



For Further Study

Read and meditate on the passage below:

⁴ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

This passage comes from the prophetic oracles attributed to Jeremiah. While other leaders and nobles were taken into captivity during the exile, he was not. Remaining among the people still in Judah, he writes a letter of prophetic encouragement to the people in exile.

Interestingly, he encourages the people in Babylon to settle in there. He is saying that they will not be immediate change. They are to make the most of their time away. This includes building houses, planting gardens, getting married and having children. Life is different for them in this foreign land, but they remain alive and should continue to see their lives as a precious gift.

Instead of stirring up conflict with others in their new homeland, they are to seek peace and prosperity. He parallels their own meaningful and abundant living to that of those who are now their neighbors. Instead of highlighting the diversity that exists between the Jewish captives and their Babylonian captors, he is emphasizing a common dignity.

In your setting, who is different than you? How can you accept, affirm, and encourage them with the love and peace of God?

PRACTICE:

Evaluate you own neighborhood and see who you can be kind to.

