

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Jeremiah 31:27-37 aloud.

1. Then & there – Jeremiah’s day

We will misread this passage (or any OT text) if we start by searching for current events. Read it in context first.

What was the situation facing Judah during Jeremiah’s lifetime?

Verse 28. Jeremiah lived through the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of its leaders to Babylon (the exile).

What were some losses Jeremiah and his peers experienced?

Political – King Jehoiachin taken as a prisoner of war in 597.

National – Judah lost its status as a nation in 586.

Religious – The Temple was burned in 586.

Economic – Jerusalem was burned in 586.

Leadership – anyone with leadership skills was exiled (Daniel, Esther, etc.).

Loss of life – probably every family lost a child or a parent.

Physical – the siege of Jerusalem and diminished agricultural activity caused hunger and disease.

Which losses would have been most difficult for you to bear?

What does verse 29 mean? Who was saying this?

Apparently a complaint of the exiles – our ancestors sinned, but our generation bore the punishment. Ezekiel 18 takes issue with this cliché, arguing that “the soul who sins is the one who will die.”

Why did God promise a new covenant? What was wrong with the old covenant? How will the new one be different?

Verses 31-33. A covenant within the heart of the believer.

What are some of the encouraging words in verses 34-37?

How does nature serve as a witness to God’s faithfulness in 35?

As sure as the sun will rise and the waves will roar...

2. A little later – New Testament

In what ways do the teachings and life of Jesus offer a fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:33-34?

What parts of Jeremiah 31:33-34 are yet to be fulfilled?

We have not yet experienced the day when evangelism is complete. Still a lot of people who do not know how wonderful God is.

3. Here & now – Our time

What are some ways that Jeremiah 31:27-37 speaks to us?

What does this passage teach us about God?

If God was willing to destroy the Temple and smash his people, what does that tell us about his priorities? What is it that he wants from people?

Why do we love homecomings? How does it help you to go home?

How do seasons of loss and despair make homecomings sweeter?

✠ **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What are some ways you are waiting and praying for God to “bring you home” - to a place of peace and rest?

Resources

Bible notes

- Book of hope. In Jeremiah 30:2, God tells Jeremiah to write about God's plans to restore Israel and Judah to their homes. This "book of hope" included the words of Jer. 30-31, and possibly chapters 32-33. Chapters 34-44 tell the story of Judah's final destruction.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

The exile game

Give each person (or pair) 5 slips of paper. Ask them to write or draw a major blessing on each card.

Day 1 - A robber came to your house last night and took one of your blessings. Toss one card into the middle of the circle.

Day 2 – You had an accident and lost one of your blessings. Group leader take one card from each person.

Day 3 - A tornado hit your house. Toss one card into the middle of the circle.

Day 4 - An enemy attacked. Toss one card into the middle of the circle.

Day 5 – Are you worried? What happened to all your blessings?

Which blessing did you keep? How did it feel to lose all your blessings?

This is what happened to the Jewish people – they lost nearly everything when their nation was destroyed and the Temple burned.

Read Jeremiah 30:8-11 aloud. This was written after the Israelites had been punished for rejecting God.

What does God promise to do after he disciplines his people?

When do people need to be punished?

What are some ways that rejecting God leads to suffering? How does God help us after he punishes us?



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LIFE Group Guide

Jeremiah 31 – Coming Home

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **God brings his children home!**

Our congregation is celebrating Homecoming this weekend, so the LIFE group guide looks at a text where God brought people home. You could use this guide or discuss Randy Lowry's sermon from I Corinthians 15.

Jeremiah's ministry was unpleasant – most of his words were predictions of punishment, and he ended up carried off to Egypt with a group of renegades. In Jeremiah 30-33, though, he got the rare privilege of talking about God bringing his people home.

Even during the darkest chapter of Jewish history, God never abandoned his people. They were "at home" anywhere on the planet as long as they honored God. And they could find hope that God would eventually bring them the blessing of home.

Leadership tip / Old-school rant:

It is crucial to read passages in context. When we jump from reading to application, we invent meanings that were never part of the text. Between "what it says" and "what it means to me" is an important step - "what it meant to the original writers & readers." This LG guide invites your group to smell the burning ruins of the ancient Jerusalem Temple before making life application. It is slower and more difficult, but it is worth the extra effort.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ If you could re-live one day from the past, when would it be?
- ❖ What did you think of today's Homecoming activities?
- ❖ What is a Bible verse you know "by heart"?