Going into Exile

By Nell Sunukjian

The Lord was telling Judah through Jeremiah that he had good plans for them, BUT the plans involved exile. Not what they thought of as good plans. Here God is promising that exile is not the end; exile is the beginning of the new future.

Listen to what the Lord instructed Judah during their exile. They were given specific instructions about flourishing in their captivity. Yes, flourishing! They were told to build homes and plant gardens. They were told to marry and have children. And then to marry off their children. They were told to increase, to flourish, to multiply, to hang on to hope and not to give up. Why? Because God had a new future for them and it was good.

My friend, Ann, went into exile when she learned from her husband that he had repeatedly unfaithful to her for four years. He very much wanted their marriage to continue, and so did she. They walked in exile together for several years as they figured out the beginning of their new future—a future would include Bill’s infant son from the affair. They didn’t leave their home or their church or their family, but they chose an exile of rebuilding, years of resting from ministry to invest in each other and to heal, and to hear God say again and again to them, "I know the plans I have for you. This is not the end; it’s the beginning of a new future.”

Together they built a new future that includes his now-grown son whom she loves dearly. Their new future includes deeper sharing and connection to each other than they had previously enjoyed. Their new future includes his restoration to ministry in their home church as he teaches a large adult Sunday School class with the blessing of the elder board. Now they are telling their story of recovery from adultery, as they did in my class, “Family Issues in Women’s Ministry.”

There are times in all of our lives when we go into exile. I thought I was going into exile when we moved here to California 17 years ago. I was leaving a lovely home and beautiful natural outdoor spaces. We were ending a productive ministry, and I couldn’t see the future. Though it looked full for my husband, Don, who would be teaching at Talbot School of Theology, it looked empty for me.

After we moved in, I tried to find where to put down my roots—could I work at our new church? (Need computer skills and I had none). Should I substitute teach? (Not even taking applications). Get a master’s degree in education? (“No, you should be teaching women,” my friend Shelley said).

So I enrolled at Talbot and almost immediately God opened the door for me to serve in Family Ministries at our new home church, EV Free Fullerton, which in turn led to me being called to serve there for over a decade as Director of Women’s Ministries. Exile? I think not!

And so for my pastor friend. This exile was not his choosing, but he must go. Yet it is not the end; it is the new future for him. The Lord says to him, too, “I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope.”

What about the man facing prison? This exile was not his choosing, but he has to go. But it is not the end for him either.

Jeremiah 50:33 says, “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah as well. All their captors hold them fast, refusing to let them go. Yet their Redeemer is strong; the Lord Almighty is his name. He will vigorously defend their cause so that he may bring rest to their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon.’ So I say with confidence to my friends, ‘Go into exile. It’s not the end; it’s the beginning of the new future God has for you.’

When you become a believer, you also become God's messenger. God wants to speak to the world through you. Paul said, “We speak the truth before God, asmessengers of God.”

2 Corinthians 1:17 NCV

Preparedness in August

Southwest Character Council is a marketplace ministry which promotes a different character quality every month. We are blessed that many from around the city receive our monthly emails and attend the monthly Character Luncheon. Our mission comes from Proverbs 24:21, which says that he who pursues righteousness finds life, prosperity and honor.

This month our character focus is preparedness. Preparedness was what Jesus taught his followers to be ready at His coming as judge. But what is on my heart this month, takes us in another direction. That is to be prepared for what is coming on the earth as we see so many shakings all around us.

Jesus admonished us to “discern the times. As believers, we are to be watchful and praying. We can, and should, consider the issue of preparedness, which requires actions beyond just thinking about the future. Its very definition means to be ready, making ready, and putting things in suitable order. When considering a job, a new baby, planning a trip or preparing for retirement, preparedness is essential to a successful outcome.

Let's look at pursuing the character quality of preparedness: Do your homework. Keep a time and emergency plan ahead, so that what may be an unexpected event or change to your plans won't catch you by surprise. Don’t delay. Get organized. Start by focusing on what needs immediate attention and prioritizing. Let’s look at pursuing preparedness.

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Emma Pettit Trippett

Preparation for the worst.

Whether your preparation is mental, physical or spiritual, early preparation will enable you to cope with whatever might be an unfortunate scenario— job loss, higher expenses or equipment failure.

Janie Peach, author of The Last Lecture, received national acclaim for his observations on his journey with a terminal illness. “I am a great optimist, but, when trying to make a decision, I often think of the worst case scenario. There are things I don’t worry about because I have a plan for them. It is wise to be kind of person who practises preparedness in all areas of life. The Bible teaches in Proverbs 27:12 that a prudent person foresees danger ahead and takes precautions or the simple key make and go for it.

Will you be ready for the future? My mother used to say, “Nothing good or bad lasts forever.”

Lauraine Huffman

Associate Character Council
Join us for character building in our marketplace ministry at Great American Steakburger, Wednesday, August 27, 2014—a family friendly $15 for training, lunch and networking. Cash or checks only please.

Anne Gallardo-Sanders, CPCU, CLU, CHFC
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If you receive this unsolicited gift of eternal life today, pray the following prayer: Dear God, I have broken all Your laws and do not deserve to live. I repent of my sins and am throwing myself upon Your mercy. I believe that Jesus is my only hope. I believe that He paid for every one of my sins and I accept Him as my Savior and Lord. I will obey and follow Him the rest of my life. Thank You for saving my soul. Amen.

If you pray this prayer or would like more information, please call Pastor Larry Lamb (915) 959-0288

How to Grow as a New Christian

1) Read the Bible every day. Begin in the Gospels of John.
2) Pray every day. Prayer is talking with God. You can pray anytime, anywhere.
3) Attend a Bible-believing church where Christ is honored.
4) Tell others of your commitment to Jesus Christ.
Obedience
Heartfelt, not Grudging

Good Day Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

God desires and expects our obedience, but sometimes simple obedience alone does not please the Lord. There were times when children that we obeyed either because we were expected to do so or we wanted to avoid the dreaded beatings across their bottoms were not in the obedience we were. We may have gotten away with it as children with our parents being satisfied with the obedience, however, then as now, the Lord looks on the heart and immediately if a mother of a non-Christian family, friends, or co-workers because of things they may post that does not match up with our beliefs. Yet I feel perhaps even more than other Christians post could possibly be what turns them around. How is it that the use of social media can be handled in your view point?

Questions:

As Christ followers, what should we be about on social media? I’m writing to Facebook, and my husband said I should not accept “friend” requests from non-Christian family, friends, or co-workers because of things they may post that does not match up with our beliefs. Yet I feel perhaps even more than other Christians post could possibly be what turns them around. How is it that the use of social media can be handled in your view point?

Answers:

Electronic communication is a tool just like any other tool. It is how you use the tool that determines whether it is good or evil. The number of people using the internet is growing, so is the amount of time spent on the internet, if this were the only measure, then no discipline was needed. There are dangers connected with social media. First, is the addition of a tool that causes people to lose themselves in the screen, cutting off family and friends for the trivial they find on the internet. Another danger is the anti-Christian influence from people and organizations. This reveals the always present challenge to disciple “in the world, but not of the world,” which applies not only to social media, but every area of life.

When we heard the Apostle Paul wrote: 2 Cor 6:14 “Do not be yoked together with unbelieVERS!” and 1 Cor 5:13 “Bad company corrupts good character.” We still drive the force of Christianity is evangelism: “go into all the world.” The choice is yours. Use every opportunity to have a positive influence on others for Jesus because as Jesus said, “you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”

[1] Philemon 8-9

Christian Leaders

Social media without a doubt has become a two-edged sword both for good and evil. However, on the same token, ministries have found social media to be a tool to reach out to those that the church has not been able to reach in the past. You can reach out to reach personally as. As for the use of social media as a personal medium, you just remember that we (Christians) are commissioned to “Go into all the world” and share the Good News to all people. Also, bear in mind that if Christians choose to communicate to fellow Christians then we are not fulfilling the charge God has given to us. As a personal follower I would use the term that it is like a tool to reach out to the lost and in need. There will be individuals that get caught in the web of social media but we are to use social media as proselytizing to Christianize, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, to be Christian lighthouse that will reach with the saving message of Jesus. So while you’re at it, yes, I believe you could add them as Facebook friends. I am not sure if you actually see them or talk to them on a weekly basis in real life.

Pastoral Assistant Paul Durkan
St. Paul’s United Methodist Church
(940) 322-3371

Concerning social media, Jesus did not have newspapers or Facebook but He did leave us some examples by the way He did ministry. Jesus always went to those who were shunned by society in His day. He ate with sinners and heal those that the Jews thought were beneath them. Jesus was there for those who needed a physician. I believe the application is that we need to be light to those who are in darkness. Yes, there are some who will do nothing but tear down the kingdom. But there are those who do to give an opportunity to hear about Jesus. I think they see in opinion but you could keep in contact with those who are open to spiritual things and you are the one who tear down our Lord. We never want to open ourselfs to anything satanic, but we should always want to share the hope that is in us, who is Jesus Christ our Lord.

Pastor Brooke Davis
Greenup First Baptist Church
(Greenup, IL)

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