

## **Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides**

### **Nov 12th**

#### **Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)**

1. If you had to be allergic to something, what would you choose?

#### **Bible Study Questions**

1. Pastor Michael talked about crises revealing character.
  - How have you seen that to be true?
  - Why is crises so revealing about someone's character?
2. Read Jeremiah 38
  - What do you notice in the story?
3. The people developed a militant patriotism in face of the Babylonian assault.
  - How did their patriotism blind them from addressing the issues that God wanted them to address?
  - When is patriotism good and when is it harmful?
4. What do we learn from Jeremiah's example in this story as he navigates God's calling on his life and national interests?
5. What do you notice about King Zedekiah?
  - What prevents Zedekiah from doing what was right?
  - Pastor Michael suggested that the Bible labels him an evil king not because he did "evil" things, but he had the opportunity to stop evil and didn't. What do you think of that? What are examples of us doing that today?
6. Ebed-Melek was an outsider with no skin in the game. Why do you think that he gets involved to save Jeremiah?
7. In this story we have three main characters: Jeremiah, Zedekiah, and Ebed-Melek. Which character do you most resonate with and why?
8. Read 1 Peter 3:15. How does this verse direct us in courageously standing up for truth?

## November 12<sup>th</sup>: A Prophet, King, and an Outsider

It has been said that crises reveals character. Crises can reveal unexpected leaders and it can expose the character flaws of others. In Jeremiah 37-38, the walls are closing in on the city of Jerusalem. The Babylonians are surrounding it and it is only a matter of time before they are conquered. This crisis reveals the character of several key figures.

**Note:** Chapters 37 and 38 are similar and some scholars believe that they are different perspectives on the same events. Our focus will be on chapter 38.

**I. The Problem: A militantly patriotic culture with unaddressed spiritual sickness:** For years, Jeremiah has been telling the people that salvation is found in addressing their spiritual sickness. But as the political crisis worsens, the people focus on patriotism and believe that salvation is found in a militant rallying around the flag. When Jeremiah tells people that the city will be saved if they surrender, he is arrested and the people seek his death (38:4).

### II. Responses:

- **Jeremiah: Love for God and his people prompts him to boldly declare truth:** Jeremiah isn't against his country. He deeply loves Judah and grieves their destruction (book of Lamentations). However, his allegiance is to God over his country. This prompts him to share God's message, even if it is regarded as treason. He does not back down, even in the face of death.
- **Zedekiah: Knows what is right, but lacks the courage to make it happen:** You get the idea that Zedekiah wants to do what is right. In 37:3, he asks Jeremiah to pray for him. He approves Jeremiah's rescue from the well (38:10) and wants to hear Jeremiah's messages (38:14). Yet, he lives in constant fear of the people and does not obey Jeremiah's messages. He initially approves of Jeremiah's arrest (38:5) and fears what others may think of they know of his talking with Jeremiah (38:24). When Jeremiah tells him to surrender, he responds with "*I am afraid of the Jews who have gone over to the Babylonians* (38:19)" as an excuse to not obey. In the end, he does not act and suffers as a result. **Note:** In both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, Zedekiah is labeled as an evil king. We often imagine an evil king encouraging corruption and idol worship. But I wonder if he is called this because he had the ability to act, but allowed evil to happen because of his fear.

- **Ebed-Melek: Has the moral clarity to discern what is right and to act on it:** Ebed-Melek was a Gentile eunuch visiting Jerusalem. He had no skin in the game. But when he heard of Jeremiah being thrown in a well, he recognized it as evil and acted to save him (38:7-9).

**III. Application: Become people who courageously and respectfully stand for truth:** This story prompts us to ask about which character we resonate with. When injustice is happening in our country, we are called to speak for truth. 1 Peter 3:15, we are told to always have an answer ready, but to do so with gentleness and respect. We should be doing this courageously in whatever context God has placed us.