

# CROSSROADS BIBLE CHURCH

GROWTH GROUP CURRICULUM

May 12, 2019

## "CITY OF GOD" - Week 1

For more information or to join a Growth Group, please visit our Growth Group page online at [cbclife.org/groups](http://cbclife.org/groups) or call the church office at 408.288.4115.

### QUICK REVIEW

For those who weren't there or even those who didn't understand it very well it will help them to get acquainted with the text and topic. These questions are also designed to be "softball" questions in order to get people to engage and participate.

1. Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

This is an opportunity to clarify the teaching for those who may not have understood it. This can also be a jumping off point for great discussion. Sometimes groups don't get past this question and that's ok! Remember, you want to "scratch where it itches" so don't feel the need to rush past this.

2. What is one thing from Sunday's message you are likely to remember two weeks from now?

### MY STORY

1. Where did you grow up? Was it suburban, urban, rural? When you thought of big cities, what was your impression? If you grew up in a big city, how has your impression of them changed?

This is your first week so you may want to spend more time on this question so those in your group can get to know each other better. You might just go around and have everyone answer.

### DIGGING DEEPER

2. Pastor Jeff discussed the nature of living in the valley, and the spiritual landscape of the Bay Area in general. What were your first impressions of these statistics? Oftentimes, it's easy for us to think of these statistics and the decline of the church in America, and allow it to discourage us in sharing our faith. Talk about these fears and read these verses to discuss how these fears can lead to opportunities to see God work through you and Crossroads in a greater way.

Acts 1:7-8; Philemon 1:6; 1 Peter 3:15-16; Psalm 96:2-4

Acts 1:7-8 New International Version (NIV)

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Philemon 6 New International Version (NIV)

6 I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.

1 Peter 3:15-16 New International Version (NIV)

15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Psalms 96:2-4 New International Version (NIV)

2

Sing to the Lord, praise his name;  
proclaim his salvation day after day.

3

Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

4

For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;  
he is to be feared above all gods.

2. When Nehemiah heard about the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, it broke him apart. He sat down and wept for days and then prayed for the city. When you read through the first chapter of Nehemiah, what do you notice about the nature of Nehemiah's prayer? What elements of this prayer can we incorporate into our own prayers lives when we commit to praying for and acting on behalf of our city?

Nehemiah 1:1-11

Nehemiah 1 New International Version (NIV)

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, 2 Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. 5 Then I said:

"Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. 7 We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

8 "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, 9 but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

10 "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. 11 Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."  
I was cupbearer to the king.

- What is something you are individually passionate about seeing change in the city of San Jose. If resources and time weren't an issue, what would you like to see change?
- What are practical steps you can take and how has God gifted and positioned you specifically to possibly take steps to see that change you are passionate about?
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The heart behind these questions is to help your group connect the passions God has put on their heart with tangible things they can do to begin the change they long to see.

3. Read through the passage of Scripture from this weekend's message again (Jeremiah 29:1-14). What specific directions does God give the exiles for relating to the city of Babylon in verses 4-7? How do you think the exiles felt about this? What is the relationship between the "prosper you" of verse 11 and the "prosperity of the city" of verse 7? What was the purpose of the exile, according to verses 11-14? Why do you think these verses were included in the letter?

#### Jeremiah 29:1-14

This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2 (This was after King Jehoiachin[a] and the queen mother, the court officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the skilled workers and the artisans had gone into exile from Jerusalem.) 3 He entrusted the letter to Elasah son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said:

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." 8 Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. 9 They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the Lord. 10 This is what the Lord says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. 11 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. 12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity.[b] I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

- What specific directions does God give the exiles for relating to the city of Babylon in verses 4–7?
  - Seek the peace of the city and pray for it.
- How do you think the exiles felt about this?
  - They would have been aghast. For centuries God had been chastising Israel for worshiping false Gods.
- What is the relationship between the "prosper you" of verse 11 and the "prosperity of the city" of verse 7? What was the purpose of the exile, according to verses 11–14?
  - The relationship between the people prospering and the city prospering is defined in v. 7 "Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Babylon was already prosperous, by working for the good of the larger culture, Israel would enjoy the favor of the people. We see the same pattern play out in the early church in Acts 2:  
  
Acts 2:46,47  
Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

## **TAKING IT HOME**

1. Who are five people you can specifically start praying for in your circle of influence that you can start praying for and start to introduce to church?
2. Pray for the city of San Jose. As Nehemiah 1 as a guide, start praying for this city and for our hearts to grow in compassion for it.
3. One of the biggest ways to see change happen is to volunteer at church. If you are not currently serving, sign up to join a ministry team.