

# Choosing Life

May 17, 2020—Lesson 12

**Background Scripture:** Jeremiah 21 • **Lesson Scripture:** Jeremiah 21:8-14

**Key Verse:** “This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.” (Jeremiah 21:8)

**Lesson Objective:** The students will begin to understand that God punishes wickedness.

**Materials Needed:** *Middle Elementary* student books, Bibles (NIV), markers, pens and/or pencils, index cards, copier paper, suitable music (for the opening activity), an instrumental praise music CD and CD player, crayons. (**Optional:** whiteboard and dry-erase markers; Older Children’s Resource Kit [attendance chart and lesson 12 materials].)

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## BEGINNING THE JOURNEY

✂️ If you purchased the Older Children’s Resource Kit, post the attendance chart and purchase stickers (such as stars) to place on the chart. Also, gather any materials that may be needed for any of the activities for this lesson prior to class (found in the Teacher’s Guide of the Resource Kit).

✂️ Prior to class, clear the center of the classroom for ease of movement. Place a line of chairs down the center of the classroom. Alternate the direction the chairs are facing for ease of reaching the chairs during the activity. Set up enough chairs for all the students minus one. Set up a spot for the music to be played. Make sure it can be clearly heard when starting and stopping the playing.

### Welcome and Worship

Welcome the students and their parents or guardians to the classroom. Acknowledge any visiting students. Open the class with a weekly check-in, letting students who desire to do so give a praise report or prayer request. Then pray or ask a volunteer to lead the class in prayer. Complete the roll call and then collect any offerings the students or any others may have brought.

### Opening Activity

The students will participate in a game of “That’s Not Fair! Chairs.” This is similar to playing “Musical Chairs.”

Have the students line up and instruct them to begin to walk in a circle around the chairs. Begin playing the music. At some interval, stop playing the music without any warning. (There should be one less chair than the number of students playing each round.) The student left standing when the music stops is called out. When that happens, all the students should shout out, “That’s not

fair!” Remove one of the chairs and then start the music again. Continue playing and removing chairs until just one student is left standing.

**Say:** Today’s lesson is about Jeremiah’s message to the people of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was telling the people to make a choice regarding whether or not they would serve God.

Discuss with the students how the people had been disobedient to God and how God would punish them for their actions. The people could choose whether to repent or to be destroyed.

Prepare the students for the Bible story.

## BIBLE VOYAGE

### The Bible Story

Always encourage your students to bring Bibles (New International Version) to class. Have extra Bibles available for classroom use.

You may choose to read today’s Scripture passage to the students from the Bible first. Then, using the student books, let volunteers take turns alternating reading different paragraphs of the Bible story aloud.

### Choosing Life

The Lord God sent Jeremiah with a message for the people of Jerusalem. They had to choose whether to live or to die. He warned that anyone who stayed in Jerusalem would die—either from war, hunger, or a terrible disease. But anyone who surrendered to the Babylonians surrounding Jerusalem would live. God had decided to bring disaster down on the city. He was giving the city to the king of Babylon to destroy.

The message to the royal family was for them to hear the words of God and treat the people fairly. They should protect the people from being robbed. If they did not, then God would

become angry and His anger would go on for a long time. This was happening because the people had done *evil* (bad) things.

The people sat on top of the mountain looking over the valley, believing they were safe from attack. They thought that their city could not be harmed. But God would give them the punishment they deserved. He would start a fire in the forest that would burn up everything around them.

After reading the Bible story, discuss the following:

1. What did God warn the people that He would do? (*He warned them that He would set a fire in the forests that could not be extinguished [put out].*)
2. Whom did God send to the people with His message? (*God sent the prophet Jeremiah with his message to the people.*)
3. What did the people believe about their city? (*They thought their city was too strong to be defeated.*)

## FUN EXPEDITIONS

### Fix That Phrase!

Give the students pencils and provide time for them to complete the activity in their student books. Make sure the students understand what it is they are being asked to do; assist as needed. After they complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

**Answers:** (1) “I will punish you as your deeds deserve, declares the LORD.” (2) “I have determined to do this city harm and not good, declares the LORD.” (3) “I am against you, Jerusalem, you who live above this valley.” (4) “Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague.”

### The Contemporary Story

Read the story to the class, or let the students take turns alternating reading different paragraphs/sentences of the story aloud.

#### Heads or Tails?

Nicky always carried a coin in her pocket. When she did not know what to do, or had to pick between two things, she would flip her coin and get her answer.

“Do you want to go with us to the library and read after school?” her sister Mackenzie asked one day. Nicky loved reading and there was a new book available that she wanted to check out from the library. But she needed to work on her homework with Ms. Garza. She was struggling in her math class and needed help knowing how to do some of the problems from class.

Nicky reached into her pocket and pulled out her coin: “Heads, I go to the library with you guys. Tails, I go study with

Ms. Garza.” Nicky flipped her coin into the air. But while she watched for it to come back down, she had a thought.

Even though she was excited to check out the new books, she really needed to choose Ms. Garza. Her grades were important and would help her in the future. Nicky did not stick around to find out on which side the coin had landed. She made her choice.

Then, discuss the following questions:

1. What was Nicky trying to decide on? (*She was trying to decide whether to go to the library or to meet her math teacher for tutoring.*)
2. What did Nicky decide to do? (*She decided to go to her math tutoring to help improve her grades.*)
3. Do you like to flip a coin when you have to decide between two equally good choices? Or do you pray to God to help you decide? (*Responses will vary.*)

### Exploring the Story in Ruby’s Lab

**Say:** It is now time to explore today’s lesson with Ruby. After we read this section, we will go back and discuss Ruby’s statements, questions, and observations.

Let one or two students read Ruby’s words aloud. Discuss Ruby’s words with the students. Encourage the students to learn all they can about *consequences* and be ready to discuss what it means during the next class session.

### True or False?

Give the students pencils and provide time for them to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. After they complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

**Answers:** (1) F; (2) T; (3) T; (4) F; (5) T

### ENDING THE JOURNEY

Bring the lesson to a close by reviewing the Key Verse and the lesson.

**Ask:** What was the Lord asking the people to do? Why is it important to treat people justly and fairly? What could the people do to be restored to God (be back in a good relationship with Him)? (*Pause for responses and discussion.*)

Take the time to answer any remaining questions that the students might have. Ask for a volunteer to end the class session with prayer.

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**Key Verse:** “This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.” (Jeremiah 21:8)

**Lesson Objective:** The students will begin to understand the importance of and will commit to treating others justly in their everyday lives.

**Materials Needed:** Upper Elementary student books, Bibles, star stickers, pens, pencils, markers/crayons, paper, choice statements, a bowl or container. (**Optional:** Older Children’s Resource Kit [lesson 12 materials].)

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## BEGINNING THE JOURNEY



✂️ If you purchased the Older Children’s Resource Kit, post the attendance chart and purchase stickers (such as stars) to place on the chart. Also, gather any materials that may be needed for any of the activities for this lesson prior to class (found in the Teacher’s Guide of the Resource Kit).

✂️ Prior to class, gather the supplies needed for today’s lesson and arrange the classroom to facilitate student participation in the “Choices, Choices, Choices!” activity. Also, either write on slips of paper or print and cut out the following scenarios/situations: (1) *You walk away when someone tries to start a fight with you.* (2) *You stand up for yourself.* (3) *You call your friends names like “ugly” or “dumb.”* (4) *You tell your family that you love them.* (5) *You do your homework and hand it in on time.* (6) *You do something that your parents have told you not to do.* (7) *You read and study your Sunday school lesson.* (You may come up with other scenarios if you would like.) Fold up all the scenario slips and put them into the bowl or container.

## Welcome and Worship

Arrive 15-20 minutes prior to class in order to lay out materials and supplies needed. Greet the students by name as they enter the classroom. Introduce yourself as the teacher and your assistant (if applicable). Make each student feel welcome and comfortable. When guests are in attendance, have the class say, “We’re glad you’re here with us today.” Ask for a volunteer to open the class session with a prayer. Collect any offerings the students may have brought and take attendance. (*Optional:* The attendance chart found in the Leadership Resource Kit for Older Children may be posted to keep attendance, placing a star sticker on the chart for each student every day of his or her presence in class.)

## Opening Activity

The students will participate in a “Choices, Choices, Choices!” activity.

Have one student at a time pull a statement out of the bowl or container and read it. The class will then decide whether the statement is a good choice or a bad choice. Lead a brief discussion of their response(s). (Continue this process with each scenario as time allows.)

Discuss with the students how in today’s Scripture text, a king and God’s chosen people did not make good choices.

Prepare the students for the Bible story.

## BIBLE VOYAGE



### The Bible Story

Have extra classroom Bibles (New International Version) if possible. For those who may not have a personal Bible, try to provide a checkout loan procedure whereby the students return the Bibles every so often so that they can then be rotated out to other students.

If your students do not know how to find the passage or verse they are looking for, teach and review Bible skills on a weekly basis through the use of interactive drills, games, and so forth.

Let the students read the Scripture passage from the Bible first. Then, have volunteers take turns alternating reading different paragraphs of the Bible story printed in their student books aloud.

## Choosing Life

In the Background Scripture for today, King Zedekiah asked the prophet Jeremiah for God’s advice as the city faced invasion. The Lord sent Jeremiah with a message for the people of Jerusalem. Here is the response: “Tell all the people, this is

what the LORD says: ‘Take your choice of life or death! Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who leave and surrender to the Babylonians will live. They will escape with their lives because I have decided to bring disaster and not good upon this city. The city will be handed over to the king of Babylon, and he will destroy it with fire.’”

God also wanted Jeremiah to tell the house of David (His people) to show justice every day. They were to help those who have been robbed and rescue them from their oppressors. God warned His people, “If you fail to do this, my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire because of all your sins.”

“I am against you, Jerusalem,” God said. He said that the people sat on top of the mountain looking over the valley, believing they were safe from attack. They thought that their city could not be harmed. God said, “You boast, ‘No one can touch us here and no one can break in.’” He said that He would punish the people for their sins. “I will light a fire in your forests that will burn up everything around you,” God said.

**Ask:** What is taking place in the lesson Scripture? (*The Israelites were in a battle against the Babylonians.*) Who is the prophet in the lesson? (*Jeremiah.*) What did he tell the king to do? (*Surrender to the Babylonians.*) True or false: God was on Jerusalem’s side in this battle? (*False.*)

## FUN EXPEDITIONS

### The Contemporary Story (Part 1)

Let the students take turns alternating reading different paragraphs of the first part of the contemporary story aloud.

#### Good Choices (Part 1)

Jace and Robinson were always getting into trouble. They played tricks on their classmates—and once they even put bubble gum in the teacher’s chair!

“Hey, man, I heard we have a substitute teacher today. What do you think we can do to make her leave?” Jace asked.

“After the last time, I think we should stop playing tricks on people. My parents didn’t allow me to have my Nintendo Switch for a month,” Robinson answered.

“Yeah, but you didn’t miss it. We still hung out and had fun doing other stuff,” Jace noted.

“That’s true, but my dad said if I pulled any more stunts like the last one, he would ground me for a year,” Robinson explained.

### Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (first section)

Let students volunteer to read the information in this section aloud. Allow time for the students to respond to and discuss any questions that are posed.

### The Contemporary Story (Part 2)

Let the students take turns alternating reading different paragraphs of the second part of the contemporary story aloud.

#### Good Choices (Part 2)

“Man, you know your dad was exaggerating. He won’t ground you for a *whole* year. Besides, if we do everything just right, we won’t get caught,” Jace noted.

“I don’t know, Jace . . . that’s what you said last time. I’m trying to make better choices and treat people how I want to be treated,” Robinson explained.

“People *have* been treating us a lot nicer since we stopped playing tricks on them,” Jace admitted.

“I say we keep making good choices. Besides, I’m not so sure my dad was exaggerating,” Robinson commented.

“Well, a year *is* a long time without your Nintendo Switch. Let’s do something nice instead,” Jace responded.

“We can help the substitute before class,” Robinson suggested.

**Ask:** How were Jace and Robinson getting into trouble? What consequences did Robinson face if he continued playing tricks on others? Do you think the boys made a good choice? (*Pause for responses and discussion.*)

### Exploring the Story with Nicholas and Cornelius (second section)

Let students volunteer to read the information in this section aloud. Allow time for the students to respond to any questions that are posed, offering insight as deemed necessary. Encourage them to make good choices in the coming week.

#### Story Timeline

Give the students pencils and allow time for them to complete the activity in their student books. Assist as needed. After the students complete the activity, review the answers aloud.

**Answers:** (A) 4; (B) 6; (C) 1; (D) 5; (E) 2; (F) 3

### ENDING THE JOURNEY

Assemble the class to reflect on the main points of the lesson by focusing on the central characters, places, conflicts, etc. Take a few minutes to review the Key Verse from today’s lesson by having the class read it together. Take the time to answer any questions that the students might have. Ask for a volunteer to end the class session with a prayer, encouraging him or her to include some aspect related to the lesson in the prayer.