

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CITY (Jeremiah 29:4–7)

#2 of Life Between the Sundays, Oct 4, 2026, Dave Geldart, Tru Community Church

1. [1] INTRODUCTION

- a. Raise your hand if you've ever moved.
- b. Keep it up if you've moved more than twice. Now three times.
 - i. Look around. Some of you are professionals.
- c. Now let's make it harder. [POINT to moving box on the stage.]
 - i. Today, right after church, somebody in your family says, "Pack up. We're moving tomorrow."
- d. **I need everybody's help with this. I'll be the kid. You're the parent who is completely out of patience. When I ask, you answer. Ready?**
 - i. "Can I say goodbye to my friends?" → No.
 - ii. "Can I finish the school year?" → No.
 - iii. "Can I pick my room?" → No.
 - iv. "Can I at least bring my stuff?" → One box.
 - v. "When are we coming back?" → Never.
- e. Hands up if you'd be furious. Yeah. Me too.
- f. Adults, most of you have had your own version of this kind of disruption:
 - i. A layoff. A set of orders. A diagnosis. A divorce. A parent who needed you closer.
 - ii. Nobody asked what you wanted. You woke up somewhere you didn't pick.
- g. Around 600 BC, Babylon marched thousands of Israelites, the best families and leaders, hundreds of miles from Jerusalem to a foreign empire with foreign gods.
 - i. And every day they wondered one thing: When do we get to go home?
- h. Then a letter arrives from the Prophet Jeremiah. Listen for the verbs.
- i. **[2] Jeremiah 29:4-7 "4 This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."**
 - i. Build. Settle. Plant. Eat. Marry. Give Increase. Seek. Pray.
 - ii. And not one verb in that letter says **wait!**
- j. Last Sunday we asked, "What is forming me?"
- k. **[3] Today the question flips: "What should I be doing here?"**

- l. Kids, you're in charge of one sentence today –
 - i. [4] it's our big idea -- and the grown-ups have to say it with you. It comes with motions.
 1. "Wherever God puts me," [point at the floor]
 2. "I can bless," [hands out, palms up, like you're giving something away]
 3. "The people around me," [sweep your arms in a circle]
 - ii. Try it: *Wherever God puts me, I can bless the people around me.*
- m. [5] Grown-ups, here's our version:
 - i. "Wherever God puts us, we belong to him, and we're there for the good of the people around us."
- n. God gives us three commands through Jeremiah.
 - i. Between them, they close the door on four traps.

2. STAY

- a. [MY MOVING STORY] I moved a lot growing up.
 - i. The last one was Raleigh to Overland Park, a few days before my freshman year of high school.
 - ii. Dad's job changed.
 - iii. I put on a brave face, but honestly I was sad and scared.
 - iv. I just wanted things to stay the same.
 - v. After our last Sunday at church, I walked across the street to this little hole-in-the-wall shake place and got a vanilla Coke, like I always did. One more time.
 - vi. Then we went home, packed up the truck, and started driving to Kansas.
 1. I never went back to that shake place.
- b. That kid is who Jeremiah wrote to:
 - i. one box, staring out the back window at everything he's leaving.
- c. [6] Look at who does the carrying in verse 4: "Those I carried into exile."
 - i. On the map it was Nebuchadnezzar. But in the letter, God says, I carried you.
- d. I can't tell you why every hard thing has landed on you, and I won't pretend to.
- e. But I will tell you he has never once lost track of where you are.
 - i. Babylon wasn't a mistake he needed to fix. It was an address he knew.
- f. So the first command, both to the ancient Israelites and to us today, is
 - i. [7] stay.
- g. Think about what those exiles wanted.
 - i. They wanted to hear, "Keep your bags by the door." This won't last long!
 - ii. Because if you never unpack, you never have to move in.

1. Never have to love the place, so it can't hurt you.
- iii. Jeremiah writes back: unpack.
- iv. [8] Plant gardens. You're going to be here a WHILE!
- h. [9] [NOTE: Show image of TULIP BULB] This is a tulip bulb. Homely little thing.
 - i. Looks like a papery onion.
 - ii. Wamego knows what these turn into every April.
 - iii. You plant this now, in October, and then nothing happens for six months.
 - iv. Nobody plants a tulip bulb on their way out of town.
 - v. A garden is how you say, I'm staying.
- i. [10] And it gets bolder → Marry. Have kids. Put down real roots.
 - i. [11] Verse 10 says seventy years!
- j. Here's the strangest part:
 - i. The next verse is the one on your graduation cards:
 - ii. [12] "I know the plans I have for you... Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
 - iii. God wrote that to people who were going to die in Babylon.
- k. [13] So here's the first trap: Escape. [Run in place for two seconds.] "Get me out."
 - i. It can sound like this: "We're only here until the kids finish school."
 1. Until we can afford to move somewhere with a mountain. Or a beach.
 2. Until we find the right church.
 - ii. Some of you own a house and your heart has been on the market for years.
 1. You don't live in Saint George, or Manhattan or Wamego.
 2. You wait in it. And you can wait your whole life.
 3. You'll never learn the names of the people on either side of you, because someday you'll be gone.
 - iii. Does this mean nobody ever moves?
 1. Of course not. → If you're in danger, get out.
 2. I'm talking about the person who's been leaving for fifteen years.
 - iv. The exiles didn't choose Babylon. They did choose how they lived there.
 - v. Kids you don't get to pick your seat but you get to choose who you'll be in it.
- l. [14] Stay means: God, this is where I am. Help me live here on purpose.
 - i. [15] *Wherever God puts me, I can bless the people around me.*
- m. But God doesn't stop at stay. Anybody can stay and be miserable.

3. [16] Command #2: SEEK

- a. Verse 7 is the center of the letter.

- i. "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."
- b. Notice who gets blessed: Babylon.
 - i. The idol-worshipping empire that burned the Jewish temple and marched them here.
 - ii. And God says, pray for it. Not for its collapse.
 - 1. The Hebrew word is shalom,
 - a. everything in its right place, the way it was meant to be.
 - 2. Kids, think of a puzzle with every piece in the right place.
 - a. THAT's shalom
 - iii. God wants shalom for the people who took your house
- c. Then comes the hook. If it prospers, you will too.
 - i. Your good is stitched to theirs.
- d. **[17] The second trap is consume. [grab with both hands.] "What can this place give me?"**
 - i. We treat towns like restaurants:
 - 1. Show up, order, rate it, complain to the manager.
 - 2. Read any local Facebook group.
 - 3. Bad roads. Nothing to do. Terrible parking.
 - ii. And church works the same way.
 - 1. If the question you ask about Tru is "What is this church doing for me?" you'll be disappointed.
 - 2. That's a consumer's question and no church can feed it.
 - iii. Jeremiah's question is different. What do I have to give this place?
 - 1. Yesterday many of us served our community.
 - 2. **Kids, was yesterday the only day God cares about this community?**
 - a. **[KIDS SHOUT: "No!"]**
 - 3. Right. Serve Day was a snapshot
 - a. But the movie plays out on Monday and Tuesday.
 - 4. It's the person who does the job well when the boss is out.
 - 5. The nurse who learns the scared patient's name.
 - 6. The mom who runs the pickup line like a ministry, because it is one.
 - 7. The neighbor who notices the porch light hasn't gone off in three days and knocks on the door.
 - iv. Seeking a city's shalom is a way of living – between the Sundays

- e. Kids, what's one thing you could do to make your classroom, your bus, or your team better, just by being there?
 - i. [LET KIDS ANSWER. AFFIRM 2–3: include someone, help the teacher, sit with somebody alone, stop laughing at the kid everyone laughs at.]
- f. Those are great – and they're kinda regular and small.
 - i. Kinda like a tulip bulb.
 - ii. Kids don't graduate from being a blessing, they just become adults who get bigger places to bless.
- g. Now when we say SEEK THE GOOD – I don't mean "be nice."
 - i. Nice isn't bad. It's just not strong enough for what God is calling us to.
 - ii. Seeking the Good is far bigger!
- h. Why would anyone live like that? Because God did first.
 - i. **[18] John 1:14, in The Message: "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood."**
 - 1. Kids, Jesus moved too.
 - a. He left his home – the best home ever – heaven! –
 - b. for a new neighborhood – and it was ours.
 - ii. Jesus didn't wait for a better neighborhood.
 - 1. Do you know which one he picked? **John 1:46 tells us: Nazareth.**
 - 2. When somebody heard where he was from, they said, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"
 - iii. Then he grew and lived thirty years of ordinary days in a town people rolled their eyes at.
 - iv. Then he walked into Jerusalem, the city those exiles longed to get back to, the one city that would kill him, and he gave his life for it.
 - v. **Hebrews 13 says he "suffered outside the city gate."**
 - 1. He is the one who was truly cast out, so that nobody who trusts him ever has to be.
 - vi. The shalom Jeremiah tells us to seek has a name.
 - 1. **Ephesians 2:14 says "For he himself is our peace."**
 - vii. Seeking a city's peace and pointing it to Jesus turn out to be the same work.
 - viii. That's the difference between us and the exiles.
 - 1. We don't bless a city to earn a place in it.
 - 2. We already have a home that can't be taken from us: God's own presence, ours now by his Spirit, and one day the whole earth made new!

ix. And because shalom LIVES IN US, we can afford to give ourselves away.

1. *[19] Wherever God puts me, I can bless the people around me.*

4. REMAIN

a. But, if I move into the neighborhood and really love these people, don't I end up just like them?

b. *[20] Jeremiah's letter doesn't use the word "remain" – but the whole letter assumes it → Build in Babylon without becoming Babylonian.*

c. And there are two ways to blow this, one from each side.

d. *[21] The third trap is assimilate. [NOTE: flatten your hand, "blend in."]*

i. Think of a chameleon – that matches whatever it's sitting on.

ii. Some of us live that way.

1. At work you laugh at the joke about the coworker who just left the room.

2. You let the conversation at the ball game go somewhere you'd be ashamed for your kids to hear.

iii. Because in your heart, you want to blend in.

iv. Kids, it's the same when you laugh at somebody at lunch so you don't get picked on next.

v. The solution isn't hiding, saying "I'll keep my distance from the whole mess."

1. Remember from last week: proximity isn't pollution.

vi. And Peter, writing to Christians who felt like outsiders, says it this way:

1. *[22] "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:11–12)*

vii. Be different where it matters. Be good enough that others are drawn to it.

viii. Kids, you don't have to be mean to be different.

1. And you never have to become somebody else to truly belong.

e. *[23] The fourth trap comes from the other side. Control. [hand on hip, pointing.]*

i. This one hears "seek the good of the city" and thinks,

1. If we had enough votes, enough seats on the board, then we could fix this town!

ii. It's October in an election year and the yard signs are up.

1. So let me say this carefully: Vote. Run for school board. Show up at the city commission.
2. Engaging can be real ways of loving your neighbors.
 - a. Daniel will have plenty to say about this in a few weeks.
- iii. But watch what's happening in you as you do so.
 1. God never told the exiled Jews to take Babylon back.
 2. He told them to build and pray.
 - a. Which means praying for whoever wins, including the one you didn't vote for.
 3. The letter has no exemption clause.
- iv. A lot of what we call outrage is this trap of control in a nicer outfit.
 1. If your neighbors know you mostly as the person with the strong opinions and not the person who brought supper when the baby came, ask yourself which one you'd rather be.
 - a. Kids, you can't make everybody play the game your way.
 - i. Blessing lets somebody else go first.
 2. There's an even nicer outfit: It's called tough love – usually delivered from a safe distance
 - a. If I really cared about these people, I'd tell them the hard truth about their sin.
 - i. Sometimes that's exactly right.
 3. But look at the order God most often uses:
 - a. [24] First he says, I'm committed to you.
 - i. Then, I'm with you.
 - ii. Then, I'm for you.
 - b. Only after that does he say, now let me walk you toward who you were made to be.
 4. Biblical scholar Scot McKnight sees that pattern all through the Bible.
 - a. It's in this letter of Jeremiah: "I carried you."
 - i. And "I know the plans I have for you."
 5. And it's Jesus – he moved into the neighborhood, he went outside the gate, all for us.
- f. [25] So remain means this: Remain God's, and Remain for them. Both at once.
 - i. And lead with Love.
- g. [26] Wherever God puts me, I can bless the people around me.

5. [27] RESPOND & REFLECT

a. Today we discovered four traps:

- i. escape,
- ii. consume,
- iii. assimilate (BLEND),
- iv. control.

b. [28] Jeremiah's command:

- i. Stay. Seek. Remain.
- ii. And the word for all of it, hands out, palms up:

1. [29] **bless!**

c. Let's get quiet. Close your eyes if you like.

- i. Kids this is a quiet moment.
- ii. Look over at the map on the south wall where many of you placed a pin a few weeks ago

iii. [30] **Think of one place God has put you.**

1. One friend who's there with you.

iv. **Ask him, "God, how can I seek the good of this place?"**

v. Then one more.

1. [31] **Think of the one person in that place who's hardest for you to love,** and ask God to let that person flourish.

2. **And if you're brave enough, ask him to bless them THROUGH YOU**

vi. **[30 seconds of silence.]**

d. Nobody here is headed to Babylon.

- i. But tomorrow everybody is headed somewhere God put them.

e. Here's a place to start:

- i. Before next Sunday, **learn the name of one person you've walked past for months. It might be someone in this room here right now!**

1. Kids, you too: Find out the name of the kid who eats alone, or who others tend to avoid.

f. [32] **Everybody say it one more time with me [with the motions]:**

- i. ***Wherever God puts me, I can bless the people around me.***

g. Before we go bless anybody, we need to be fed.

- i. We can only give away what we've been given.
- ii. Jesus left his home, moved into our neighborhood, and went outside the city gate so we could be at home with God forever.

iii. And the night before, he sat down at a table with his friends.

6. [33] Communion

- a. He told them he was leaving.
 - i. He also promised he'd drink this cup with them again, new, in his Father's kingdom.
 - ii. Remember the exiles' question, "When do we go home?"
 - iii. This Communion table is part of the answer.
 - 1. We eat and drink with hope until he comes back.
 - 2. This is the meal of forgiven people who are headed home.
 - a. Even as we continue to live well here
 - 3. Let's celebrate it that way.
- b. In a minute, you'll come get a piece of bread and a cup, then take them back to your seat and hold them.
 - i. We'll eat and drink together.
 - ii. If you love Jesus, this table is for you, kids included.
 - iii. Parents, you know your kids best.
- c. BREAD: On that night Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, given for you."
 - i. Let's thank him for that.
 - ii. Take and eat.
- d. CUP: Then he took the cup and said, "This is the new promise, sealed with my blood."
 - i. He himself is our peace.
 - ii. Let's thank him. Take and drink.
- e. **Now, go bless somebody**

LIFE BETWEEN THE SUNDAYS



WHEN DO WE GET TO GO HOME?

JEREMIAH 29:4-7 ⁴ This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ “**Build** houses and **settle** down; **plant** gardens and **eat** what they produce. ⁶ **Marry** and **have** sons and daughters; **find** wives for your sons and **give** your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. **Increase** in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, **seek** the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. **Pray** to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING HERE?

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JEREMIAH 29:

God of Israel, send me to Jerusalem to build and plant gardens and have sons and daughters; let your daughters have sons and daughters; let your sons and daughters increase. ⁷ Also, to which I have come to it, because



Lord Almighty, the Lord who brought you into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon; do not despise them; let them settle down and be fruitful; they will then prosper and have many sons and daughters. ⁶ Marry and give in marriage; let your sons and daughters marry and give in marriage; let your sons and daughters have sons and daughters; let your sons and daughters increase. ⁷ Also, to which I have come to it, because the Lord says: 'The prosperity of the city which I have brought into exile shall not prosper.'"

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JEREMIAH 29:10-11 ¹⁰ This is what the Lord says: “When **seventy years** are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ 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.”

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Stay means:

God, this is where I am.

Help me live here on purpose.

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I can bless the people around me.***

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COMMAND #2: SEEK

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John 1:14 ^{MSG} The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.

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COMMAND #3: REMAIN

Build in Babylon without becoming Babylonian.

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TRAP #3: ASSIMILATE

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1 PETER 2:11-12 ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

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TRAP #3: ASSIMILATE

TRAP #4: CONTROL

COMMAND #3: REMAIN

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TRAP #3: ASSIMILATE

TRAP #4: CONTROL

God's Pattern: "I'm committed to you."

"I'm with you."

"I'm for you."

... "Let me walk you toward maturity."

COMMAND #3: REMAIN

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Remain means:

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RESPOND & REFLECT

FOUR TRAPS:

Escape. Consume. Assimilate. Control.

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JEREMIAH'S COMMANDS:

Stay. Seek. Remain.

RESPOND & REFLECT

FOUR TRAPS:

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JEREMIAH'S COMMANDS:

Stay. Seek. Remain.

BLESS!

RESPOND & REFLECT

Think of one place God has put you...

God, how can I seek the good of this place?

RESPOND & REFLECT

Think of one place God has put you...

God, how can I seek the good of this place?

Think of the one person in that place who's hardest
for you to love...

Ask God to let that person flourish.

And to bless them through you.

RESPOND & REFLECT

**Wherever God puts me,
I can bless the people around me.**

COMMUNION

