

Leader Guide

Week 2: Exile and the Kingdom of God

Discussion for week of January 24, 2021

SHALOM
following Jesus in an angry,
anxious, and polarized world

Connecting

Take a few minutes to catch up.

- Share one high and one low from the time since you last saw each other.
- Were you able to *practice peace* this past week? Share your experience with us.
- Share something that God has been teaching you or a way you've been encouraged lately.

A Reminder of Purpose

Our purpose in Life Group is to grow in Christ-likeness, learning to love God and others, together. As we approach some harder topics in this series, remember to arrive ready to listen and learn from others' perspectives, respect safety and confidentiality, value your relationships above proving your point, deal with conflict lovingly, and be ready to surrender your ideas to the heart and mind of Christ. We may not always agree, but we will always be respectful.

Prayer

Take a moment to sit in prayerful silence. Invite the Holy Spirit to watch over your time together. Consider praying from Paul's words to the Ephesians:

"Holy Spirit, help us to be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love. Help us to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."
(Ephesians 4:2-3)

Debrief

- What does it feel like when politics or other issues overshadow Jesus in your life?
- What is one thing from the sermon that you were surprised or intrigued by?
- Is there something you hope we discuss in our time together?

The Big Idea

Christians are by definition saved into a new community of Grace. But we live in the "here-but-not-yet" tension of life on earth as exiles. Jesus is calling us to acknowledge him as our primary King and for the Kingdom of Heaven to be our primary home. In this world, that identity means seeking the good of our city and living in counter-cultural ways to show that our knee is bent to only one Master: the Prince of Peace.

Watch Pastor Matthew's Synopsis (posted on the [Life Group Studies webpage](#)): After watching, take a minute in silence to think about and note anything further that came to mind that you'd like to ponder or discuss, guided by these questions*:

- What memories are reawakened as you consider what Matthew has spoken about?
- What are your biggest questions you have surrounding this topic?
- Are there certain injustices or broken situations you long to see resolved?

* Discuss, or just use as personal prompter questions to inform the rest of your discussion.

Scripture & Discussion

Read I Peter 1:1-2 and I Peter 2:8-12. Then discuss together:

- What similarities are there between the historical, cultural, or spiritual circumstances these early Christians faced and our own?
- How do you relate to the things that the Christians living in "exile" may have been feeling?
- Why do we, like the early church, need to hear this message?
- How might God speak to our circumstances today based on this passage?

Read Jeremiah 29:1-7 and Acts 17:16-34. Then discuss together:

- How does Jeremiah's counsel and Paul's model of "living in the city" coincide or challenge the way Christians have often postured themselves toward the culture today?
- What connection is there between God's message to the Israelites in Jeremiah 29, and Paul's actions in Acts 17:16-34?
- What was the personal experience that the sermon sparked for you? If you are comfortable, share what it was and how you felt about your own response.
- How do you seek the peace of, or build bridges with, people whose values are different than yours?
- How are these Scriptures prompting you to adjust your posture toward neighbours or this culture when their values do not coincide with what you understand God's priorities to be?
- What is one new way that you, as a godly "exile," could *seek the peace of the city*?
- Each week, we're going to brainstorm together how the Scripture can be applied to our relationships as a Life Group. **As a group, what guiding principle can we agree to uphold with each other through the rest of this series (and beyond)?**

Practice: Practicing Citizenship

The stories of the Israelites in Babylonian exile and of Paul making a case for Jesus to the people of Athens both exemplify a part of the Christian calling: to live in community with those who don't hold our beliefs and let our life be a witness to God's glory and Kingdom.

This week, ask God to reveal any part of your life where God might be calling you surrender something highly important to you in order to let him be King. Perhaps this could be allegiance to a political party, theological party, or even to just being "right" about something.

- *Have you had a belief that, when questioned, provokes a knee-jerk reaction? Why is it a sensitive topic for you? What steps could you take to surrender it to the kingship of Jesus?*
- *Have you witnessed division between others because of people living in different "tribes"? What could you do to help heal that division?*

Pray, asking God to reveal a position or belief He wants you to examine. As you do so, meditate on Isaiah 9:6-7, and respond to what God impresses upon your mind and heart:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

Caring for One Another

- *What help do you need to overcome anticipated challenges in doing this practice?*
- *Do you or your family have a need that the Life Group can help meet?*

Based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.