**BCM Bible Study – November 29/30, 2017**

**Jeremiah: Back to Egypt (Jeremiah 40-45)**

A Dashed Hope of Renewal

* *These chapters are written around 587 BC when Zedekiah is blinded and captured for his rebellion against Babylon. The city is brought to ruins and Gedaliah is established by Nebuchadnezzar as Judah’s governor. Gedaliah is known to be sympathetic to Jeremiah’s message of submission to Babylon and is placed as ruler at Mizpah, not at the rebellious Jerusalem. Jeremiah is given the chance to go to Babylon or stay in the ruins of Jerusalem, and he decides to stay.* **Read Jeremiah 40:7-12**
	+ What does Gedaliah tell the Judeans to do? Where have you heard this type of language before? (Look at Jer. 29:4-7)
	+ Also, re-read Jeremiah 29:10-14. If you were a Jew living during this period, what would you think was happening?
* **Read Jeremiah 40:13-41:8** *Ishmael goes on to take the people captive and tries to take them to the Ammonite territory. Before he can succeed, Johanan catches him, so Ishmael and his men must escape back to Baalis without the captives.* **Read Jeremiah 41:16-18.**
	+ Why does it seem that the king of Ammon desired to kill Gedaliah? (Hint: 41:2-3, resistance to Babylonian rule)
	+ Why is this such a great evil? (see Jer. 27:1-3, 8-11)
		- In what way is this a lack of faith on Ishmael’s part?
	+ At the end of the chapter, what does Johanan decide to do with the people? Why does he do this?
		- In what way is this a similar display of lacking faith? What fear is driving him?
* This is contrasted by the men coming to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles who are killed by Ismael.
	+ **Read Leviticus 23:29-44.** *These flimsy booths are a reminder to Israel that they once dwelled in temporary shelters during the forty years in the Wilderness, totally dependent on the Lord. God is faithful and He continues to provide all we need to walk upright before Him still today.* (https://feast.icej.org/about)
	+ Why is the attempted celebration of this feast such a stark contrast to the rest of the passage? (Both the unfaithful leaders and the unrealized hope)
		- Where do you tend to look for a sense of security and provision in this world?
		- Why does it seem easier to trust in these things?
		- What would more full dependence on God look like for you? What steps can you take to live more dependently on God?

Don’t Go to Egypt: **Read Jeremiah 42:1-17, 43:1-13**

* Where is Johanan and what is he doing when he asks Jeremiah to pray?
	+ What does this tell you about the authenticity of his request?
	+ Consider this: *“They really didn’t want either his prayers or God’s plans, they wanted the LORD to approve what they had already decided to do.”* (Warren Wiersbe)
		- How does this quote resonate with you? Do you do this?
		- What life plans do you hold tightly? What would be difficult about having these plans changed?
* Consider 42:6 again. Often the situations that look “bad” in the moment are ultimately God’s design for our ultimate good. On the contrary, sometimes the things that seem “good” in the moment will not end in our ultimate good.
	+ What examples have you seen of this truth already in your life?
	+ How does this story encourage you to encounter difficult life stages or situations?

Going Backwards: **Read Jeremiah 44:1-14** Pause here and ask someone to give a summary of these verses – what has been said so far? Now, **Read Jeremiah 44:15-30.**

* What were the Judeans doing that was so abominable in the sight of the God?
* Why do the Judeans say that they continue to worship these gods?
* Why is it particularly tragic and ironic that people are turning back to gods in *Egypt*?
	+ ESV Study Bible footnote on 44:26: “These Judeans have reversed salvation history by returning to **Egypt** and her gods. So, God will take back the **name** he revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:14; 6:2-3) and the saving, covenantal presence his name symbolizes.”
	+ What pre-salvation practices or activities do you run to when you are looking for things to go well? In other words, where are you looking for satisfaction or security in the sinful activities that characterized your life before you knew Jesus?
	+ This mistake is in essence the same one that tripped up the Judeans. What causes us to fall into this trap? (one answer – not learning from the past)
		- Read: “The whole Egyptian escapade was under his wrath because it was an attempt at self–salvation.” (New Bible Commentary)
		- In what way are some of the aforementioned actions an attempt (intended or not) at self-salvation?

Conclusion: Break into small groups

* Consider the story of the woman at the well in John 4. She is living a worldly life, seemingly looking for satisfaction or security in men. **Read John 4:7-15.**
	+ What worldly practices have you found to leave you more “thirsty”? Which of these things are still a struggle for you? What holds you back?
	+ In what ways have you found Jesus’ promises in this story to be true?
	+ How can you encourage one another to pursue Jesus in every area of life?