

Quick Backdrop

Has this ever happened to you? You do something bad. Your parents say, "If you do that again you will be in trouble." Then you do it again. And your parents say, "If you do that again you will be in trouble." And you do it again. Still no trouble. Your parents have been gracious, or maybe lenient. You do it again. Then BAM! It all blows up and you feel like you might never escape parent wrath.

Believe it or not, God's people, the Israelites, had something similar happen to them in the Old Testament. They kept choosing disobedience and at times even choosing outright evil against God and His plan. Yet He kept telling them, "If you turn to me then you will be alright, but if you keep going down this path of disobedience, then destruction is on its way." Well, they kept going down the path of disobedience. They never changed and eventually it all blew up. They lost their homes, their land, their place of worship, their possessions and they were exiled to a foreign land.

1 Digging In (God, Show Me!)

The Israelites lost everything, and you can't blame them for thinking that they had lost God, too. They were suffering the consequences of the mess they made. But during their exile God had something very different to say to them than what you might expect, words He sent to them through the Prophet Jeremiah.



Jeremiah 29:11-14

¹¹ "For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² In those days when you pray, I will listen. ¹³ If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," says the LORD.

You may have heard this passage before, but you may not have known why God said it to His people. He was telling them it was going to be alright. He hadn't left them, even though they had made some choices that got them kicked out of their homes and the Promised Land for almost 70 years.

Take a moment and read that passage out loud slowly to yourself three times. As you do underline or highlight (if you're doing an e-version) anything that stands out to you.

Now rewrite those verses in your own words in or on a separate sheet of paper or in an e-doc.

Write down everything this passage teaches you about God's plans. What *are* they and what are they *not*?

What is God saying about you and His plans in this passage?

2 Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)

Have you ever really thought about the fact that God has plans for you? He has plans even when we've made some disobedient choices. You might ask, "How do I even know God's plan?" Jeremiah 29 gives us a great place to start. Try this:

Draw a circle in the space below or on a separate sheet of paper. If you're using an e-doc, imagine your doc to be a circle.

At the top write "God's plans." Moving clockwise, on the right-hand side write, "Pray." At the bottom write, "God listens." Continuing in a clockwise direction around the circle, on the left-hand side write, "Seek with my WHOLE heart." Now at the top near where you wrote "God's plans," write "FIND HIM."

Read the Jeremiah the passage one more time and look for the pattern of the circle you just drew. Write the corresponding phrase from the passage in the appropriate spot of your circle.

3 Seal the Deal (God, Change Me!)

Back to the question, "How do I even know God's plan?" Looking at your circle, write an action you can do for each section of the circle. Then do those actions. In fact, commit to do these actions every day for seven days without even thinking about God's plans. Remember, it doesn't matter how disobedient you've been. If the Israelites could rebel repeatedly, and still be loved by the Lord enough for Him to want them, you know God loves and wants you!

Simply do Jeremiah 29:11-14. Pray, listen, and seek. Before long, you will be doing the plans that God has for you, plans for good and for hope.

Fold or Cut