

**Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides**  
**November 19th**

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

1. What is your favorite part of the Thanksgiving meal?

**Bible Study Questions**

1. Describe a time when you feel that you put time into something and it was wasted?
2. Read Jeremiah 40:1-6, 41:1-3, 41:16-42:16, 43:1-7
  - You would expect Jeremiah to be vindicated after the Babylonian invasion. In the aftermath, how do the people respond to his leadership?
  - What emotions would you be dealing with if you were in Jeremiah's position? How would it impact your relationship with God?
3. How do most Americans describe a successful life? How do you generally describe a successful life?
4. Read 2 Timothy 4:6-7 and Hebrews 11:32-40. Based on these verses, how does God define success?
  - Is God's definition easy for you to agree with or not? Why?
5. Is there an area in your life that you need to shift your focus to better invest in things that matter?
6. Jeremiah ends (Jeremiah 52:31-34) with a word of hope about the release of the king. Decades later, Jeremiah's ministry was starting to have fruit as restoration began. How does this encourage you?

## November 19<sup>th</sup>: Was it all a waste?

Jeremiah's predictions came true and the Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian army. The people have been taken into captivity. As the ministry of Jeremiah wraps up, we all hope for a Hollywood ending in which he is vindicated. Yet, we don't get the ending that we want. It prompts the question: Was it all a waste?

- I. The end of Jeremiah's ministry:** In Jeremiah 39, Jerusalem is destroyed and in chapter 40, Jeremiah is given the option to either stay in the land or go to Babylon. He decides to stay with the few poor people who were left behind. The Babylonians appoint a governor who is a friend of Jeremiah's and the land seems to enjoy a season of renewal. This is all shattered though when the governor is assassinated (41:2). This puts everyone in fear of Babylonian reprisal.
- a. The people continue to reject his council:** In chapter 42, The people ask Jeremiah to inquire of God as to if they should stay in the land or travel to the safety of Egypt. Jeremiah prays and God tells them to stay in the land and trust him. However, the people ignore Jeremiah and travel to Egypt.
  - b. His life ends in exile in Egypt:** In chapter 43, Jeremiah is forced to go with them to Egypt. He warns them though that war will soon be coming there and they will be destroyed. In chapter 44, the Jewish women commit themselves to worship of the "Goddess of Heaven." Jeremiah condemns them for their disobedience. That is the last that we ever hear of Jeremiah. We can assume that he died in Egypt, in a place he didn't want to be with a group of people who wouldn't listen to him.
  - c. He ends up performing a key role in God's redemptive story:** Jeremiah's ministry seems to fail, but God is not finished with him. He is given the honor of contributing two books to the Bible (Jeremiah and Lamentations), which continue to impact people yet to this day. Furthermore, two of his prophecies are quoted in Matthew as helping to pave the way for Jesus.
- II. A life that counts**
- a. God cares more about faithfulness than accomplishments:** Jeremiah did not have accomplishments, but he was faithful to obeying God. In Jesus' parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), he commends his servants for being a "good and faithful servant".
  - b. God is the one who defines success:** We tend to define success as results. But God doesn't look at that way. In Hebrews 11, he

commends people for their faith and obedience, not for their results. His calling is to faithfully follow him and then leave the results in his hands.

- c. A life devoted to God is never wasted:** Men tend to consider a successful life one with accomplishments. Women tend to consider a successful life one full of relationships. Both miss the mark. God is looking for people who will be devoted to him. That kind of life is never wasted.
- d. We need to remember that God is not finished writing the story:** In Jeremiah, it looks like his ministry was all a waste. The Jewish people have ignored the message and the land is now empty. Yet in the last four verses of the book, we have an obscure story about King Jehoiachin being released from prison. The point in this story was that God was still at work. He was beginning a restoration of his people. Jeremiah's ministry was beginning to have results. In the same way, many of us pour into a ministry or in a person only to feel as if our time has been wasted. Yet we need to remember that we only see a part of the picture. Our work is not in vain and God is always working in ways that we don't see in the present.