

Out of Context Plans to Prosper- Session #2 Small Group Notes

Introduction:

What did you want to be when you grew up? (Ex: fireman, ballerina, astronaut, doctor, policeman, teacher, mother). What was so attractive about that job?

If you could live your life over, what key decision or decisions might you make differently that would impact where you are today? How do you think your life would look different? In what ways have you seen how God's plan has been working in your life?

Which of the following statements do you most closely identify with? (1) I've always had a clear sense of my purpose and knew what I was placed here to do/be (2) I've been searching to find my place in the world and the reason why I'm here (3) I struggle to see plan of my life when I go through hard things.

Discuss:

1. Read Jeremiah 29:10-11

The context of the passage is how the people were living in exile. Many had questioned why they were there if they were the promised people of God. However, the Lord used the prophet Jeremiah to remind the Israelites that even though things were not as they had planned or hoped for, He was with them and was working in the midst of difficult days. God's plan was to do good things for them, and to restore their hope and futures in ways they'd only dreamed of as captives in a foreign land. In short, there was a method to the madness. God was at work purifying His people, and He sent them into exile to do it because their relationship with Him was far more important than any measure of earthly ease or comfort. When it comes to life situations, we have to see as well that God sometimes is doing a work in us before He does a work through us. We will go through hard things, but they can all be seen as a part of the greater plan of God.

Name a situation where you have confused the desert with being deserted by God. What did you learn in that situation, or what are you learning now?

Based on your relationship with the Lord currently, what purpose do you imagine God might have in allowing you to face a difficult situation: to prepare you, to purify you, or to clarify your priorities? How can this group pray for you about that?

What can you do, practically, to make the most of the desert seasons you find yourself in?

2. Read Jeremiah 29:12-14

God declared that the working out of His plan included the exiles turning to Him for help as they had stubbornly refused to do when they lived in Judah. To call to the Lord is to recognize that only He is the Source of help and deliverance. The exiles would come and pray to the Lord, and the Lord promised to listen to them. This promise was a reversal of a previous divine declaration to refuse to hear the people's cries for help (see Jer. 11:11). The difference for the exiles would be the changed condition of their hearts toward God. The discipline of the exile was designed to propel the people toward genuine repentance. God promised that the people would find Him—that is, would be assured of His presence and power for living—when they sought Him humbly and wholeheartedly.

How can we encourage one another through difficult times when we are certain that God has a plan for all of us?

What sorts of plans does God have for His church that should help us be bold for good works and the fulfillment of the Great Commission?

Has anything ever happened to you that made you feel like you had been forgotten by God? What Scriptures helped you through that time that you might use to help others?

3. Read Matthew 6:25-34

This verse gives us insight into the feelings God has toward each of us, and our importance to Him. He knows us, and He knows we need His

provision. The good news is He is always at work to provide for us because we matter to Him even in spite of the times that we struggle. We can trust Him to meet our needs. He does that because we matter to Him. But it begins in see how the plans of God always align when Jesus is put first in our lives!

Is there an area of your life that you are seeing God work in today? If not, what is something that you are seeking the Lord's direction in?

How has today's discussion encouraged you to show your trust in God's provision for you, now that you realize you matter to Him? What would that look like?

What special abilities and talents do you have that point to how "fearfully and wonderfully made" you are? How does serving others help you to understand your purpose in Christ?