



Discussion Guide  
Race Against the Horses – Part 1  
LEADER GUIDE

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Hey leaders! In our new series, “*Race Against the Horses*”, we’re discovering how even when Jeremiah did not live up to his potential, God gave him a generous and gracious invitation to live for more. We receive this same invitation ... to live with a bold, expectant, dependent faith in God in order to experience our best life!

**\*SPECIAL NOTE\*** As we start a new year, we want to invite your small group to seek the Lord in a more intentional and dedicated way! As part of this, *SACRED ASSEMBLY* kicks off soon! Some of the ways we will support our church family are through Daily Devotionals & Prayer Texts, a Night of Worship, a Day of Prayer & Fasting, and Celebration Services. Check out all the details here ... [rockbridge.cc/sacred-assembly](http://rockbridge.cc/sacred-assembly)

*Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!*

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?  
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or [discipleship@rockbridge.cc](mailto:discipleship@rockbridge.cc)

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**“What you are is God’s gift to you; what you become is your gift to God.”**  
[Hans ur von Balthasar]

LEADER RESOURCES || **Leader Note** We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!

- **Passage Summary**
  - In Jeremiah 12:5, God poses a question to a discouraged Jeremiah that challenges his assessment of his life (“*If you have raced with runners and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses?*”) God essentially tells Jeremiah that He has more, harder, and better for him. In Ch. 1, we see how God assesses and aims Jeremiah’s life. He has value, dignity, and purpose when assessed by God, and his job is to trust and act accordingly.
- **Jeremiah 1 Commentary & Guide to Jeremiah**
  - Use this commentary and Bible Project overview for background and encouragement. These would be good resources to share before you gather.
- **Known By God**
  - This would be a good resource to share with your group after you gather.

ENGAGE & CONNECT || **Leader Note** The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another’s hearts and building joy together.

What is one word that you would use to describe the direction of your life right now? Why did you choose that word?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || **Leader Note** Begin your time together by thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, beginning in a posture of humility and dependence!

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

*“The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love,  
O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.”*

[Psalm 138:8]

**BIG IDEA || Leader Note** Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today’s reading and discussion.

God’s word and work set the bar for our potential and purpose. Are we living life to the fullest?

**PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note** Have people read aloud the passage as instructed. Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage multiple people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they’re for guidance!

Have someone read Jeremiah 12:5 aloud. Then, have a couple people read aloud portions of Jeremiah 1:1-19.

1. What do v. 4-5 reveal about God’s knowledge and purpose for Jeremiah before his birth? How does this encourage you? *God knew, formed, and set apart Jeremiah before his birth, demonstrating His active role in shaping each person’s life and calling. This reflects His sovereignty and intentionality in creation.*
2. How does Jeremiah initially respond to God’s calling (v. 6)? What might this indicate about the human tendency when faced with a divine task? *Jeremiah expresses inadequacy and inexperience, a common human reaction when overwhelmed by the weight of God’s calling. It highlights our tendency to focus on limitations rather than God’s provision.*
3. How does the perspective that God’s plans are “more, better, and harder” than we might expect challenge your views of success in the Christian life? *Answers will vary: it challenges the idea that success equals comfort or ease, emphasizing growth, faith, and impact over worldly measures of success. It calls believers to embrace challenges as part of God’s refining process.*
4. Jeremiah is assured of God’s presence despite opposition. What specific challenge can this promise encourage you to face right now? *God’s presence provides courage and reassurance that we are not alone. It reminds Christians that success is measured by faithfulness, not by external results.*
5. Jeremiah’s calling was part of God’s bigger plan. How does recognizing God’s larger purposes impact the way we as Christians view our roles in the church and the world? *Recognizing God’s purposes fosters a sense of responsibility and privilege in serving His Kingdom. It helps believers see their roles as integral to advancing His mission, regardless of how small or ordinary they may seem.*
6. Jeremiah initially felt inadequate for his calling. What area(s) of your life makes you feel most unprepared? How can you trust God to equip you? *This is a good opportunity to go first!*
7. In v. 8, God reassured Jeremiah to “do not be afraid”. What fear(s) are holding you back from fully embracing God’s plans for your life? How can you trust God to help you overcome those? *Answers will vary: common fears might include failure, rejection, or uncertainty. Overcoming involves prayer, support from the faith community, and focusing on God’s power rather than personal limitations.*
8. Jeremiah was called to be a “gift” to others. What gifts or talents has God entrusted to you? How are you using them to serve others? How might He be inviting you to begin? *Answers will vary: identifying gifts like hospitality, teaching, or encouragement allows believers to find joy and purpose in serving. Using them for others aligns with God’s calling and advances His Kingdom.*

9. How could fully embracing that God “chose, set you apart, and appointed” you before birth influence your view of identity and purpose? *Answers will vary: instills confidence in God’s intentional design and a sense of responsibility to fulfill your calling; it shifts identity from self-achieved to God-given.*
10. What practical and meaningful steps can you take this week to align your thoughts, actions, or self-assessment with God’s perspective of you and your calling? *Answers will vary: steps might include daily Scripture reading, journaling God’s promises, seeking accountability, or praying for clarity in understanding His will. These practices help align the heart and mind with His truth.*

**STEP OF OBEDIENCE** || **Leader Note** *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

Jeremiah 1:8 reminds of a powerful truth from the LORD: “*Do not be afraid of anyone, for I will be with you to rescue you. This is the Lord’s declaration.*” This should give us the confidence to race against the horses! Based on what we’ve read and discussed today, what is a step of obedience you can take this week in this area? Here are a few additional questions to consider ...

- How are you letting the fear within you win?
- What self-talk does not align with God’s words?
- Will you redefine success in terms of faithfulness to God?
- How can you embrace God’s assessment and direction for your life?

*Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question.*

**PRAYER FOCUS** || **Leader Note** *We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your gathering each week to pray together. You can pray for one another as well as the prompts below!*

### **Living Fully in God’s Potential and Purpose**

- Let’s reflect on this truth: God’s Word reveals His incredible promises, and His work in us sets the bar for our potential and purpose. He calls us to a life of fullness—rooted in His love, guided by His Spirit, and shaped by His truth. But are we truly stepping into all He has for us?
- As we pray, let’s ask God to open our eyes to His purpose for our lives and empower us to live boldly for Him. Let’s invite Him to search our hearts, remove any barriers holding us back, and help us embrace the abundant life He desires for us! Amen.