

Youth Teaching Resources

October 13, 2019



Season After Pentecost (June 16-November 24)

Choices That Matter

Habakkuk 1:1-2:4 (RCL 1:1-4, 2:1-4) – Faith for Hard Days

Jeremiah 29:1-9 (RCL 1, 4-7) – An Unlikely Garden

Jeremiah 31:27-34 – A Surprising New Start

Joel 2:23-32 – A Harvest to Remember

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

An Unlikely Garden

Jeremiah 29:1-9 (RCL 1, 4-7)

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

“Make the most of it.” Life isn’t always what we had planned, and when it doesn’t go as planned we are to make the most of it. This is hard for our students to get because they put their heart and soul into something; maybe even sacrificing something really big for it to happen. Then, when that “it” doesn’t occur, life can fall apart. And that is when we have to make the most of it. It’s hard for our students to see that they will get another chance and how they deal with this current disappointment will have some influence over that. The hardest part here: modeling it for your students. When things get hard, make the most out of what is going on. They watch you when times are hard to know how to respond.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “Failure is Not an Option” from *Apollo 13*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What is the problem?
- 2) How do they plan to fix it? What would have happened if they had not fixed the problem?
- 3) How did they make good out of a bad situation?
- 4) When have you faced a bad situation? What did you do about it?
- 5) How does your faith help you through difficult situations?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Jeremiah 29:1-9. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What is going on when Jeremiah speaks to the people of Israel?
- 2) Why would the people be waiting around "twiddling their thumbs"?
- 3) Why does Jeremiah not want the people to be deceived?
- 4) Why does Jeremiah tell the people of Israel to pray for their oppressors?
- 5) Why would it be hard for the people of Israel to live out what Jeremiah is telling them to do?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Where were the people of Israel exiled too?
- 2) How does Jeremiah's prophesy reveal that we have choices in our life?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": How long did the exile last?

Transformation

Conclude your time together by creating small groups of three and have the students discuss the following question in their small groups: What do you hope to do when you leave high school? When the groups have had time to discuss their question, bring them back together as a large group and facilitate a discussion with the larger group using questions like the following:

- 1) Where do your hopes and dreams come from?
- 2) What happens if you only hope for your dreams?
- 3) What do you need to do to make your dreams happen?
- 4) How is your faith like the hopes that you have for the future? What happens if you wait around on your faith?
- 5) How do we know what to do along our journey of faith? What markers of faith do we have along the way?
- 6) How do we celebrate these milestones? What do we do in-between these milestones?

Close with a prayer thanking God for walking with us each and every day; not just on the days that are hard or the days that we celebrate.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Exiles in Israel—Because of our affinity for Israel, many Americans fail to appreciate the plight of Palestinian people. In an unfortunate twist for a people whose heritage includes being forced from their homes and into exile, the establishment of the secular state of Israel in 1948 forced more than 700,000 Palestinians from their homes and property, offering little recourse other than settlement into large refugee camps where many continue to live.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) counts about 5 million Palestinian refugees and patrilineal descendants today, with 1.5 million still living in 58 UNRWA camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank (<https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>).

Pro-settler movements, mainly among Orthodox Jews and many coming from America, continue to expand into areas of the occupied West Bank, building new settlements in violation of international law and claiming more Palestinian territory. The forced removal of Palestinians from their land, along with continued Israeli expansion into the West Bank, remains at the root of much discord, not only in the Middle East, but throughout the world.

In the photo to the right, which I took from Mount Gerizim, a densely populated section of the city of Nablus is the Balata refugee camp, where an estimated 27,000 Palestinian refugees still live in a camp designed for 5,000, according to UNRWA (<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/balata-camp>).



Multiple messages—In a recent study of Jer. 4:11-28, we saw an example of one of Jeremiah’s fiery predictions of judgment, warning the people of Judah that their sin had bought them a ticket to Babylon. In a study of Jer. 8:18-9:3, we heard Jeremiah weeping for the people because judgment had come. In today’s text, Jeremiah offers encouraging advice to those who had been deported. In next week’s study, he will offer even more hope. Jeremiah was not a “one-tune musician,” but remained in touch with the people and spoke what they needed to hear.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Jeremiah's advice—One might wonder if Jeremiah had Joseph in mind when he counseled the exiles to make the best of their situation and make a positive contribution to the land in which they lived. The story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50) recounts that he was taken to Egypt as a slave, but he kept a positive attitude and quickly settled into his new life. As Joseph worked to promote Egypt's well-being, despite several setbacks, he also found personal prosperity.

A thought for reflection—Jeremiah's prophecy suggests that we can make choices about our life, no matter what the situation. We can be bitter, or sweet. We can be resigned to a gloomy life, or we can make it better. We can fade as an unwatered plant, or we can grow in grace. Which will you choose?

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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How long did the exile last?

Jeremiah predicted that the exile would last for 70 years, if that's what is meant by "Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place" (v. 10).

The first wave of exiles were taken to Babylon in 597 BCE. A second wave was deported in 587, and yet more were taken in 582. We could say the exile officially ended shortly after Cyrus the Persian conquered Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king, in 539. The following year, the famous "Edict of Cyrus" (Ezra 6:3-5) decreed that the Jews could return to their homeland and reestablish temple worship.

If we start counting with the first exiles in 597 B.C.E., this would give a period of only 59 years for the exile proper. However, very few Israelites returned in the first wave of repatriates. More of them came some years later, when Jerusalem had been reestablished, no doubt some of them after 70 years.

The precision of Jeremiah's prediction is not as significant as its import: the exiles would be in Babylon for a long time. Many would die there. New generations would be born there. And the Lord would be with them, even in a foreign land.