BIBLE STUDY

Jeremiah 29:10-14

Before We Dive In: Can you think of a season of life in which God asked you to wait? How did you feel?

Pause to read Jeremiah 29:10-14 and watch the Scripture in Motion video that brings these verses to life. Let the Word speak to you before entering into the study and discussion.

Opening Question: What images or moments stood out to you most, and how did they connect back to what you had just read in Jeremiah 29:10-14?

The book of Jeremiah has lots of historical factors that precede our reading that give context for the starting verses of our reading. The Jews of Israel had been conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and taken into exile in Babylon, despite the fact that they were continually told by false prophets that they would have times of peace and prosperity (read Jeremiah 8:11, 14:13-16) even in light of their sinful decisions. Jeremiah's message was different from the false prophets; he spoke God's truth about accountability for sin and a call to repentance. It was prophesied in Jeremiah's book that God's people would need to take accountability for their evil actions and wait 70 years in exile.

Dive Deeper: Western culture is a culture of immediate gratification and 'feel-good culture'. You could say that this culture prefers the false prophets who preach 'feel-good culture' as opposed to a culture of accountability. Where do we see this manifesting itself in our culture today?

Waiting is hard and sometimes is even considered a waste of time. So often, we find ourselves on the go and demand what we need immediately. Consider this when reading the beginning of Jeremiah 29:10 again: "When 70 years are completed for Babylon…" In *"Oh, the Places You'll Go!"* the famous book by Dr. Seuss, there's a part of the book that talks about 'the waiting place' as being the worst place you can possibly be in life. In its entirety, it's not a bad book, but the philosophy around waiting reflects Western ideologies around seasons of waiting. American culture does not like to wait or generally undervalues the growth that can occur in these seasons of waiting. In contrast, Scripture highlights these seasons as times when God can work on his people—growing, refining, and nurturing them. Even today, many Christians will talk about or remember a season of waiting as important for their spiritual growth and edification.

Dive Deeper: Consider other examples throughout Scripture when individuals or groups experienced seasons of waiting. What purposes did God accomplish through those times of waiting? What can we learn from these examples and apply to seasons of waiting in our own lives?

Jeremiah 29:11 is one of the most familiar verses in Scripture, but when we understand the context surrounding it, its message carries an even greater depth. It's a promise of faithfulness *through* life's difficult times, not *an exemption* from the difficult times. Too often, we read this verse through the lens of God blessing us, but it shifts our perspective tremendously when we consider it in the midst of the darkest and most difficult parts of life. Recall that at :20 in Scripture in Motion's video, we are taken through a dark tunnel as Jeremiah 29:11 is read. At this point, Israel was only 11 years into the 70-year exile, with many more years of "darkness" still ahead. This promise of shalom—peace and wholeness rather than harm—and of hope and future restoration serves as a consistent reminder that God's light remains present in the darkness, even when its fulfillment still seems far off.

Dive Deeper: This world has lots of darkness—anxiety, depression, political division, and lukewarm attitudes toward God are just a few examples. How does this promise of peace and restoration encourage you in times of darkness?

In Jeremiah 29:12–13, God tells his people that when they call upon him, pray to him, and seek him with all their hearts, he will listen and allow Himself to be found. Throughout the Old Testament, particularly in Deuteronomy, seeking God with all of one's heart is closely connected with repentance—turning away from disobedience and returning wholeheartedly to God and his covenant. Jeremiah's words echo Deuteronomy 4:29: "But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul." This same theme also appears in Deuteronomy 26:16; 30:2, 10; and 2 Chronicles 7:14 to name a few, where returning to God is marked by wholehearted devotion, obedience, and repentance. In this sense, calling on God is more than simply asking him for help; it reflects a heart that recognizes its need for God and desires to be restored to relationship with him. This theme becomes even more significant later in Jeremiah (read Jeremiah 31:31–34), where God promises a new covenant with his people—a covenant in which God would write his law on their hearts, forgive their sins, and establish a deeper, restored relationship with them.

Dive Deeper: What does genuine repentance involve, and why is it such an important part of returning to God? In what ways might repentance be overlooked or minimized in Christianity today?

Rewatch the animation around :45 as verse 14 is read. Here, the people (represented by the particles) are banished, scattered everywhere off screen, but the gold thread (representing God's hand) follows and immediately catches all the banished people and pulls them back to his side. God's people had repeatedly disobeyed him through idolatry, child sacrifice, and other acts of rebellion, yet God continued to hold onto his people and draw them back to Himself. Sometimes when we are going through dark or difficult times, it can feel as though God has let us go, but the Bible demonstrates again and again that no matter how far or distant he may seem, God remains faithful and will always stay attached to us, pulling us back in.

Dive Deeper: When have you felt far from God? How does it change your perspective to know that even in the midst of sin and darkness, God remains with you and continues to hold onto you?

Discussion Questions

1. Recall God's promises in these verses: to prosper and not harm, to give hope and a future, to gather his people, and to bring them back to Himself. Which of these promises resonates most with you, and why?

2. This repeated phrase "bringing you back" appears once in verse 10 and twice in verse 14. What is the significance of Jeremiah continuing to come back to this phrase?

3. While Israel's rebellion against God may be easy to recognize in hindsight, we struggle with the same temptations today, even if the idols we face look starkly different. Give some examples of things we can be tempted to value, pursue, or depend on more than God. How can we recognize when something has become an idol in our lives, and what practical habits or spiritual goals can we put in place to help us keep God at the center of our lives?

4. What makes it difficult to trust God during seasons of waiting? How can we seek God in those times, trusting that he is still at work even when we cannot yet see the outcome?

5. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God demonstrates his desire to restore his covenant relationship with his people. How does seeing God's commitment to restoration strengthen our faith and give us hope, especially in seasons of brokenness, distance from God, or uncertainty?