

Dr. Gary Yates, Jeremiah, Session 14, Jeremiah 11-20

Confession 1, Prayers of Jeremiah

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Yates, Jeremiah, Session 14, Jeremiah 11-20, Confession 1, Prayers of Jeremiah, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Gary Yates' lecture analyzes Jeremiah chapters 11-20, focusing on Jeremiah's "confessions," which are actually **intense prayers and laments**. Yates argues these prayers, filled with **raw emotion, accusations, and arguments with God**, model authentic prayer, demonstrating the **freedom to express honest struggles and negative emotions** to God. He supports this by comparing Jeremiah's prayers to similar expressions in the Psalms and other Old Testament figures like Job and Habakkuk, even suggesting parallels with Jesus's own cries on the cross. Ultimately, the lecture emphasizes the **importance of honest and vulnerable prayer**, even when it involves challenging God.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Yates, Jeremiah, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Jeremiah).



Yates_Jeremiah_Session 14.mp3

3. Yates, Jeremiah, Session 14, Jeremiah 11-20 Confession 1, Prayers of Jeremiah

Jeremiah's Confessions and Prayers: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Dr. Yates, what is the primary nature of Jeremiah's "confessions," and what is their significance?
2. Why does Dr. Yates believe it's important to study the Old Testament, especially concerning God's interaction with people?
3. Where can the six passages that contain the "confessions" of Jeremiah be found?
4. In Jeremiah 15, what specific complaints does Jeremiah express to God, and what imagery does he use to describe God's perceived actions?
5. In Jeremiah 18, what specific judgments does Jeremiah ask God to inflict upon his enemies, and what does this suggest about his emotional state?
6. According to Dr. Yates, what freedom do we have in prayer, as supported by Psalm 62:8?
7. How does Dr. Yates use the story of David and the water to illustrate the concept of honesty in prayer?
8. What are some of the Old Testament examples Dr. Yates uses to illustrate how people argued with God?
9. What is the primary genre of the Psalms, and how does this relate to Jeremiah's prayers?
10. What accusatory language does Jeremiah use toward God in Jeremiah 20:7?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The "confessions" of Jeremiah are actually prayers, specifically laments, where Jeremiah pours out his heart to God about the pain, difficulty, and opposition he faces in his ministry. These prayers, though Jeremiah's words, become God's word to us through inspiration, offering insight into the nature of ministry.

2. The Old Testament illustrates the principles of the New Testament through real-life experiences, providing a deeper understanding of God's character and how He relates to people. By studying these narratives, we gain a more complete picture of God's self-revelation, which we would miss by ignoring them.
3. The six passages containing Jeremiah's "confessions" are found in Jeremiah 11:18-23, 12:1-6, 15:10-21, 17:14-18, 18:19-23, and 20:7-18. These passages are interwoven throughout the messages and oracles in the book.
4. Jeremiah complains of being a man of strife and contention, cursed by everyone, and experiencing abuse and hardship despite his faithfulness. He uses the image of a "deceitful brook" to describe God's perceived unreliability.
5. Jeremiah asks God to deliver his enemies' children to famine, their wives to childlessness and widowhood, and their men to death by pestilence and the sword, which suggests he was in a state of raw, emotional anguish and frustration.
6. Dr. Yates states that in prayer we have the freedom to come to God with absolute honesty, and to pour out our hearts to him with all of our emotions, both positive and negative. This freedom allows us to be vulnerable and authentic in our relationship with God.
7. Dr. Yates uses the story of David pouring out the water to illustrate that we can bring the full contents of our hearts, including our negative thoughts and feelings, before God as David did with the water, thus giving us a model for true vulnerability in prayer.
8. Dr. Yates uses the examples of Abraham negotiating with God about Sodom, Moses arguing for the Israelites after the golden calf incident, and Habakkuk's dialogue with God about the wickedness of the land, to demonstrate how the Old Testament gives people freedom to argue with God.
9. The primary genre of the Psalms is lament, which aligns with the type of prayers that Jeremiah prays. This demonstrates that there is precedent for the way that Jeremiah is expressing himself to God.
10. Jeremiah accuses God of deceiving him and of being stronger than him and prevailing against him. He also states he has become a laughingstock because of the Word of God.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Develop a well-organized essay addressing each question.

1. Analyze the significance of Jeremiah's laments as a model for prayer, addressing how they challenge or affirm traditional understandings of the practice.
2. Discuss how the "confessions" of Jeremiah reflect the tension between divine calling and personal suffering.
3. Compare and contrast the ways that Jeremiah and the Psalmists use accusatory language towards God in their prayers. How are these similar or different?
4. Evaluate the concept of righteous anger and imprecatory prayer within the context of Jeremiah's "confessions."
5. How do the themes explored in the "confessions" of Jeremiah contribute to a broader understanding of ministry and relationship with God in difficult times?

Glossary of Key Terms

Confessions of Jeremiah: A term used to refer to a series of prayers, primarily laments, found in Jeremiah 11-20, where the prophet expresses his raw emotions and struggles to God. These prayers reveal the personal cost of his prophetic calling.

Lament: A literary genre characterized by expressions of grief, sorrow, complaint, and questioning, often directed toward God in times of personal or communal distress. Laments can be found throughout the Psalms and in the prophets, including Jeremiah.

Imprecatory Prayer: Prayers that call for judgment, curses, or destruction upon enemies or those perceived as wicked. Such prayers can be found in both the Old and New Testaments and reflect a desire for divine justice.

Wadi: A dry riverbed or valley in arid or semi-arid regions that fills with water during periods of heavy rainfall. Jeremiah uses the metaphor of a dry wadi to describe the perceived unreliability of God.

Patah: A Hebrew verb meaning to deceive, entice, seduce, or persuade. In Jeremiah 20:7, it is used by the prophet to describe God's actions toward him, implying a form of divine manipulation.

Major Keys (Worship): A reference to the traditional musical concept of major keys, which are often associated with joyful, upbeat, and celebratory expressions of worship, contrasted with a broader range of emotion.

Minor Keys (Worship): A reference to the traditional musical concept of minor keys, which are often associated with expressions of grief, struggle, and sadness in worship. These are essential components in the full expression of faith as seen in the Old Testament.

Accusatory Language: The act of charging someone with a fault or offense, often directed towards God in the Old Testament, not as a sign of disbelief but as part of a dialogue of wrestling with faith.

Covenant: A sacred agreement or promise, particularly between God and His people. Jeremiah's prayers often appeal to God's covenant obligations to enact justice.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Yates_Jer_En_Lecture14.pdf":

Briefing Document: The Confessions and Prayers of Jeremiah (Part 1)

Introduction:

This document summarizes Dr. Gary Yates's lecture on Jeremiah chapters 11-20, focusing on what are often called the "Confessions of Jeremiah." Dr. Yates argues that these passages are not so much confessions in the traditional sense but rather are *laments* – deeply personal prayers where Jeremiah expresses his raw emotions, struggles, and frustrations to God in the context of his difficult prophetic ministry. These prayers, while being Jeremiah's words to God, are also God's word to us, providing a model for honest and authentic prayer.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Humanness of Jeremiah's Prayers:

- The lecture highlights the intense emotional struggle Jeremiah experienced as he fulfilled his prophetic calling. As Dr. Yates points out, *"Zeal for the path of discipleship... is no guarantee of smooth sailing in life."*
- These prayers reveal Jeremiah's weariness, depression, and experiences of rejection and persecution, which are relatable to those who have faced similar challenges in ministry or life.
- The prayers are described as *"raw emotion,"* often raising questions about whether such expressions are permissible to voice to God.

1. Jeremiah's Laments as a Model for Prayer:

- The core argument is that Jeremiah's prayers provide a model for authentic prayer, demonstrating that it is acceptable to bring negative emotions, anger, and doubt to God.
- Dr. Yates emphasizes that prayer is about *"absolute honesty"* and pouring out one's heart to God, not just presenting a facade of happiness. He states, "Psalm 62:8 says that you are to pour out your heart to God. That's, that's what prayer is."

- These laments showcase how to "worship God in the minor keys" as well as the major, acknowledging that life isn't always joyful.

1. Examples of Jeremiah's Laments:

- **Jeremiah 15:10-18:** Jeremiah laments the suffering his ministry has brought him, questioning why his pain is unceasing and comparing God to *"a deceitful brook, like waters that fail."*
- **Jeremiah 18:19-23:** Jeremiah prays for harsh judgment on his enemies, including their families, demonstrating the intensity of his emotional distress and anger. He says, *"Therefore, deliver up their children to famine. Give them over to the power of the sword. Let their wives become childless and widowed."*
- **Jeremiah 20:7-18:** Jeremiah accuses God of deceiving him (using the Hebrew word *patah*) and expresses feeling overwhelmed and mocked for delivering God's message, and curses the day of his birth. He says, *"O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived."*

1. Biblical Precedent for Arguing with God:

- Dr. Yates points out that Jeremiah's approach is not unique in the Old Testament. He argues that there is a *"long history of people who argue with God."*
- Examples are given of Abraham negotiating with God over Sodom, Moses pleading for Israel, and Habakkuk questioning God's use of Babylon.
- This suggests a freedom of access and honesty in the relationship with God, distinguishing between questioning to know and understand versus simply complaining about circumstances.

1. The Place of Negative Emotions in Prayer:

- The lecture emphasizes that it's not only acceptable but sometimes *necessary* to bring negative emotions to God.
- Laments are a dominant genre in the Psalms, demonstrating that expressions of grief, pain, and anger are biblically appropriate. He cites examples such as Psalm 6:6-8, where the psalmist describes being *"weary with my moaning"* and having *"my eyes waste away because of grief."*
- These expressions often employ vivid and extreme imagery to ensure God understands the depth of their suffering, which can also be seen as part of a healing process.

1. **Accusatory Language Toward God:**

- The lecture explores the idea that it's even biblically acceptable to use accusatory language toward God, as long as it's done respectfully, within the context of a loving relationship with God.
- Dr. Yates notes that the Psalms contain many examples of this kind of language, citing that, *"Craig Broyle says that in the Psalms, there are more than 60 of them that have some type of accusatory language toward God."*
- Examples include Psalm 13, where the psalmist questions God's neglect, and Psalm 44, where the people accuse God of breaking his covenant by abandoning them in battle.

1. **The Cry for Justice:**

- Jeremiah's prayers often include imprecations, prayers for judgment on his enemies, which can be challenging for modern readers.
- Dr. Yates emphasizes that these prayers are a cry for God's righteous justice in an unjust world, often reflecting a desire for God to honor His covenant.
- He connects this with similar imprecatory language in the Psalms and even in the New Testament concerning enemies of the Gospel. For instance, he cites Psalm 58:10, which says, *"the righteous will be glad when they bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked."*

1. **Jeremiah as a Model:**

- Dr. Yates argues that instead of thinking Jeremiah was in the wrong to pray these things, we should learn from Jeremiah. He should be seen as a model for genuine, honest, and passionate prayer.
- His experience reflects the reality that ministry can be a terribly lonely occupation, and these laments provide a model for how believers can cope with difficulties.
- These prayers also echo the experience of Jesus in his earthly ministry, especially His cry on the cross as documented in Psalm 22:1.

Conclusion:

The lecture concludes that Jeremiah's confessions (laments) are not aberrant or improper expressions but are rather a powerful example of how to engage with God in the face of difficulty. By understanding these prayers within the context of Old Testament prayer, we can see that they are a model for authentic prayer, which includes arguing with God, expressing negative emotions, and even accusing God within the framework of a loving relationship. These prayers call us to an honesty with God that is often missing in contemporary worship and prayer. The emphasis is on a relational understanding of prayer rather than a transactional one.

5. FAQs on Yates, Jeremiah, Session 14, Jeremiah 11-20, Confession 1, Prayers of Jeremiah, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Confessions and Prayers of Jeremiah

1. **What are the "Confessions of Jeremiah," and why are they significant?** The "Confessions of Jeremiah" are not traditional confessions of sin, but rather a series of intensely personal prayers and laments found within the book of Jeremiah (specifically in chapters 11-20). These prayers reveal Jeremiah's raw emotional struggles, including his feelings of rejection, persecution, and disillusionment in fulfilling his prophetic calling. They are significant because they offer profound insight into the human side of ministry and a relationship with God, demonstrating that even those called by God experience doubt, anger, and despair. They also reveal the power of inspiration as Jeremiah's words become God's words to us.
2. **What types of emotions are expressed in Jeremiah's prayers?** Jeremiah's prayers are marked by a wide range of raw emotions, including despair, weariness, anger, frustration, and a sense of being betrayed by God. He questions God's justice, expresses feelings of abandonment, and even accuses God of being deceptive. These prayers challenge the idea that a relationship with God is always characterized by joy and peace, and demonstrate that it is acceptable and important to bring all our emotions to God.
3. **Where can these "Confessions" be found in the Book of Jeremiah?** These prayers are found in six specific passages throughout chapters 11-20:
 - Chapter 11, verses 18 to 23
 - Chapter 12, verses 1 to 6
 - Chapter 15, verses 10 to 21
 - Chapter 17, verses 14 to 18
 - Chapter 18, verses 19 to 23
 - Chapter 20, verses 7 to 18

1. **How do Jeremiah's prayers relate to the laments found in the Psalms?**

Jeremiah's prayers strongly resemble the laments found in the Psalms. Like the psalmists, Jeremiah pours out his heart to God, expressing deep pain, frustration, and even anger. Both use vivid and often shocking language to express their feelings and question God's actions. The shared characteristic of these laments demonstrates that it is a biblical practice to bring negative emotions, doubts, and even accusations to God in prayer, reflecting the reality of human experience. They both offer freedom to express worship in minor keys, and not just major keys.

2. **Is it appropriate for believers to express such negative emotions and accusatory language toward God in prayer?**

Yes, the Old Testament provides numerous examples of individuals who argued with God, expressed negative emotions, and even made accusations toward Him, suggesting that God allows and accepts such expressions as part of an honest relationship. The examples of Abraham, Moses, Habakkuk, Job, and David all show that it is okay to question God, and ask for clarification and to voice concerns. It's not a lack of faith to voice negative feelings, but wrestling *through* faith. It is not a sign of a lack of faith but rather part of the process of learning, growing, and understanding God. However, this should be done in a worshipful context with respect for God's holiness and sovereignty.

3. **What is the significance of Jeremiah accusing God of being like a "deceitful brook"?**

Jeremiah's accusation that God is like a "deceitful brook" is a powerful metaphor that illustrates his feelings of abandonment and disappointment. He's using the image of a wadi (seasonal stream) that is sometimes full of water but often dry, suggesting that God has become unreliable and has failed to provide the sustenance and support that he expected. The people of Israel were accused of looking for water in broken cisterns, and this statement from Jeremiah means that God has now become one of the broken cisterns to him. This reflects a crisis of faith and a deeply felt sense of betrayal.

4. **How do these prayers model "worship in the minor keys"?**

"Worship in the minor keys" refers to expressing a full range of emotions, including sadness, grief, and anger, in our relationship with God. This contrasts with the idea that Christian worship should always be about joy and celebration (the "major keys"). Jeremiah's prayers, like many psalms, provide a model for this, showing that it is okay to approach God with all our pain and struggles, and that worship can be authentic and meaningful even in times of deep distress and discouragement.

5. **Do Jeremiah's prayers for the judgment of his enemies and their families align with New Testament teachings about love and forgiveness?** While Jeremiah's prayers for the judgment of his enemies and their families can seem harsh, they should be understood within the context of the Old Testament, where justice is emphasized. Jeremiah was not expressing personal vengeance but rather calling for God's righteous justice against covenant rebels who rejected God's message. Importantly, the New Testament itself also speaks of God's judgment on those who oppose the Gospel, suggesting that there is a proper place for praying for God's justice. Examples include the saints crying for justice in Revelation, Paul's curse on those preaching false gospels and his seeking judgement on Alexander.