**When You’re Stuck in Babylon**

**[Jeremiah 29:4-14](http://3vc.us14.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=8d36191425c9fd9273a37a8f1&id=b44e7f1102&e=13512fe331" \t "_blank)**

**Small Group Guide**

**Opening Icebreaker Question**:

* If you were stuck in an airport for multiple days and nights, which one would you want to be stuck in and why? What would you eat and where would you sleep?

**INTRODUCTION:** The word, “Exile,” comes from the darkest period in the history of God’s chosen people. It denotes the mass deportation of Jews from their homeland into the conquering country (the Northern Kingdom of Israelites to Assyria in 722 BC and the Southern Kingdom of Judahites to Babylonia in 598 and 586 BC).

Historical events: In 598 BC, Nebuchadnezzar (King of Babylon) took the first wave of captives from Jerusalem, and left a puppet king, Zedekiah, in charge of Jerusalem. A few years later, Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and stopped paying the tribute. So the armies of Babylon came and lay siege to Jerusalem again for 3 years, causing a famine, and eventually in 586 BC, they totally destroyed the city—the houses, the palace, the Temple, everything, and they carted off everybody else to Babylon, except for a few poor farmers who they left to tend the land.

Think about the state of things for a moment. God has made these great promises to rescue the world through a chosen people. He supernaturally fought for them and gave them a homeland. He gave them his presence, in the magnificent Temple that Solomon built. And now what? His people are scattered. Their homeland is in shambles. And the temple destroyed.

1. If you’re one of those people, how are you feeling about God’s promises at this moment?

Enter the prophet **Ezekiel**. He was a Jewish priest who had been taken captive in that first wave of people in 598 BC, and carried off to Babylon. His wife had died before the final destruction of Jerusalem. He’s suffering personal loss as well as national loss. All hope seems lost. And God gives him a series of visions. One of those is in Ezekiel 37. **READ EZEKIEL 37:1-14 (note that the “dry bones” is a metaphor for the nation of Israel. See v. 11).**

1. What’s the purpose of God’s Spirit asking Ezekiel, “Can these bones live?”
2. What do you learn about God from this passage?
3. What hope would Ezekiel gain from this passage for the nation of Israel?
4. The prophecy here was fulfilled—in a short-term way—when Cyrus of Persia sent many Jews home after about 70 years. In the Big Story of the Bible, how does this passage point to what Jesus has done for us (and will do in the future)?

Peter picks up this language of exile way over in the NT, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and he says that we’re exiles too, just like they were.

**READ 1 PETER 2:11-12**

1. When Peter wrote this letter, he wasn’t writing to literal exiles—people who had been banished from their countries—no, he was using a biblical motif to suggest that any Christ-follower in this present world is in “exile.”
   1. Why is that true of us?
   2. How do you most acutely feel this sense of “exile?”
   3. What does it mean to “abstain from the [things] which wage war against your soul?”

**Read JEREMIAH 29:3-7**

1. These last two passages point out that we are to be (as Pastor Josh says) “Salty Sojourners” in our world today. We should not be polluted by our culture, but in it enough to influence it for good. Josh summarized Jeremiah’s words with three pursuits while we’re “stuck in Babylon.” Discuss each one below.
2. Settle in and make it your home for now (vv. 5-6). What would that look like for you? Has anything kept you from doing this?
3. Invest yourself in the quality of life there (7a). How has God uniquely equipped you to do this? Do you see it happening? Are you nudged to any particular avenue of “investment?”
4. Pray for the place where you are planted (7b). How can we do this consistently and specifically? If you have done this, have you experienced God answering in any way?
5. The story of Daniel is one of a Babylonian captive who remained faithful to God despite intense pressure not to do so. He continued his Jewish eating habits, despite Babylonian suggestion otherwise; he continued his prayer schedule despite a direct edict from the king; and he trusted God even though he was thrown into a “den” to be killed by a lion.
   1. In what ways is Daniel foreshadowing Jesus, a “true and better Daniel,” in all that he would do for us?
   2. How can we be more like Daniel—fixing our hope in God’s great rescue plan while using our unique make-up for influence in the present?
   3. How can we pray for a Daniel to be raised up to influence today’s national leaders as Daniel did back then?
6. Do any of you feel “stuck in Babylon,” feeling like you are out of your element and God is far away? How can we pray for and assist you?
7. What daily or weekly practices might we engage that would remind us of our hope in Christ instead of our despair at being different than the world?
8. **Share and Pray:**  Among our prayer requests, let’s pray that God will drill his hope deep into our Spirits that we might be salt and light in (engaging in and attractive to) our culture.