

December Family Devotional

“Anticipation even in exile” Week of December 8-14

Sometime during the week, work through the readings and questions below (with family or friends if possible). Our hope is that this will help you grow in anticipation for what Christmas is meant to be.

When God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, that was only the beginning of a 40-year journey. But God kept His promise and gave Israel the Promised Land. Things went really well for a while. King David was a good king who taught the people to love God with their whole hearts. David’s son, Solomon, was a pretty good king too, but his heart began to wander away from God after a while. And as Israel’s king drifted from God, so did the people. Over the years, God would send messengers to remind the people that God loves them & wants to be close to them. But most of the time, God’s messengers were laughed at or ignored.

Finally, after hundreds of years passed, God said, “Enough!” Israel’s rebellion had gone too far. And so God did something that broke His own heart. He kicked Israel out of the Promised Land. Just like Adam & Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden, now God’s people had to leave the Promised Land. They were conquered by an enemy nation that did not love or worship God. This nation brought God’s people back to their own country where Israel would become slaves yet again. Imagine how horrible that would have been!

The Bible calls this the time of Exile. For 70 years, God’s people were held captive in a foreign country that didn’t even speak their language.

Read 2 Kings 25:8-12 and Isaiah 1:1-9

How do these passages describe what is happening to God’s people?

Try to imagine being a child and going through this trauma. If you were taken away from your home by a foreign country who forced you to live among them when you can’t even speak their language, how would you feel? **What are some of the things you would miss the most?**

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“Anticipation even in exile” (page 2)

The exile was a terrible time for God’s people. But God used it for good. It made them sorry they had turned away from the God who loved them. It made them sorry they had worshipped other gods. It made them sad that they couldn’t be in the Promised Land anymore. It made them sad that God seemed so very far away.

But God had not left His people forever. He knew this would be a sad time for them, so He sent special people like Jeremiah and Ezekiel to be with them and to speak fresh messages from God – messages of comfort and messages of hope. He also sent messengers to warn them ahead of time that judgement is coming. One of those messengers was a man named Isaiah. God used Isaiah to warn Israel of terrible judgment, but He spoke words of hope through Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 9:1-7.

What hopeful phrases do you hear in these verses?

Where does God want His people to look for hope?

Which description of the coming “child” encourages you? Why?

I’m sure the people of Israel would have much rather been released to go back home right away, but that wasn’t God’s plan. They had to wait many years (70 actually) before they could go back to the Promised Land. Rather than giving them what they wanted, God gave them promises to hold onto. And even though they had to wait, God kept His promises – every one.

Sometimes God doesn’t give us what we want right away either.

Read 1 Peter 1:6-7 What are some of the ways God works through the hard things of life? Can you see this in your own life?

We need to hold onto God’s promises too. This Sunday, we’ll look at some more of the promises God has given us that can encourage us when we’re not getting what we want right away.

Pray for one another.