

Small Group Notes

Jeremiah 25-29: Hope in Exile

Overview

This guide is designed to help your group dig deeper into the themes from Jeremiah 25-29. The passage covers Jeremiah's prophetic ministry during a critical turning point for Judah, the rise of Babylon, the coming 70-year captivity, the danger of false prophets, and God's enduring faithfulness to His people. Use the questions below to spark honest conversation and personal reflection.

Key Takeaways

- God called Judah to repentance for 21 years through Jeremiah before judgment came. His patience is extraordinary, but His justice is certain.
 - The 70-year captivity was directly tied to Judah's violation of the seven year Sabbath rest for the land, demonstrating that God is specific, precise, and serious about His commands.
 - The track record of past fulfilled prophecy in Scripture gives us confidence to interpret future prophecy literally and with precision. Taking prophecy literally means recognizing allegories and symbols when they appear in the text, but not making something an allegory without textual evidence.
 - False prophets speak with authority and tell people messages that are not from God. Believers must test every word against Scripture. New Testament prophecy, a Spiritual Gift, should be judged before it is believed.
 - Being faithful to God does not guarantee an easy path. Jeremiah's obedience made him a target, not a celebrity. There are times when doing God's will makes things harder, but right is always right.
 - God's promises to Israel in Jeremiah 29:11 and 29:13 were given in the context of discipline and refinement, not comfort and ease. They reveal a God who never abandons His people even when He is correcting them.
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Getting the Conversation Started

Begin your group time with one or both of these opening questions. These are meant to be light and accessible before moving into deeper discussion.

1. Think of a time someone gave you advice you did not want to hear but later realized was exactly right. What was that experience like?
 2. Have you ever been in a season where doing the right thing made your life harder rather than easier? How did you navigate that?
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Discussion Questions

1. Jeremiah preached repentance for 23 years with little visible response. What does that kind of persistent, unrewarded faithfulness look like in everyday life? What keeps a person going when their obedience seems to produce no results?
2. The sermon noted that God describes Himself as jealous “for” His people, not jealous “of” them. What is the difference, and how does understanding that distinction change the way you relate to God?
3. The 70-year captivity was tied specifically to 70 violated Sabbath years in Israel's history. What does that level of precision suggest about the character of God and the nature of prophecy?
4. The sermon argued that if we accept the prophecies of Christ's first coming as literal and specific, we should apply the same standard to prophecies about His second coming. Do you find that reasoning compelling? Has your view of future prophecy been more literal or more symbolic, and why?
5. God used a pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar, to accomplish His purposes and even called him “my servant.” What does this reveal about God's sovereignty over nations and world events? How does that apply to the world we live in today?
6. The sermon pointed out that false prophets never announce themselves as false prophets. They speak with authority and say things people want to hear. What are some practical ways a believer can discern whether a word, a teaching, or a prophecy is genuinely from God?
7. Hananiah's false prophecy offered peace, restoration, and a short timeline of two years. Jeremiah's true prophecy offered 70 years of painful captivity. Why is it so easy to gravitate toward the message that feels better, and what guards us against that tendency?
8. Jeremiah was faithful to God and became public enemy number one as a result. The sermon said, “We don't gauge what is right and wrong by the hardships or ease that brings upon us, but by whether we are found faithful to do what the Lord has said.” Do you agree with that statement? How does it challenge the way you make decisions?
9. God told the captives in Babylon to build houses, plant gardens, get married, and pray for the peace of Babylon, essentially to settle in for the long haul. What does that instruction teach us about how to live faithfully in circumstances we did not choose and cannot immediately change?

Jeremiah 29:11 and 29:13 in Context

These two verses are among the most quoted in Scripture, often applied as personal promises of blessing and prosperity. How does understanding their original context, spoken to people in captivity as a result of their sin, change or deepen the way you read them?

* Note: This may be a good time to re-read those two verses to refresh our memories.

Practical Applications

For Personal Reflection: Set aside time this week to read Jeremiah 29:4-14 slowly and in full. Ask God to show you what He is saying to you specifically in this season of your life, not just what you want to hear, but what He is actually saying.

For Scripture Study: Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-21 and Leviticus 25:1-7 alongside Jeremiah 25. Trace the connection between the Sabbath year law and the 70-year captivity. Consider how seriously God takes His own instructions and reflect on whether there are areas of your life where you have treated His commands as optional.

For Group Accountability: The sermon warned against listening only to voices that make us feel good. As a group, commit to holding one another accountable to testing what you hear, whether from podcasts, social media, or even the pulpit, against the Word of God. Identify one resource this week that you will evaluate together using Scripture as the standard.

For Prayer: The sermon closed with a call to pray for Israel's salvation. Make this a regular part of your personal and group prayer time. Ask God to open your eyes to how current events in the world connect to His prophetic purposes.

For Those in a Hard Season: If you are in a season of difficulty or discipline right now, consider whether God may be using it to refine you rather than punish you. Bring that honestly before God in prayer and, if appropriate, share it with a trusted member of your group for prayer and encouragement.

Closing Prayer

Close your group time by praying together over the following:

- That God would give each member discernment to recognize truth and reject deception
- That each person would pursue holiness, faithfulness, and repentance not out of obligation but out of love for God
- That your group would be a community where hard truths are welcomed and where the Word of God is the final authority
- That God would accomplish in each person exactly what He intends through the study of His Word

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." -- A summary of Psalm 119:105