

forLIFE

DAY 1 - READ Jeremiah 29:1-3.

The people who received this letter had been exiled. They were driven to a place they didn't want to be, didn't expect or plan for. They desperately wanted something different. At some time in our lives, each one of us will find ourselves in some kind of *exile* - having to deal with illness, job loss, divorce, death, and life-changing events we don't want and never expected.

Can you relate to the people in exile? **DESCRIBE** a situation in which you found yourself in a place you didn't want to be. How did you respond to being in *exile* - in a place you don't want to be? Does your view of God and His goodness change with the circumstances in which you find yourself? Or do you hold unswervingly to the truth His faithfulness, His goodness, and His love for you? While in the midst of the *unwanted and unexpected*, how might remembering these truths change your attitude or perspective?

DAY 2

Those in exile lived each day "in waiting." They were waiting for their circumstances to change before really living their lives. What message does God send them?

READ Jeremiah 29:4-6. For these people, what does it mean to settle down? **DESCRIBE** the practical things God directs the people to do. These are the things which settled people do. They're the things of living one's life. Notice the latter part of verse 6 where God tells them to increase... do not decrease. Whenever we cease to *live* and settle in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, our life decreases and a part of our soul shrinks up.

READ Philippians 4:11-12. How does learning contentment no matter the circumstances lead to the ability to be settled and increasing who you are as a person? Learning to *settle* doesn't mean you give up the notion that things could change. It simply means you trust and believe that life is to be lived today, even in the midst of the exile. It should be lived even when it's unlovely and in the trials. God will still speak and provide peace.

Have you put your life on hold for some reason or because of an unexpected circumstance? Specifically, in what practical ways is God directing you to settle down in the midst of your current circumstances? Have you learned contentment even in the difficult times?

DAY 3 - READ Jeremiah 29:7-9.

God's instruction to those in exile was: **SETTLE** and **BLESS**. *He told them to commit and give of themselves, even in a place they didn't want to be.*

READ Matthew 5:13-15. We're the salt. We're the light... for whom? Wherever we find ourselves, we've been instructed to bless and make things better bringing God's light into whatever darkness surrounds us.

How does it look to bring His light into your current circumstance? What can you do **TODAY** to make things better for someone else? If you're in the midst of exile and disappointment, how can you be a blessing to others who may be experiencing something similar? Will you commit to give of yourself?

DAY 4

Interestingly enough, making things better and being at a place where we can bless, requires us to engage in the life around us and in relationship to people. This demands we be present emotionally, mentally, and physically. Our ability to be fully present is threatened by daily encounters and everyday interactions in which we're most vulnerable.

"Wherever you are, be all there."

Jim Elliot

This becomes more and more difficult in our world today. We sit with someone while texting someone else. We walk through the mall listening to our music. We drive while a movie entertains our kids in the back seat. Our society is losing the art of being fully engaged in the present moment.

READ Psalm 118:22-29. God has given us this day. No matter where you are today, **PRAY** you allow yourself to be **all there**. **PRACTICE** the art of being present. What practical steps can you take to remove distractions which keep you from being present with those around you? As a family, what steps can you take?

DAY 5 - READ Jeremiah 29:10-14.

Many of us have memorized and quoted vs. 11. Understanding the context in which it was given to the people in exile - *in the midst of things not going as hoped or planned* - what's the new meaning or insight from this verse?

Our God is a God who

- loves us and longs to be close to us,
- desires and plans to give us a life of meaning and purpose,
- listens to us,
- will be found when we seek Him,
- rescues us from captivity and brings us into freedom.

REFLECT on what this means to you.

How do these truths change your perspective today?

How would it look to have a life which lives out these truths?

READ Colossians 1:9-14 as a prayer today.