

## COMMUNITIES THAT BUILD A CITY!

Scripture used: [Jeremiah 29:1-14 \(NRSV\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

This week we were blessed with Guest Pastor George Hinman's sermon on building cities. The timing for this sermon is important, since we are approaching the 2 year anniversary of the tragic protests and deaths in Charlottesville. Some people despair when they think about the state of the country. But the prophet Jeremiah offers us a different path. He watched his own city, the Jewish capital of Jerusalem, sacked by the Babylonians. He watched his fellow Israelites taken in chains to once again be forced into exile. And yet he had faith in God. Jeremiah knew that the Lord had plans for Israel's future. We can have this same faith as we look at America. Each of us has the chance to bless the city where they live, helping build a new city right in the middle of the dying one! As Jesus followers, we must embrace change and work to build a better future. God can use us to heal the tensions and fear that currently dominate so much of our media and our minds.

### KEY POINTS

- 1) **Being "in exile" means losing your place.** From the moment we are born, the world changes around us. God knows that it is impossible for us to live in a single place for our entire lives. When the Israelites were told they would be in exile for 70 years, the number was a metaphor for their entire lives as described in [Psalm 90:10 \(KJV\)](#). Human life is full of loss. As children we lose our innocence. And some of us go through periods where we lose our faith. Eventually all of us lose our strength and health. But we don't despair. God's message is targeted to people in exile!
- 2) **God wants us to build a new place.** We are commanded to grow. But this doesn't mean we have to start somewhere new. Pastor Hinman offered two powerful examples of building while in exile. First, Daniel was a refugee from Jerusalem who settled in Babylon and worked his way into a position of great power with King Nebuchadnezzar. Second, a wave of African-Americans fled persecution in the South during the Great Migration, settling in cities such as New York. It was there in the 1920s and 1930s that the Harlem Renaissance spawned religious, literary, musical, and political figures who shaped America all the way to today! This is what the Bible meant when he described the righteous prospering both themselves and the city in [Proverbs 11:10 \(NIV\)](#).
- 3) **God wants us to bless a new place.** There is no "one size fits all" way to bless people, but Pastor Hinman offers a framework that might be useful. By following the example of Jesus, we can exalt our own cities like in [Proverbs 11:11 \(NIV\)](#)!
  - a. **Bond.** Start by finding the place where God wants you to build. Pray to God for clarity. Ask Him where you can help prosper the community, and yourself.
  - b. **Listen.** Followers of Jesus can learn a lot by listening to the stories of other broken people. Go to the people of your new community and listen to them. Find out what they need, and why.
  - c. **Elevate.** Gather up all the pain and fear that you hear from people. Give it over to God in prayer, asking Him to work in the world. Make sure to ask Him about your own role in the community.
  - d. **Serve.** Pastor Hinman said that we should be people "of the towel, not of the cloth," meaning we should focus on serving others.
  - e. **Speak.** Over time, our service will show the community that Jesus followers are different. Other people will naturally be curious about us. That is the perfect opportunity to share the story of Jesus and His message of redemption and eternal life.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Pastor Hinman spoke a lot about our community or our city. Where do you feel most at home? Where is your place?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Do you identify with the idea of being in exile? Have you "lost a city" somehow? Share your story of when and how it happened. Have you started building a community in exile?
- 3) **DO** - Consider the acronym "BLESS" shared in the message. How can you take a step to bless someone in your community this week?