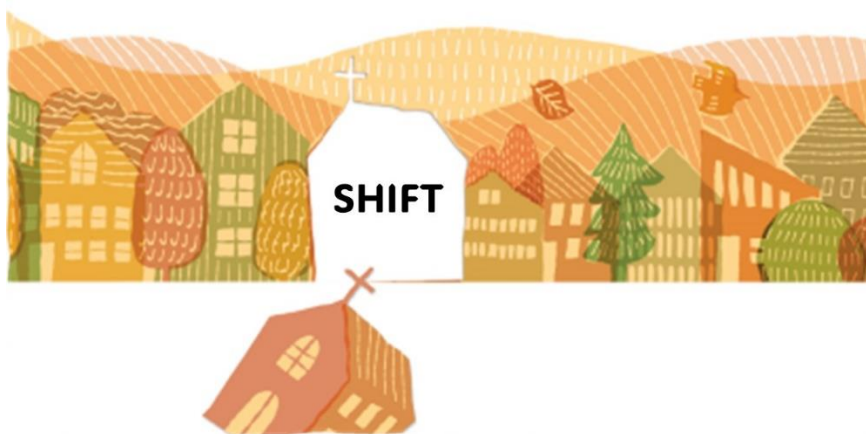


JOURNEY

lutheran ministries



Embracing the Exile
Week Two Bible Study

Journeylutheranministries.org

Connect *(10 minutes)*

The thought of our being in exile is not a comfortable one. Exile means “living away from home”, and for most of our lives many of us have lived in what we considered a Christian society, but that is changing quickly. As a follower of Jesus, how have you been made to feel like an outcast in our modern world? How have you responded to these changes?

Respond *(10 minutes)*

God’s people have been chosen and exiled throughout the scriptures. Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden, God’s promise to Abraham made him a nomad and sojourner for the remainder of his life. Moses and the Israelites roamed the desert waiting to be led to the promised land; even Peter refers to brothers in Christ as “elect exiles of dispersion.

Why do you think God uses exile as a tool to move His people to accomplish His will?

Expand *(60 minutes)*

Acts 11:19-30 helps us to discover six biblical truths about living in exile that we must embrace to navigate the cultural shift we are in.

- 1) **EXILE PROMOTES THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL**
Read Acts 11:19-21. What causes believers to scatter to far off lands, and what is the result of their exile? Verse 21 makes it clear that a supernatural force was behind their success. How can we apply these passages to our modern exile?

2) EXILE CONFRONTS OUR IDOLS OF POWER

As we become people of influence in our culture, God calls us to seek what is best for our communities.

Read Jeremiah 29:4-7. What role does our humility play in accepting God's call to act when our cultural power is taken away? How can we put this into practice in our lives to spread the Gospel?

3) EXILE IS WHERE WE DEPEND ON THE LORD

Read Acts 14:22. Being in exile can certainly be seen as a hardship, and as Barnabas told those in Antioch "Remain true to the faith" for our only hope in times of hardship is in the Lord. It is our nature to turn to God in times of need, but in times of plenty we often put God "in our pockets" in case we need Him later. Exile teaches us to turn to God and remain faithful and depend on Him alone to provide for us.

In what kind of situations do you see yourself turning to God? When are you less likely to turn to Him?

How does Barnabas' advice to the church in Antioch relate to us, and them?

4) EXILE SHOWS US OUR NEW AND BETTER IDENTITY

In pre-Christian times people were identified first and foremost by their culture. You were a Jew, a Gentile, or a Roman. The followers of Jesus in Antioch were the first to be labeled "Christians" (Christ-ones).

How does our culture choose to divide people today?

There are many seasons of our life when we try to find our identity. In our baptism, in our conversion experience, we see God chose us in Jesus.

What identity traits do you hold onto that hurt your faith, and which ones do you hold onto that help your faith?

5) EXILE REQUIRES DISCIPLESHIP

Read Acts 11:25-26. Barnabas realized he needed help and you looked to a knowledgeable and qualified teacher to minister to the people, so he made a substantial journey to bring Saul to teach the believers in Antioch.

We must have the same attitude as Barnabas. We must be willing to listen to and learn from others, and seek out the best teachers to spread the good news of the gospel.

What obstacles can get in our way when considering discipleship?

How can our pride become an obstacle?

In the past, our US culture valued biblical knowledge and understanding of the scriptures. In what ways has that changed? How can we reverse that trend?

6) EXILE MAKES US GENEROUS

In Jeremiah 29 verse 7 says “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare”.

We too need to pray for the people of the city's that we live in collectively—but also individually. Who is God laying on your heart to be praying for in your city?

The famine in Antioch affected everyone. We saw the Christians share what they had among themselves, and the community. These ways of loving people was a rapid spread of the gospel of Jesus.

What are the acts you do to show the generous love of Jesus?

Journey wants to do this in a better way with your generous acts, please share with others and pastor how Journey can do this better with you.

Honor*(3minutes)*

Can we be grateful in our time of exile? Can we give thanks and prosper, helping grow the community of believers while we, ourselves draw closer to God during a time “away from home”? We can if we understand that even while in exile, God is still with us, and our situation is part of His plan for our lives. In truth, until we are united with God in His heavenly Kingdom, we are all in exile, away from our true home in heaven.

Pray that we will make the best of our exile through steadfast faithfulness and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and while we navigate this time of exile let us be a light to this changing world so that all may come to see the Love, Grace and Mercy of Jesus Christ, and the salvation only He can offer.

Apply (7 minutes)

We are called to remain faithful in our exile, but the world pressures us to leave our life of faith behind. Below are some questions to consider as we move forward in our exile.

- ★ As we consider the words of the great commission (Matt 28:19-20) we can see the problem that the De-churching presents. How do we attract new people to the faith when so many are leaving the community of believers? What are some ways we can approach those who have left the church to reconnect them with the church family?
- ★ How do we remain faithful and Christ centered in an environment where many see Christians as “hateful” for not accepting the ways of the world?
- ★ How do we promote the gospel to those who say they’ve heard it all before?
- ★ What are some ways we can show those who have left the church that our identity as Christians is more important than how the world sees us?
- ★ How do we demonstrate generosity as a church family?

NOTES