

Weekly Cell Guide

Leader's Copy

Topic - Keeping Hope Alive in the Midst of Darkness

Date - 17-May-2020

Scripture - Jeremiah 29:1-14

Speaker - Pastor Vincent Lun

WELCOME [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

[Ice Breakers 1](#)

[Ice Breakers 2](#)

WORSHIP [15 min]

You may select songs like

1. Stronger
2. In Christ Alone

BIBLE READING PLAN [10 min]

Take some time to talk about the Bible Reading Plan. The time of sharing can include the following:

- a) How's everyone's progress so far?
- b) What are some things that God has spoken to you through the various readings?

WORD [45 min]

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the sermon discussion, cell members will:

1. Cling to the one true source of hope that matters – Jesus Christ, the hope of glory.
2. Seek God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength – and trust in His sovereignty.

Sermon Summary

The following are the key points of the sermon:

In any crisis or difficult situation, we cling to our only true hope in Christ, and we commit to keep this hope alive when we:

1. Fully engage in where God has placed us (vv 1-7)
2. Wisely discern true Biblical hope from false worldly hope (vv 8-10)
3. Wholeheartedly seek God and trust in His sovereignty (vv 11-14).

Sermon Recap (Full Summary)

In troubled times, people are always looking for hope. They will grasp at any sign of hope even when it is false, as long as it sounds better than the truth. The Jewish exiles in Babylon were given two messages of hope – two years of perseverance or 70 years of captivity before God allowed them to return home. Jeremiah’s message was not popular, but it was from God. Likewise, in our current climate of fear and uncertainty, true hope is found only in Jesus and in the Word of God – even when it’s sometimes hard to comprehend. Jeremiah’s message teaches us three ways to keep this hope alive in our present situation. We need to:

1. Fully engage in where God has placed us (vv 1-7)

The Jews in captivity were told to settle down and make Babylon their home for the next 70 years. Furthermore, they were told to seek the welfare of the city – in other words, to live godly lives and bless their captors! Likewise, the Church today may be in lockdown globally, but we can still be engaged with the world wherever God has planted us. No doubt we will still face all the challenges that disruption and isolation bring, but instead of complaining, we can turn our attention to others and seek their welfare. Instead of asking, “When will this season be over?” we ask, “How can we be a blessing to others in this season?” We move from self-preservation to sacrificial giving because we have a hope that many are looking for. We can share this hope. We can care. We can give. We can pray. We can love.

2. Wisely discern true Biblical hope from false worldly hope (vv 8-10)

The Jews in Babylon heard from two prophets with two different messages. Hananiah promised them two years in exile while Jeremiah gave them 70 years. This was difficult to hear, but it was the truth. Today, we are flooded with pleasant-sounding promises from “men of God” everywhere. Therefore, we need to be wise to discern the truth from the half-truths and the outright lies out there. We need to discern the true hope (which is from God) from false hopes that originate from men. How do we do that? First; we take heed of the whole counsel of God – never pick and choose what we want to read in the Bible. Our hope, security and guidance are all found in the Word of God. Second; we must be in a community where there is mutual accountability, and where we allow others who love us to speak into our lives.

3. Wholeheartedly seek God and trust in His sovereignty (vv 11-14)

While Jeremiah preached a hard message to Judah – that they must be disciplined and taken into captivity for their idolatry – God’s ultimate plans for them were plans “of peace and not of evil.” God’s plans were not designed to harm them but rather for their welfare, to give them “a future and a hope.” God promised them, “If you seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me.” God made 10 such “I will” promises in chapter 29 alone! The people of God today are called to do the same. We are to seek Him wholeheartedly – not in accordance with our own agendas and plans – but His. When we seek the Planner, we will find His plans for us. And His plans are always for our welfare, to give us a future and a hope – regardless of what we are going through today.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Read Jeremiah 29:1-14. Make a list of the commands that you see in this passage. Which ones do you think were most difficult for the Israelites to obey? (Recap) [10 min]**

Leader's Notes:

Babylon was a place of discipline and repentance for the Israelites. God's favour seemed to have disappeared from the nation of Israel. Their sense of identity was under attack and their very survival was at stake. Yet in the midst of the darkness, Jeremiah proclaimed that God was commanding the exiles to build their homes in Babylon and to live peacefully there (29:5-7), to ignore the false prophets (29:8-9), to be assured that God had their welfare in mind and that they would return home in 70 years (29:10-14). Given the length of their exile, they were to build houses, plant gardens, marry and have children, and even plan for marriages of their children. Furthermore, they were not only to be concerned about their own life, but they were to promote the welfare of the Babylonians. God was concerned about the welfare of a pagan nation! But through it all, the assumption was that God would be present and active in their daily lives even in this foreign land.

Transition (Wrapping Up & Moving to The Next Question)

Even though many of God's commands to His people were difficult, He ultimately had their welfare in mind when He gave them one of the most famous promises in the Bible in verse 11. We will do well to examine this important and oft-quoted Scripture.

- 2. Read Jeremiah 29:11. This verse is one of the most quoted verses in the Bible. How have you understood this verse? What goes through your mind when you read that God wants to prosper you, give you hope and give you a future? Relate from your personal experience how God had brought you through difficult times in the past. (Relate, Reflect) [15 min]**

Leader's Notes:

Leaders can encourage members to share from their personal experiences how God had brought them through difficult times in the past. The sharing would encourage all to trust in the faithful God even through difficult times.

Jeremiah 29:11 is possibly one of the most beloved, yet most misunderstood, verses in the entire Bible. It is often taken out of context and offered as a remedy to troubled souls. Jeremiah 29 is God's Word to Judah amid their suffering under God's discipline as a result of their idolatry. God told the Jewish exiles in Babylon to live godly lives in their captivity because God knew what He was doing – even though that captivity lasted 70 years and many never lived to see it end. Likewise, God's plans for us are always good, but they are not necessarily comfortable, nor are they the plans we would choose in our limited human understanding.

For more insights, read "Does Jeremiah 29:11 Apply to You?"

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jeremiah-2911-apply/>

Transition (Wrapping Up & Moving to The Next Question)

While the verse may often be misquoted, this is not to say that it has no relevance to us today. Just as it had spoken to the Jews in captivity then, God is speaking to the Church in lockdown now – that we have a hope beyond the present uncertainties and challenges. He wants to redeem us and put us on a path to wholeness, just as He wanted the nation of Israel to be redeemed and be whole again.

- 3. Read Jeremiah 29:12-14. Are you seeking God with all your heart at this point in your life and during this difficult season? If not, what steps will you take this week to draw closer to God? (Response) [15 min]**

Leader's Notes:

While Christians struggle, like everyone else, with the challenges of being confined at home and the uncertainties of what to expect in the future, we need to remember that we worship a God who is in complete control of the situation and who promises us a future and gives us hope. Instead of looking at the storm around us, let us focus on Jesus who alone can calm the storm. Instead of reading awful news every day, let us dive into His awesome Word daily. Instead of spending time on Facebook, let us carve out time to pray and to seek His face.

Closing

The world is going through an unprecedented time in history with the pandemic and Christians are not immune or protected from the virus. But this trial should not distract or hinder us from Jesus' commandment to us to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33) or His commission to us to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

WORKS [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. Continue to pray for the Covid-19 situation.
2. Pray for God to reveal Himself to you and one other person you choose to pray for this week.
3. Reach out to someone who's been let down by false hopes and allow God to use you to share the true hope in Jesus Christ.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Join us at our weekly online prayer gatherings:

YOUTH | Tuesdays, 8-9pm LIVE on Instagram (@wearemegalife)

CHINESE | Wednesdays, 8-9pm, Zoom

ENGLISH (RiverLife Selah) Thursdays, 8-9pm LIVE on Facebook (@riverlifechurchsg)

2. Job Opportunities

RiverLife Church has a Job Placement Scheme (JPS) and the objective is to offer temporary projects or assignments to church members who may be facing financial hardship or retrenchment. Such temporary projects or assignments may be offered by RiverLife or other para-Christian organizations subject to availability and reasonable 'job fit'.

New Hope Community Services (NHCS), a charity, is urgently looking for two suitable candidates to fill the position of Operations Officer. This is a temporary full-time job expected to last for a duration of 6 months (subject to present prevailing social

conditions). One of the key initiatives of NHCS is to provide shelter for displaced families and individuals in partnership with Ministry of Social and Family (MSF).

To find out more about this job, please contact Leah at admin@newhopecs.org.sg

Church Vision

“A radiant disciple-making church catalysing Kingdom transformation in our communities and the nations.”

Mission

We exist to make disciples who behold Christ and reveal Him.