

Understanding the Plan

Jeremiah 29:11-14a

Lesson 3

Exploring Faith Bible Study Series

Lesson Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is to help people see there is a plan for our lives. God's plan is not about each day being determined beforehand. This lesson will demonstrate that when we choose to live our lives with God as our guide and head, life will be more full and satisfying than we could even imagine.

Ice Breaker:

Invite the group to think for a moment about this question: In your life, what is the biggest thing you ever planned for? Ask group members to share their responses.

Life Connections:

Use these questions to help your group members to begin to open up with one another and to think about their own lives. The answers to these questions need not be spiritual in nature. The intention is for practical real life responses.

- 1) Why do we make plans? So we can know what is going to happen; so we can be prepared; so life will be easier.
- 2) How do you feel when everything goes as planned? Satisfied; in control; like I accomplished something good.
- 3) How do you feel when things don't go as planned? Frustrated; totally helpless; it doesn't bother me too much.
- 4) What role does God have in your plans? Not much, I make them without considering Him; I pray He will help my life to go well; I feel like He has let me down when my plans fail.

Scripture's Answers: Jeremiah 29:11-14a

In this section the Life Connection questions are now related to the passage of Scripture being used in this Bible Study. The answers to the following questions should come from the text as well as out of the individual's hearing and understanding of what they have heard read.

Have a member of the group read the Scripture passage aloud for all to hear. Make sure extra Bibles are available so everyone can follow along.

Scripture:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity" (Jeremiah 29:11-14a)

Introduction:

Most people plan their lives. We like to plan and prepare for our futures. All too often we find our planning doesn't work the way we had hoped. For some this leads them to give up their goals and dreams. For others failure spurs them on to try more, plan in strategic ways and work harder to achieve what they want. Sometimes botched plans lead people to curse God because He did not help them to succeed. Others could care less, or think little about God's involvement in their lives—their plans are all dependent on their own strength and stamina.

God wants us to understand He has a plan for each of us. This plan is not something that is laid out, scheduled for everyday and against our will. God's plan is to bring us to Himself. When we respond to His loving call and His plan for us, our lives will look different and our planning will not be in our power, but in His.

5) What do you think God means when He says He has a plan for you? He wants to control me; He knows what is best for my life; He helps those who help themselves.

Teaching Time:

Say to your group: God has said He has a plan for each of our lives. He also says His plan is to prosper us, and not to harm us. Many people think God is an angry and judgmental God who does whatever He wants even if it hurts us. This passage of Scripture says that isn't true. God does not want to harm us. He wants what is best for us.

6) What goes through your mind when you realize that God wants to prosper you, give you hope and give you a future? I did not expect that to be what He wanted; I am amazed He would want that for me; I am not sure what God is going to do in my life.

7) God also wants to listen to you. What would you say to Him if you had the chance? I wish He would help me more; I don't really think I need Him in my life; I have no idea what I would say to Him.

Teaching Time:

Say to your group: God wants us to come to Him. He doesn't care where we have been or what we have been doing; He still has a plan for us. God tells us that He wants us to call on Him and to seek Him. We all are seeking something in our lives. Some of us may be seeking to make a name for ourselves, others, seeking to have enough money to retire and leave our children with something, others, seeking to make a difference in the world. God says when we seek Him we will find Him.

8) What do you think finding God would do for your life? Make me happier; I don't really know; help me to be a better person.

9) How do you think you can find Him? By going to church; by reading the Bible; by praying.

Reflection:

Invite the group to take a moment to reflect silently on the questions you are going to ask. These questions can be answered or you may choose to allow the members of the group to think about them.

10) What is keeping you away from God's plan for your life?

11) How is relying on your own planning failing you?

12) What is holding you prisoner?

Optional Activity Time:

As a way to make the reflection more meaningful in the lives of group members there are two activities to engage in. First, give the group time to write the answers to the reflection questions in a journal they can keep throughout the study time and the week to come. Second, send each group member home with these questions to think about and write about in a journal during the week. When the group gathers together the next time, break the group up into smaller groups and give them the opportunity to share what they have been thinking about since they last met.

Teaching Time:

Say to your group: Jesus Christ is God's Son. He came into the world and lived and died for all people. His death made it possible for us to know God and not be separated from Him. God has a plan for each of our lives; He wants each of us to know Him. When we know Him our lives are different. Everything we do is different. When we experience His love and His forgiveness we are free from anything that is holding us prisoner. When we allow God to be in charge of our lives, He promises to prosper us, give us hope and a future. We must be careful to understand when God talks about prospering it isn't material blessings He is talking about. God will provide for us, it may not be the way we would imagine, but He will provide. Nothing and nobody else in the world can really offer us these promises but Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

Take time to pray together before the group leaves. Allow group members to share insights and ask questions they may have.

Possible Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

Thank You for coming to the world and dying for us so we can know God. Thank You for having a plan for each of our lives. Thank You for the hope and peace we can have when we turn to You. We want to turn our lives over to You and live according to Your plan. Will You come into our hearts and forgive us of our sins so we can be freed from the things of this world that hold us? We know our own planning is not perfect and that we often fail. We need You to guide us and lead us through the good times and the bad. We want to take Your hand and walk the pathway of life with You.

Amen.