

# Training a Prophet

Jeremiah 11-12

# Training a Prophet Introduction

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- Getting to know and understand God is a process.
- We are all in the midst of development.
- Our faith is as much a work in progress as we are.

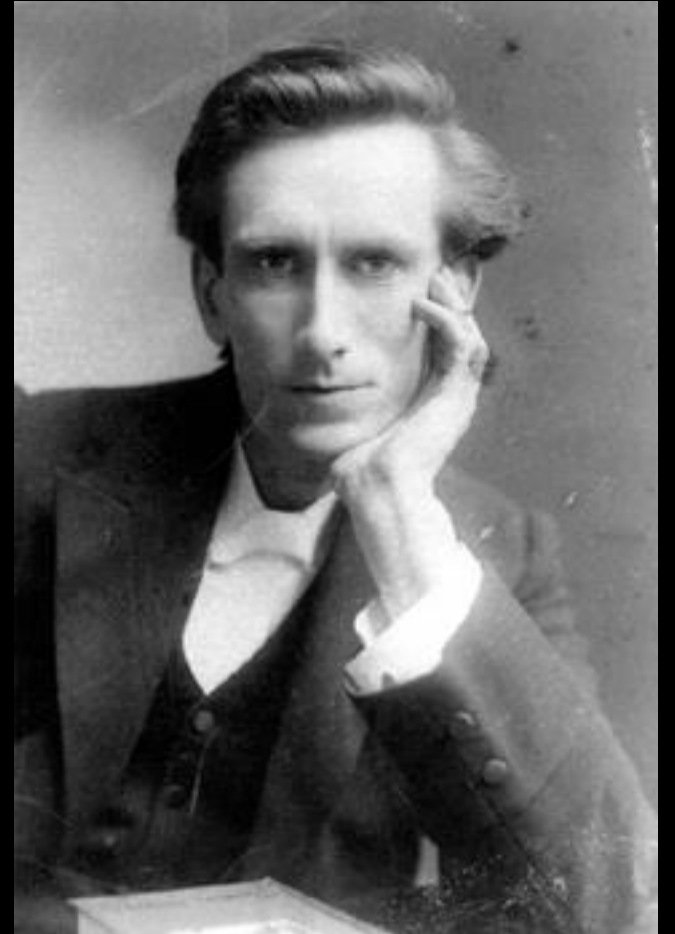
# Training a Prophet    Introduction

- What is the process by which we get to know God?

# Training a Prophet    Introduction

*The only way to know God more fully is to obey what we have discerned, then we shall know something more.*

*– Oswald Chambers (1874 – 1917),  
YMCA Chaplain in Egypt*



# Training a Prophet    Introduction

- You may have noticed the Bible is a big book.
- Not only is it big, but some parts are hard to understand.

# Training a Prophet    Introduction

- In addition, God is big.
- Have you ever found a close friend, maybe even your spouse, difficult to understand?
- Getting to know others takes time.

# Training a Prophet    Introduction

- We serve a big, big God.
- He is somewhat like us since we reflect his image.
- He is also unlike us – in a lot of ways.



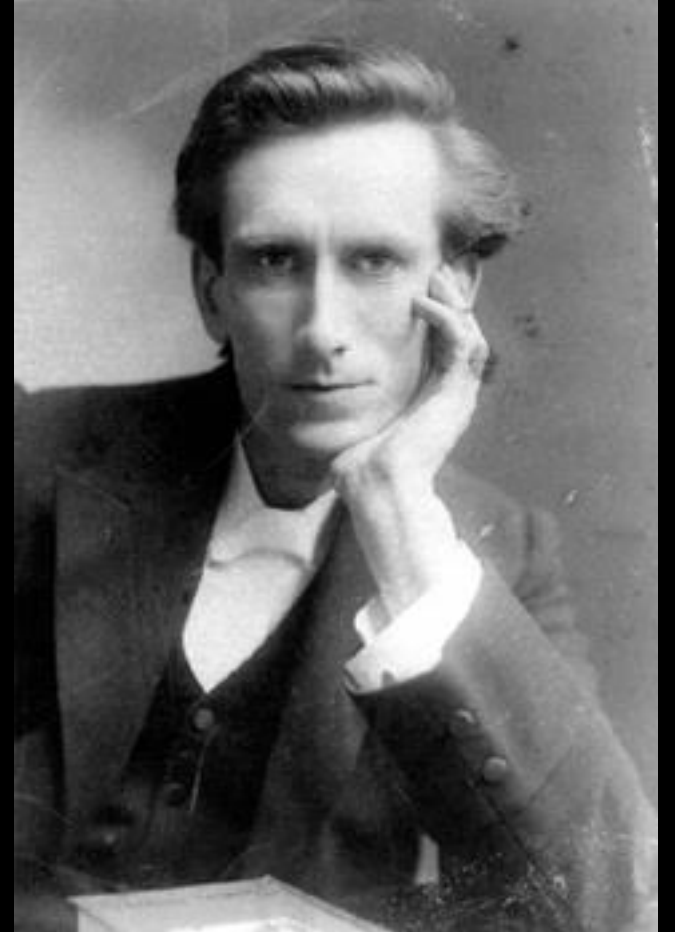
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- We can know him accurately, but we may never know him completely.
- Still, we can know him better today than we ever did before.
- Oswald Chambers called this “progressive realization.”

# Training a Prophet    Introduction

*Progressive realization does not mean that God reveals Himself by inches, but that we realize His revelation of Himself by inches as we obey.*

*– Oswald Chambers (1874 – 1917),  
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# Training a Prophet    Introduction

- In **Jeremiah 11** and **12** we see the training of Jeremiah the prophet.
- He will have difficulties. He will have questions.
- He will also continue to grow.

I. The people reject God 11:9-13

## I. The people reject God 11:9-13

- 11:9 God views the people's rejection of him as a "conspiracy."
- He is not saying the people were engaged in secret meetings to overthrow the authority of God.

## I. The people reject God 11:9-13

- 11:9 The people were simply going with the flow – the spirit of their times.
- The real brains behind the “conspiracy” – if there was one – was bigger than the people themselves.

# I. The people reject God 11:9-13

## Ephesians 6:11-12 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

## I. The people reject God 11:9-13

- 11:10 They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words.
- God sees their rejection of him as – in a sense – traditional.



## I. The people reject God 11:9-13

- 11:10 They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words.
- Judah had recently experienced a spiritual renewal – a return to the Lord.
- This was, historically, a glitch.
- Idolatry and disobedience was the normal state of affairs.

# I. The people reject God 11:9-13

*In an age that has thrown off all tradition, the only rebellion possible is orthodoxy.*

*– Peter Kreeft, Boston College*



II. God rejects the people 11:14-17

## II. God rejects the people 11:14-17

- 11:14 Do not pray for this people ... I will not listen
- A prayer to end suffering without a deeper intention to repent is no real prayer.
- It's simply adding Yahweh to one's pantheon of idols.

## II. God rejects the people 11:14-17

- 11:17 God sees the depth of their devotion to Baal.
- By contrast, their devotion to him was strictly superficial.

### III. The plot against Jeremiah 11:18-20

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*Just as our Lord was rejected by the people from his own home town, so the prophet Jeremiah faced a plot against him by the people of his own village of Anathoth. If the Lord himself had not warned the prophet about this plot, it might have been successful.*

*– Issiaka Coulibaly, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, FATEAC, Ivory Coast*

### III. The plot against Jeremiah 11:18-20

- “If you don’t like the message, kill the messenger.”
- Jeremiah, John the Baptist, the Apostles Peter and Paul – to name a few – all shared this experience.
- Jesus is the ultimate example.



### III. The plot against Jeremiah 11:18-20

- “If you don’t like the message, kill the messenger.”
- It’s so consistent, you can almost call it a biblical principle.
- Awareness of this principle is part of a prophet’s training.

### III. The plot against Jeremiah 11:18-20

#### John 15:18-21 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

## IV. The prophecy against Anathoth 11:21-23

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- God will deal with them.
- Jeremiah is simply to keep going, keep speaking, keep doing what the Lord asks him to do.

## V. Jeremiah's complaint 12:1-4

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- Jeremiah is griping.
- I don't blame him.
- One time I was right in the middle of griping to God when Chuck Smith came on the radio teaching on this very passage.

## V. Jeremiah's complaint 12:1-4



*There is nothing wrong with questioning God. It would be unrealistic not to have questions ... but it is wrong to challenge God ... don't charge God foolishly.*

*– Chuck Smith (1927 – 2013)*

## V. Jeremiah's complaint 12:1-4



*Jeremiah began by affirming, “Lord, I know You are righteous, but I would like to talk with you.” Questioning is fine. Jeremiah found his answer by questioning God.*

*– Chuck Smith (1927 – 2013)*



## V. Jeremiah's complaint 12:1-4

- Good old Pastor Chuck is right.
- Jeremiah got his answer; no doubt about that.
- What I do doubt is if he liked it!

VI. The Lord's answer 12:5-6

## VI. The Lord's answer 12:5-6

- Allow me to paraphrase:
- **Jeremiah to God:** "O Lord, my life is just miserable."
- **God to Jeremiah:** "You think this is bad? Just wait. It's going to get even worse!"

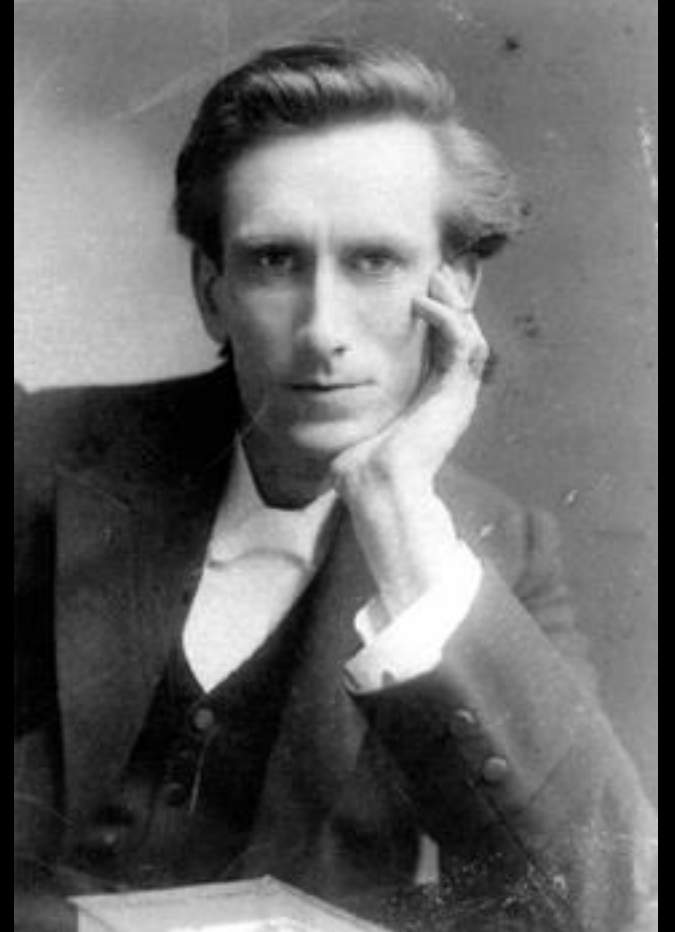
## VI. The Lord's answer 12:5-6

- God in his grace gives us only a little at a time.
- We might call this – along with Oswald Chambers – “progressive realization.”

## VI. The Lord's answer 12:5-6

*Progressive realization does not mean that God reveals Himself by inches, but that we realize His revelation of Himself by inches as we obey.*

*– Oswald Chambers (1874 – 1917),  
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## VI. The Lord's answer 12:5-6

- In other words, we understand God better the longer we walk with him.
- God is personal. We get to know him better over time, just as with any other person.
- And occasionally he gives us tests.

## V. Jeremiah's complaint 12:1-4



*God puts us through tests. Sometimes we pass. Sometimes we fail. The bad thing about failing the test is that you have to take it again. So often when things start going bad, I say, "This is a test. I want to pass it. I don't want to go through this one again."*

*– Chuck Smith (1927 – 2013)*

## VI. The Lord's answer 12:5-6

- Jeremiah's trials are his tests.
- He had many of them. We will have them too.
- We may hope they are not as severe as Jeremiah's.



## VII. The Lord's lament 12:7-13

## VII. The Lord's lament 12:7-13

- Do not think for a minute that God enjoys inflicting judgment.
- He hates it. The only thing he hates worse than judging sin is the sin itself.

## VII. The Lord's lament 12:7-13



*God talked of the people still as the dearly beloved of His soul. Oh, that stubborn love that God has for man. He won't let go in spite of their evil, in spite of their broken covenant, in spite of their failure.*

*– Chuck Smith (1927 – 2013)*

## VII. The Lord's lament 12:7-13

- This is the beauty within the tragedy of the cross.
- Jesus suffered out of a pure, intense and holy love for those who had rebelled against him.

## VII. The Lord's lament 12:7-13

### 1 John 4:9-10 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins.

## VIII. The Lord's plan 12:14-17

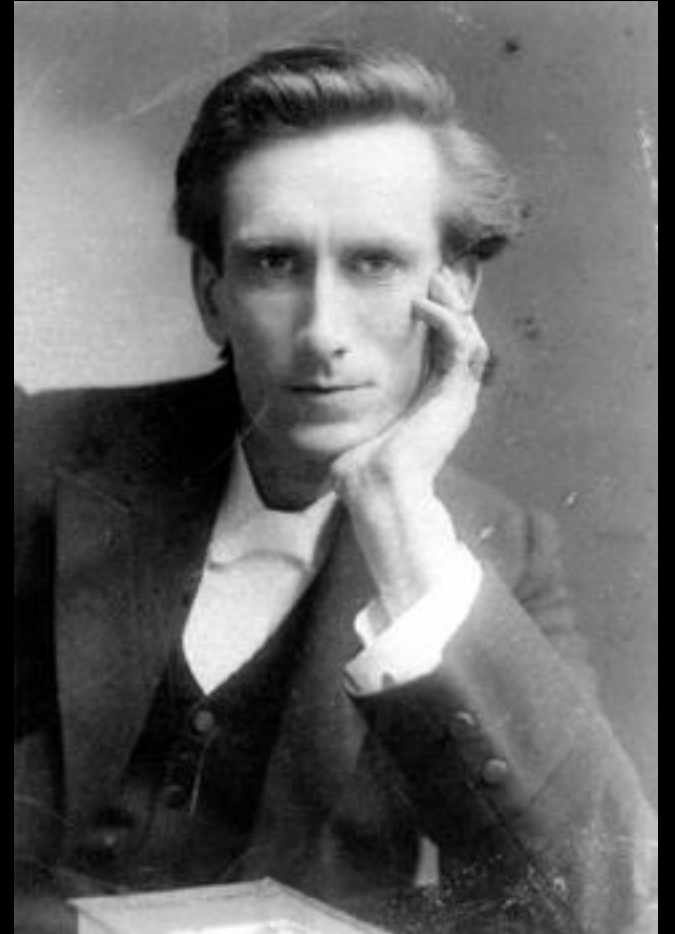
## VIII. The Lord's plan 12:14-17

- Just as God is not finished with Jeremiah, he is not finished with the people of Israel and Judah.
- Their downfall is coming, but so is their restoration.
- The Lord also claims sovereignty over all nations – he is Lord of all.

## VIII. The Lord's plan 12:14-17

*God created ... Israel for one purpose, to be His servants until through them every nation came to know God. Through every period they turned away from that preordained purpose because they wanted to be like other nations. This is the reason of all the judgments that paralyzed Jeremiah.*

*– Oswald Chambers (1874 – 1917),  
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## VIII. The Lord's plan 12:14-17

- Judgment, mercy and restoration are all phases in the same process through which God carries out his plans.
- The longer Jeremiah walked with God, the more God revealed of his plans.

Training a Prophet    Conclusions

# Training a Prophet      Conclusions

- If you don't like the message, don't kill the messenger.
- Listen and consider. It might just be true.

# Training a Prophet      Conclusions



*If God's word makes us uncomfortable, we must not seek to change the message but to change ourselves.*

*– Issiaka Coulibaly, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, FATEAC, Ivory Coast*

# Training a Prophet      Conclusions

- It may seem easier to abandon God than to serve him.
- Jesus said some seed would be sown on rocky soil.
- Decide today to prepare yourself for tomorrow's challenges and meet them with absolute faith.

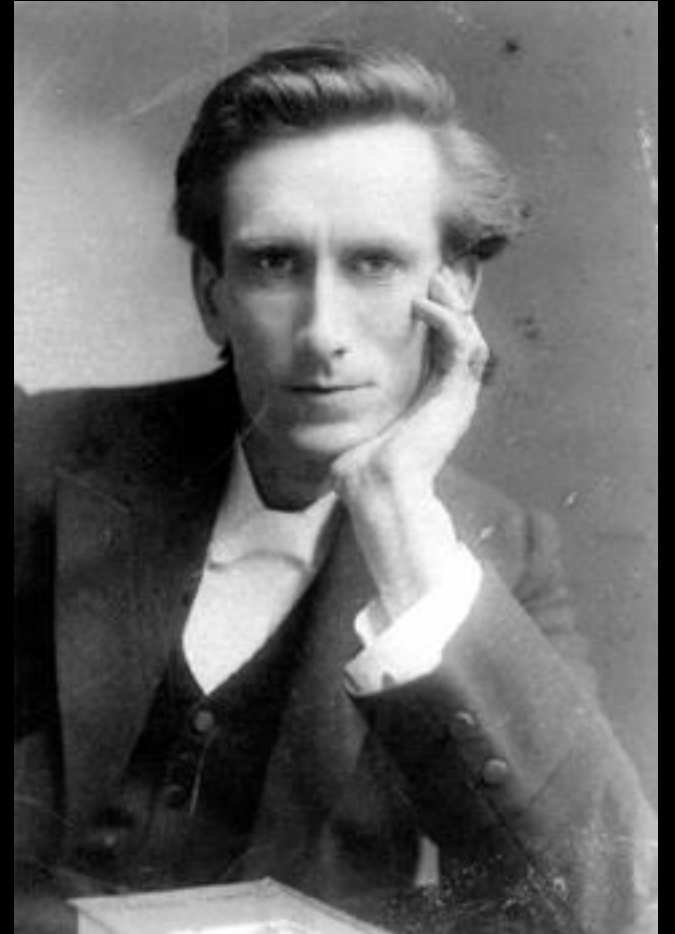
# Training a Prophet      Conclusions

- We should not doubt that God truly loves us.
- We do, however, need to know that he is training us to serve him better.

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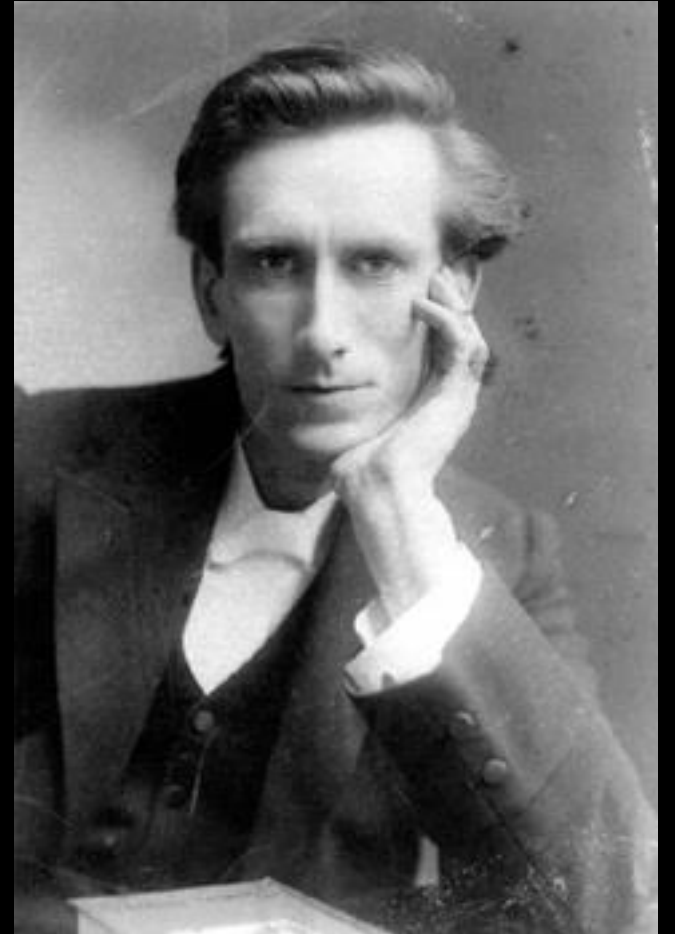
- We understand God better gradually – over time.
- Remember Oswald Chambers' “progressive realization.”



# Training a Prophet      Conclusions

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# Training a Prophet      Conclusions

- Like Jeremiah, our walk with God will take us through difficult times.
- Like Jeremiah, we will also have questions.
- Like Jeremiah, we may not like the answers.
- But we must stay committed to the process so that we always continue to grow.