

Brentwood Baptist

Instructions for Living in a Strange Land

Jeremiah 29:1-14

May 16, 2021

MAIN POINT

God didn't promise to deliver His people from difficult days, but He did command them to live as His people in a foreign land. Jeremiah's instructions are especially helpful to Christians living as exiles in a post-Christian culture today.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What events have tempted you to retreat to your Christian enclaves and avoid the culture around you?

How can you live a distinctly Christian life in our increasingly secular world?

What is the role of evangelism in living as God's people in a foreign land? In what ways is evangelism not enough? How are God's people called to live holistic Christian lives impacting the culture in broad ways?

Many in the evangelical church take an "us versus them" mentality when it comes to engaging culture. But the message of Jeremiah in this passage is not "us versus them"; instead, it is a message of hope and courage in a difficult culture. The church of Jesus Christ must live missionally within her communities to show and share the love of Jesus Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Jeremiah 29:1-5.

Name a time when you have been tempted to believe that God has forgotten you. Why did you believe that? How did you overcome that belief?

How did God create a people through His Word? How did God use His Word to save you, and how is He continuing to use His word to re-create you into His image?

Hope was not Jeremiah's primary language. Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet because his words were filled with doom and gloom, but in this letter to the exiles Jeremiah offered a lifeline. He didn't say, "I told you so." Jeremiah continued to do what he had always

done; speak God's word faithfully, powerfully, and completely. In their exile, Jeremiah offered good news: God was not dead nor had He been defeated.

Have a volunteer read Jeremiah 29:6-9.

How have you been called to be a missionary to those people with whom you interact most regularly? How do you show God's love on a regular basis as his ambassador in the corner of the world to which he has called you?

What does it look like for you to seek the welfare of the city in which you live and in which your church resides? How can you seek the welfare of your city and not be stained by the sinfulness of those around you?

The Israelites were not to go to Babylon and waste their time there. In Babylon they were to be a reflection of God's love and care. Even in exile, the people of God were called to act, love, and look like the people of God. God called Israel to be a nation of priests. Priests intercede on behalf of others before God. In many respects, the people of Israel were to be interceders before God on behalf of Babylon. Yahweh is a missionary God and, as such, expects that His people always live and act as missionaries.

Have a volunteer read Jeremiah 29:10-14.

Name a time when God's Word has sustained you. What are some verses you have found most beneficial in dark days of your life?

Why are verses like Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 8:28 so easily misapplied? In spite of the ways they have been abused, how do Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 8:28 give you hope?

The hope of Jeremiah 29:11 today is not a guarantee of prosperity. Instead, it is the confidence that God is in control. God is in control of all things. He was in control of the defeat of Judah and would even be in control of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Jeremiah 29:11 is not a guarantee for an easy life; it is the promise that regardless of your situation, you are not alone and God is not finished. Even in discipline, God has a plan and a purpose. Jeremiah 29:11 works in concert with Romans 8:28, "all things work together for the good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

All things work together for God's good ends. Even those things that others mean for harm, God can use for good. He is in control and you can trust Him. When the days are dark and the road is hard, depend on God's Word. Jeremiah 29 was written to a specific people in a particular time and place, but the truths of this chapter apply to all of God's people. Wherever God's people are found, their God is there with them and they have an opportunity and responsibility to serve Him in that place. God is present among His people through His Word. His Word is given for the good of His people.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Where are you currently prone to seek your own way over the plans of God in your life? How do you need to submit these areas to Him?

Why is it easy to sometimes view secular culture as the enemy to be overcome instead of individual souls in need of conversion?

How can we speak into the restless hearts of our secular culture by living within the culture and seeking the welfare of those with whom we interact regularly?

PRAYER

Pray for the ability to trust God in your current season of life, even if it is difficult. Ask God to reveal to you the ways in which He is calling you to live for the benefit of others and for His glory in your current circumstances.

COMMENTARY

Jeremiah 29:1-14

29:1 The rest of the elders appears to be those who had survived deportation to Babylon.

29:2 King Jeconiah is another name for King Jehoiachin. The Hebrew form of queen mother is a feminine ending on the same masculine form for “a mighty man of valor” or a “hero” (Hb *haggevira*). The court officials (Hb *hassarim*) is usually rendered “eunuchs,” but it was also a title for palace officers (52:25; Gen 37:36; 40:2; 1Sam 8:15).

29:3 Jeremiah sent his letter by an emissary that King Zedekiah of Judah was sending to Babylon, which accompanied tribute he was paying to Nebuchadnezzar. The two men who carried the letter were Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiyah. Shaphan was a sort of secretary of state under King Josiah (2Ki 22:8-14), and Gemariah was the high priest under Josiah (2Ch 34-35). Despite a crooked government and priesthood, these men show that some people remained faithful to the Lord, even during the worst of times.

29:4-7 Jeremiah’s letter must have arrived in Babylon shortly after the exiles did. It warned that this would not be a short exile.

29:7 Jeremiah’s advice to the exiles was remarkable. He urged them to pray for Babylon and its prosperity. By doing this the exiles would prosper as well (1Tim 2:1-2).

29:10 The 70 years for Babylon are also noted in 25:11. The duration of the Babylonian kingdom is linked with the length of the exile. From Nebuchadnezzar’s accession to the throne in 605 b.c. to the fall of Babylon in 539 b.c. was 66 years.

29:12-13 These verses are a renewal of God’s promise in Dt 30:3-5.

