

Going Deeper

Your weekly guide to understanding God with others

Return from Exile

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Introduction

Throughout the Bible there is a repeated theme of exile. As early as Genesis 3, we see humans exiled for the first time, and in each exile there is a sense that we are far from home and far from God's design. Biblical history shows people living in exile with a faithful God, who can help us make sense of our present moment here and now. Over the next seven weeks we will be looking at biblical examples of exile and gleaning wisdom about how we can engage with God whilst we are far from home.

Read

Jeremiah 29:1-14

Discuss

1. What comes to mind when you hear the term 'exile'?
2. Exile can encompass more than a physical place; we can live in a state of exile. What are some current examples in our city, nation and the nations of people living in exile?
3. Read Jeremiah 29:5-6. In your current context, what opportunities are you seeing to "build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Multiply and not decrease"?
4. C. S. Lewis writes, "The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshipers." What does Lewis mean? How does this weave into our theme of return from exile?

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5. When you are facing challenges, how does being in touch with stories of God's faithfulness in the past influence your response in the present moment?
6. Read John 14:1-3. Despite knowing that we are living in exile here and now, we also know that there is hope for a brighter future in Jesus. Do you find hope in the promise of restoration and reconciliation in Jesus? How does that influence your day-to-day living?

Respond

Jeremiah 29:7 says, "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." This week, pray to God on behalf of our city and our world. Ask God to use you as a person who can draw meaning out of this moment of exile in this city, the nation and the nations.