

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

- 1 Can you recall a time when your faith was tested through suffering? How did you respond, and what did you learn from that experience?
- 2 How have your own struggles equipped you to offer comfort and support to others in their times of need?
- 3 Reflect on a period of hardship in your life. How did it deepen your understanding of God's character and reveal His goodness to you in new ways?

WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!



SCAN QR

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.



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SUNDAY WORD

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TEXT: Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) - "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV) - "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

GOD IS ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT US

Jeremiah 29:11 - "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you... (NKJV)."

Isn't it wonderful to know that God thinks about us constantly? This may be the most important thing you'll ever hear. The God of the universe considers us, knows us, remembers us, and keeps us in mind. He knows who we are and where we are. We are never lost or forgotten because God's heart is so big and His knowledge so vast that no one ever gets lost even when everything gets mixed up.

Unlike God, we often get so caught up in life that we forget even the people closest to us. We miss birthdays, anniversaries, and graduations. We tend to remember bad things better than good ones. We recall hard times and insults. Some people have a "Grievance Book" that remembers every mean thing done to them, even twenty years ago. Some people never forget. They remember every bad thing that happened to them and hold onto grudges for years.

GOD WANTS TO GIVE US A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE

Jeremiah 29:11 - "...To give you a future and a hope." (NKJV)

Even when we have good thoughts about each other, we tend to forget them over time. That's why we say "out of sight, out of mind." But God never forgets His children. Even though He rules the whole world, He always remembers His own. In verse 11, the Hebrew text mentions "thoughts" or "thinking" three times. God isn't just saying, "I have plans for you," but rather, "I have been thinking about you." It suggests care, concern, interest, and affection.

We find great comfort in this truth: God knows what He is thinking even when we don't. We may ask, "Lord, what are you doing? Why is this happening?" Life often doesn't make sense. The good and the bad, the happy and the sad, they all seem mixed together without any clear reason. Even if we tell ourselves, "God has a plan," it's seldom clear to us. But God knows what He is thinking, even when His thoughts are hidden from us. God always has us in His mind. Therefore, we shouldn't worry about things too complex about God and life itself. We know so little. We understand so little. We have so many questions. But one thing is clear: God is always thinking about us.

GOD'S THOUGHTS TOWARD US ARE GOOD

Jeremiah 29:11 - "...thoughts of peace and not of evil..." (NKJV)

It gives us comfort to know that God is thinking of us, but it's even more important to know what He is thinking. Here, He makes it clear: "Thoughts of peace, and not of evil (NKJV)." Different translations say it in different ways: "Plans for welfare and not for evil" (ESV). "Plans to take care of you, not abandon you" (MSG). "Plans for good and not for disaster" (NLT). "Plans for well-being and not for trouble" (NLV).

This answers our biggest question: Is God for us or against us? God gives us His answer. All of God's thoughts for us aim for a positive outcome. Nothing happens by chance or nothing happens without a purpose. As one writer said, "Every affliction is timed and measured." We won't fully understand Jeremiah 29:11 if we think it's a magic charm to protect us from pain or suffering. Remember, this verse was given to the Jews in Babylon to remind them they were not forgotten and that their exile wouldn't last forever.

The devil often whispers discouraging thoughts in our ears, trying to make us doubt the Lord. The next time the devil tries to fill your mind with dark thoughts, remind him that the Lord's thoughts are not evil. Push the devil away with that truth. God can't have evil thoughts towards His chosen ones. God gave His own Son to die for us; He can only think good things about us.

So the question is: Why does God allow His children to go through hard times and suffering? There are several reasons. First, He wants to cleanse us of sin and make us pure. Second, He uses suffering to test our faith. Will we still follow Him when things are tough? Third, He uses hard times to humble us. When everything's going well, we can get prideful, but when troubles come, we turn to God in humility. Fourth, He prepares us to help others going through tough times. He comforts us so we can comfort others. Many Christians find their greatest ministry in sharing how God helped them through hard times. Fifth, Hard times help us understand God's character better. In tough times, we see His goodness in new ways.

Webster Bible Translation says, "to give you an expected end." That's actually a good way to translate Hebrew. This verse has a specific focus. God has planned an end for His people, and nothing will stop them from reaching it. Even though they couldn't see it while they were under Babylonian rule, seventy years later, the same God who allowed a pagan king (Nebuchadnezzar) to punish them would raise another pagan king (Cyrus) to set them free. Neither king knew they were part of God's plan; they acted according to their own free will, but God worked through their decisions to bring His children home. This means, God's plans never go unfinished!

Seen this way, Jeremiah 29:11 is a great comfort, especially in tough times. It tells us that God thinks of us and that His thoughts are good. When God's plans are complete, He will bring our troubles to their appointed end. This is the "hope and future" we all need.

This tells us about the process Coke bottles are made. The curing of the Coke bottle through very intense heat to mold the bottle was necessary and helpful for its purpose. Going through the oven made it stronger. It's the same for us. We can't skip the hard times in life; they're part of God's plan to make us useful. It might not feel like much comfort when you're in the heat, but remember this: You won't stay in the furnace longer than needed. When your trial, set by God, is over, you'll come out stronger than before.

What does it mean to be a believer? Jesus Christ died and rose again. In His death, He defeated sin; in His resurrection, He defeated death. Our biggest enemies are defeated: sin and death. He beat them both. Jesus bought us with His blood and brought us into God's family, guaranteeing our salvation.

No wonder the Bible says in Romans 8:31-32, 35-39 "31 If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? 35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep." 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. 38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

So, rest in God's sovereignty. Don't be afraid. None of us knows what tomorrow brings. But our faithful God keeps every promise. Nothing can happen to us without His loving care. If your path is dark, keep believing. When your trial is over, you'll say what others have said in every age: "The Lord was with me all the way."