

STUDY GUIDE:

For The Life Of The World | Episode 1 - Exile

As we begin this series, you will see that we've all been in this conversation for a while now. The start of this video covers some territory that you have heard before: Our salvation is for more than heaven someday... it has purpose on earth today. Even last week at the end of our Are We There Yet? series we dove into the idea of EXILE and the different postures we can take towards our culture as Christians. So, your CORE has covered the first few ideas, but keep going... this will be a GREAT journey my friends!

INTRODUCTION

Our first episode revisits something so foundational to our Christian walk that it's easy to overlook and misunderstand. God tells us we are exiles, strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Our calling is to a better country, an eternal dwelling. And yet—and here's where it gets tricky—our calling is also *For the Life of the World*.

That means God isn't calling us to a bunker mentality (fortification). He also isn't calling us to dominate the culture around us (domination) or to simply blend in to get along (accommodation).

So how exactly are we supposed to engage the world?

KEY IDEAS from the video:

Babylonian Exile of Israel and the Current Exile of the Church: Israel's exile in Babylon is instrumental in teaching the church how to live in the world but not be of it. The history of Israel and the church reminds us that God's ultimate purpose is restoration.

Oikonomia: This is an ancient Greek term meaning "house management or stewardship." It also helps us understand how each sphere of life—family, work, government, art, education, charities, and more—has its own arrangement or mode of operation. When these spheres blend and interact, it's a grand collaboration that reflects God's *economy of all things*. Oikonomia involves gift exchange in our creative stewardship of culture.

The Song of Gift: We are made in the image of God, called to be gift-givers of the Gift-giver. If we pour out our lives, using our gifts to bless others, we will be blessed in return (though not necessarily in material ways). This communal blessing produces abundance and flourishing.

The Welfare of the City: The Israelites were commanded to seek the welfare of the city in their place of exile. The church is also called to seek the welfare of the earth's inhabitants during our pilgrimage here. This is our priestly calling as gift-givers in God's economy of all things. (Jeremiah 29)

Discussion Questions

In God's economy of all things, his *oikonomia*, is your daily labor solely a means to provide for yourself, your family, your church, and maybe your favorite charitable cause?

For what purpose is your work designed? What is your economic responsibility? How might you grow your God-given gifts in order to enlarge your vision to serve others in need of your gifts?

Have we forgotten to be gift-givers in all our relationships and exchanges? How does understanding *all is gift* change the way you approach your daily work and interactions with others? Is your work a heavenward offering? What are the ways you might carry out the calling to be a royal priesthood, to bless others with the gifts God has blessed you?(What is your salvation actually for?)

How is a Chinese sky lantern a good metaphor for our lives, our work, our gifts? How is our work connected to the earth, in the places where we live? Do we seek to serve locally, nationally, globally?

How do you define success or your purpose in life? Is it connected to the welfare of the city where you have been placed? What would it take to transform your city?

What does it mean to "prepare the way of the Lord"? What are some ways you could do this in the specific location God has placed you?

WORD for the JOURNEY

Isaiah 55:11 ... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Entangled in the everyday grind of life in exile, I sometimes lose sight of a staggering, awe-inspiring reality: I have a God-breathed book I can open every day for strength and wisdom. The story of exile is woven throughout Scripture. The Pentateuch, prophetic books, wisdom books, historical chronicles, and New Testament all speak to us about our journey on earth and illuminate God's purpose for his creation. We read, we meditate on these living words, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we grow in grace as the living body of Christ in the world. So I hope you'll join me in reading these Scripture selections as we journey together. We'll learn more about God's everlasting love for us and his plans for the flourishing of his handiwork.

Psalm 24:1–2 *The earth is the LORD's ...*

Jeremiah 29:7 *Seek the peace and prosperity of the city ...*

Jeremiah 29:11 *'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you ...'*

Jeremiah 29–33 *Israel's exile in Babylon*

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*

Hebrews 11:13 *... admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.*

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works*

1 Peter 1:17 *... live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear.*

Prayers for the Journey

1. Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of your life, for restoring our communion with God and renewing our calling as gift-givers. Through your perfect sacrifice you have given us the power to love and bless others with our gifts. My heart rejoices.

2. Father God, I need wisdom to know how to use the gifts you have given me, *for the life of the world*. You promise to give wisdom to all who ask. Knowing that your ultimate purpose is restoration fills me with hope and expectation. Thank you.

Close in Prayer for One Another

