

Testing the Prophets



Teacher's Guide

Surveying the Source

Isa. 8:20; Jer. 18:6–10; Jonah 3, 4; Matt. 7:15–20; Gal. 2:11–14.

Plotting the Course

The students will:

- ▶ Learn how to distinguish a false prophet from a true one.
- ▶ Discover the benefit of following

God's counsel.

- ▶ Build a stronger faith in God's trustworthiness.

Preparing to Lead

Jeremiah was quite young when God called him to be a prophet. He never married. On one occasion, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah;

and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets' " (Matt. 16:14, NIV). Many who saw Jesus were reminded of Jeremiah. Jeremiah loved the people. He was kind, compassionate, and courageous just like Jesus.

Getting Started

A. Read the following quote, "The prophet is a person, not a microphone. He is endowed with a mission, with a power of a word not his own that accounts for his greatness—but also with temperament, concern, character, and individuality. As there was no resisting the impact of divine inspiration, so at times there was no resisting the vortex of his own temperament. The word of God reverberated in the voice of man."¹

Discuss with the class how much of the personality, character, temperament, and

individuality comes through in the message of a prophet. Allow the class to give their views.

B. Tell your class about the Puerto Rican preacher José Luis de Jesús Miranda who claims to be Jesus Christ. He preaches that there is no devil and no sin and that in Christ's eyes, his followers can do no wrong.²

Encourage members to share stories of other people who made similar claims as Mr. Miranda. Ask what makes these people true or false prophets.

Delving Into the Word

A. Show the class a clay pot, and talk about what it is. Pass it around for each member to touch. Then give each member some modeling clay for them to create whatever they can. Next, read Jeremiah 18:1–10 slowly in order to cap-

ture the imagery that the text paints. Invite each member to share how easy or hard was it to make their object. Encourage the discussion by asking the following questions: ●How does your clay object relate to Jeremiah's message? ●What

Materials

a clay pot; modeling clay for each student

does your object say about God? •What does it say about how God communicates with His people? •What does it say about Jeremiah? •Was he a humble learner?

•What does it say about people and their response to the message and the messenger? •Can the message ever be separated from the messenger? •Is the message and the messenger part of the same package?

B. Read the following quote, “The prophet’s task is to convey a divine view, yet as a person he is a point of view. He speaks from the perspective of God as perceived from the perspective of his own situation. We must seek to understand not only the views he expounded but also the

attitudes he embodied: his own position, feeling, response—not only what he says but also what he lived.”³

Discuss Jonah’s experience, and ask what position, feeling, and response Jonah was reflecting in proclaiming God’s message. Point out that Jonah was “greatly displeased” and “angry,” and that the word *angry* is mentioned five times in Jonah 5 with four of those times referring to Jonah. While he recognized God as “slow to anger,” Jonah himself was so angry that he wanted to die.

Ask the class how they feel about an “angry prophet.”

Discussing the Ideas

1. Why is character and behavior a good test of a true prophet?

2. God asked Jonah if he had any right to be angry. What does this say about the character of God and the character of a prophet?

3. Is the life of a prophet more like an impatient developer building a shopping

mall or a farmer cultivating a field? Explain your answer.

4. Is the prophecy more important than the prophet? Explain your answer.

5. Ellen White wrote, “My Saviour declared to me to be His messenger.”⁴

What did she mean by that?

6. How was Jesus a prophet?

Closing the Activity

Ask class members to share which of Ellen White’s books or quotations is their favorite. Give each of them a copy of the reproducible activity (p. 36), and ask them to write on it why they like that book or quotation so much and how it has

helped them to grow in Christ. Give a minute or two for them to do this. Then collect their papers and randomly pass them around for other people to read. Give time for people to respond to what others have written.

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1. Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (Peabody, Mass.: Prince Press, 2003), p. viii.

2. For more information go to the following Web site: <http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/02/16/miami.preacher/index.html>.

3. Heschel, *The Prophets*, p. viii.

4. *The Faith I Live By*, p. 294.

Answer these questions in the space below: (1) What is your favorite Ellen White book or quote? (2) Why is it your favorite? (3) Was there a time when this book or quote helped you in a special way?