

# Chapter 7

## God's Prophets: At the Heart of the Journey

### Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 7, "God's Prophets: At the Heart of the Journey" (pages 156–173).
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 6 Review and Reflection questions from pages 134, 138, 144, 148, and 151.

### Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Have several students describe the hardest jobs they've ever done. Was the job physically difficult? dirty? complicated? stressful? Then ask: "Did you try to get out of it or get help?" Relate these real-life short-term jobs to the lifelong job of a prophet or "nabi" as the Hebrews called these messengers.
- Ask students to recall and explain the two "marks" or characteristics of a prophet. (1. *A prophet is called by God to a new role and life.* 2. *A prophet's message is typically unpopular with the establishment.*)
- Pose the questions: "Does God still call prophets?" "What messages would God want today's prophets to share?" (*Welcome all reasonable answers.*)
- Collect the Review and Reflection Questions from Chapter 6.
- Have students use their texts to answer question 3 on page 162 as a longer essay (100–200 words) summarizing what they learned about the prophets of Deuteronomical History. These prophets prepared the way for the "latter prophets." Collect essays.

### Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

*Text Reference: Introduction, Marks of the Prophets (156–161)*

- Ask students to list the steps in the "call narrative"—the 5-part process in which God recruited prophets.
- Give student 5 minutes to read Jeremiah 1:4–10 or Isaiah 6:1–9. Ask for volunteers to "walk through" the texts, illustrating how the call narrative unfolded for Jeremiah and Isaiah.
- Revisit the meaning of the terms "major prophets" and "minor prophets," and list the prophets under either label on the board. Ask: "Which prophet was the first to have his sayings gathered in a book?" (*Amos*) "Who was the model for all Old Testament prophets?" (*Moses*) "Why?"
- Divide the class into small groups. Have half the groups write a job description for a prophet. (*Direct them to pages 158–161 for further information on the roles prophets assumed.*) Have the other groups write modern sayings of a prophet using the Old Testament literary messenger formula "Thus says the Lord . . ." (*Direct them to pages 159–160 for further information on the sayings of prophets.*)

### Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Assign students to do the journal assignment on page 162 on "prophets" in the world today.

### Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

*Text Reference: The Servants, the Prophets, The Contrasting Styles of the Prophets, Further Reflection (pages 161–173)*

- Ask groups who wrote modern sayings of a prophet to share a few with the whole group. Have students isolate "timeless" social and moral issues as well as concerns that would not have existed 800–900 years before Christ.
- Summarize the themes of these four prophets — Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea. (1. *There is only one true God – Yahweh.* 2. *People must renounce sin and recommit themselves to truth and justice.*)
- Ask some students to quickly scan the material on Elijah, others to focus in on Elisha, others to review Amos, etc. Challenge students to be the first one to find evidence in the text that the Hebrews were *not* worshipping only Yahweh and were *not* committed to truth and justice. Have them read portions of the text that prove that the prophet—and his message from God—was needed.
- Point out the differences in style (and message) in the prophecies of Amos and Hosea. Amos constantly preached about the coming doom and destruction because of the people's sinfulness. Amos emphasized the compassionate and forgiving nature of God.

- Query the groups who wrote a job description for a prophet: “If we think of the role of the prophet as just another ‘job’, what are personality traits, job experience or attitudes that *could* make him or her more effective in communicating God’s word? Would this always be true? Could God choose a crabby person, an introvert as a prophet?” Discuss.

*Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):*

- Provide a dozen or more newspaper articles on social justice issues – unemployment, homelessness, abortion, war, urban violence, etc. Ask students to read them quietly to each other in clusters of two or three. Play instrumental music very softly to provide a meditative background.
- After ten minutes, collect the articles and ask students to sit quietly in a circle around lit candles. Invite the students to consider the issues they’ve read about and the need for compassion and justice in our world today.
- Initiate prayers of petition for the injustices and destructive situations that are hurting and killing people. Pray too for prophets, those who speak God’s word.
- Play or sing together “I Have Loved You” by Michael Joncas from *On Eagle’s Wings* or *Glory & Praise 2* (OCP [NALR]).

*Conclusion (5 minutes):*

- Assign the Review and Reflection questions on pages 156, 162, 169, and 171.
- Have students read Chapter 8, “Turning Point in the Journey: The Destruction of Judah, Exile and Return,” pages 176–199 for the next session.