, and leading your group into genuine rest through genuine submission to His good way.