

Membership Covenant

The 5 G's
Groups
Giving
Gifts
Grace
Growth

A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Text for the Week: Jeremiah 29:1-14

Message for the Week: Grace in Living

Sunday, February 25

Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

We live in an age in which fast food, fast cars and trucks, fast access to entertainment has overwhelmed many. Though there are reasons for us to be thankful for such things, sometimes, the slowness of a handwritten letter that can be read over and over again is a beautiful thing. Have you recently received such a letter, a card, or a good sit-down conversation? How did that make you feel? Do not text your answer.

Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Jeremiah 29:1-14](#) out loud.

[Clicking the link will bring you to multiple translations.]

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

Respond / Reflect:

What is the significance of exile? How do we experience exile today? How do we get there (see verses 4, 7 & 14)?

What do you think God's purpose in exile is (v.7)?

Why does God tell the Jewish people to pray for the Babylonians? What happens when we pray for our enemies?

Why does God tell them to build houses, settle down, plant gardens, marry, increase in number and not decrease even though they were in Babylon and not the promised land?

Why did Pastor Jeff translate the word "prosper" to "shalom"? How does that change your thinking about this passage (vs. 7 especially) and our relationships in our world?

Try It:

Who do you identify as an enemy / someone who is against you? Start praying for them and seeking shalom/prosperity for them.

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Pray this prayer together:

Father, thank you for the time and place in which we live. Help and equip us as a church community to seek the SHALOM of our church, families, neighbors, friends, classmates, and workplaces. AMEN

Missional/Spiritual Practice: Grace

I commit to loving Jesus with all my heart, soul, mind and strength knowing I have been saved by grace because of Jesus' death and resurrection; this is a free gift, not the result of anything I have done.

I commit to sharing my testimony of what God has done and continues to do in my life by his grace regularly and boldly as I am led by the Spirit.

Jeremiah 29:1-14

New International Version

29 This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ² (This was after King Jehoiachin^[a] and the queen mother, the court officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the skilled workers and the artisans had gone into exile from Jerusalem.) ³ He entrusted the letter to Elasah son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said:

⁴ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” ⁸ Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. ⁹ They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the Lord.

¹⁰ This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity.^[b] I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”

Footnotes

- a. [Jeremiah 29:2](#) Hebrew *Jeconiah*, a variant of *Jehoiachin*
b. [Jeremiah 29:14](#) Or *will restore your fortunes*

The Message

29 ¹⁻² This is the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to what was left of the elders among the exiles, to the priests and prophets and all the exiles whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon from Jerusalem, including King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the government leaders, and all the skilled laborers and craftsmen.

³ The letter was carried by Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah had sent to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. The letter said:

⁴ This is the Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies, Israel’s God, to all the exiles I’ve taken from Jerusalem to Babylon:

⁵ “Build houses and make yourselves at home.

“Put in gardens and eat what grows in that country.

⁶ “Marry and have children. Encourage your children to marry and have children so that you’ll thrive in that country and not waste away.

⁷ “Make yourselves at home there and work for the country’s welfare.

“Pray for Babylon’s well-being. If things go well for Babylon, things will go well for you.”

⁸⁻⁹ Yes. Believe it or not, this is the Message from God-of-the-Angel-Armies, Israel’s God: “Don’t let all those so-called preachers and know-it-alls who are all over the place there take you in with their lies. Don’t pay any attention to the fantasies they keep coming up with to please you. They’re a bunch of liars preaching lies—and claiming I sent them! I never sent them, believe me.” God’s Decree!

¹⁰⁻¹¹ This is God’s Word on the subject: “As soon as Babylon’s seventy years are up and not a day before, I’ll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home. I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.

¹² “When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I’ll listen.

¹³⁻¹⁴ “When you come looking for me, you’ll find me.

“Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, I’ll make sure you won’t be disappointed.” God’s Decree.

“I’ll turn things around for you. I’ll bring you back from all the countries into which I drove you”—God’s Decree—“bring you home to the place from which I sent you off into exile. You can count on it.