

Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything

Session 1: CITY—The World That Is

By Timothy Keller

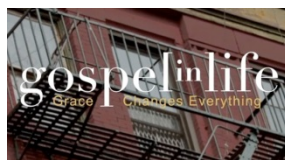
Bible Study:

In 586 BC, Jerusalem was destroyed and the elite of Jewish society—the artisans and professionals and leaders—were taken to Babylon by force. The prophets Jeremiah received a word from the Lord and wrote these exiles a letter. Read aloud Jeremiah 29:4-14, and the work through the questions below.

1. What specific directions does God give the exiles for relating to the city of Babylon in verses 4-7? How do you think the exiles felt about this?
2. What is the relationship between the “prosper you” of verse 11 and the “prosperity of the city” of verse 7?
3. What was the purpose of the exile, according to verses 11-14? Why do you think these verses were included in the letter?
4. Rodney Stark, a sociologist of religion, writes,

“Christianity served as a revitalization movement that arose in response to the misery, chaos, fear, and brutality of life in the urban Graeco-Roman world...Christianity revitalized life in...cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent urban problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments...To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective...services.”

Is this still true of Christianity today? Why or why not? In what ways does Christianity “revitalize life” in your neighborhood?



DVD Notes:

Cities are:

1. Places of refuge and safety
2. Places of justice
3. Cultural development
4. Spiritual seeking or finding

But, sin has broken the original intention of cities...

“City”—“any place of density, diversity and cultural energy”

Discussion Questions:

1. Was there anything from the video that was new to you, or had an effect on you?
2. It is often said that Christians today have little impact on the world around them. Is that a correct assessment? Why or why not? What prevents us from becoming more engaged in the world around us?
3. The Hebrew word translated “*prosper*” means “*to be healthy, to increase, to have things go well.*” It means growth in all its dimensions. What types of growth within the Christian community can prosper the places in which we live?
4. How can we serve and love our place of residence, rather than resembling it, or removing ourselves from it? What can we do to become genuinely interested in its peace and prosperity?

