

# Discipleship Guide



*Exile*

**Exile 3**

**A Biblical Theology of Exile 4**

# Exile

In the Old Testament, there is a period of captivity summarized by the word “exile”. The exile began with the nation of Babylon conquering Judah and laying siege to Jerusalem. In this time, the temple, the central place for worship, was destroyed and God’s people were taken captive.

All of this took place under God’s sovereignty as His judgment against the sins of His people. Over and over again God sent prophets, who acted like prosecuting attorneys bringing a case, to warn His people about the coming judgment if they didn’t repent and turn from their idolatry, cruelty, and injustices.

God also promised that this specific exile would not be permanent and would come to an end after 70 years. This prophecy was fulfilled when King Cyrus of the nation of Persia allowed Israel to return and begin the process of rebuilding.

This rebuilding process is partially recorded in the biblical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai. But as we’ll learn in this study, the Israelite exile points to something much more significant than a simple lesson in history.

# A Biblical Theology of Exile

## MAIN POINT

Humanity has experienced exile since the Fall in Eden when we were sent away from God's presence. This exile is only overcome by being reconciled to God through faith in Jesus, yet our experience of exile will continue, and even intensify as Christians, until we are welcomed into the new creation at the return of Jesus.

## GROUP INTRO

Christians across the globe have experienced their own exile through things like ridicule, mockery, and violence for following Jesus. When you've felt shame or fear for following Jesus, have you wanted to fight back/attack or retreat? Why do you think that is?

## TEXT

1. Let's look at the first human experience of exile in the garden of Eden. Read Genesis 3:20-24. How is this event - the sin of Adam and Eve - a picture of human exile?

*Leader help: Since Adam was the representative for all humanity, his sin impacts all of us, and so does his exile. God sends Adam and Eve away from His presence and away from eternal life. This is a picture of exile - being cast from the blessings of God and sent into a world where pain, loneliness, and death dominate. The fact that a cherubim - an angelic being who serves God - prevents reentry points to our desperate need for rescue. We cannot bring ourselves back into God's presence.*

2. God does not leave us in exile but promises reconciliation and restoration. Read Deuteronomy 30:1-6. What specific promises does God make here? How do God's words here also remind us of our need for salvation?

*Leader help: God promises all kinds of restoration and mercy, and the gift of having the heart "circumcised" - a metaphor which means being given a new heart that loves God and can obey Him. However, the responsibility to "return to the LORD your God" and "obey His voice" should make us pause and reflect: before coming to Jesus by faith, have we ever obeyed God and wanted to truly return to Him?*

3. Read John 14:1-6. This is Jesus promising a return to God. How does Jesus say this return to God happens? What is our responsibility in this return?

*Leader help: Jesus highlights a central part of Christianity: faith alone. We don't return to God on our own, through our own righteousness, good works, or holiness, but only by faith in Jesus. Jesus is the one who perfectly obeys God like He demanded in Deuteronomy 30. Jesus comes to earth as "the way, and the truth, and the life" - meaning He is the only one who can reconcile us to God and heal our exile.*

4. Read Jeremiah 29:3-7 and 1 Peter 2:4-5, 11-12. What did God tell the Old Testament exiles to do while in exile? What does Peter say our responsibilities are as we exist in this world as exiles? What's similar and what's different between these exhortations?

*Leader help:*

*The Israelite exiles were to bring physical and spiritual blessings to those around them and live very "rooted" in the foreign land where they were in exile. God's command here mirrors the commands He first gave to Adam and Eve. Christians are to live first and foremost in the love and joy of Jesus, the living stone who was rejected by men. We're invited to continually come back to Him so that we can be built up to offer "spiritual sacrifices" to God - things like loving our neighbors, being generous, forgiving, telling others the gospel, walking in repentance, living in Christian community, etc. Christians are to recognize, however, that no place in this broken world will be a "promised land".*

## APPLICATION

1. When in your life have you personally felt “exiled” from God? What is your assurance that God hasn’t rejected you or cast you out when you experience these feelings?
2. How can we help one another act as God’s holy priesthood, sacrificially loving others, when the culture around us grows more and more hostile to Christianity?
3. How does the hope of a new, sin-free, beautiful, physical creation, including a new body, empower you to live faithfully as an exile?
4. What are some of the ways you have resisted living as an exile and instead chased comfort, a “promised land”, or cultural acceptance?

## PRAYER

Confess your own resistance to faithfulness in exile.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: 1 John 1:8-9***

Thank God for His rescue of you, and the promise of full deliverance from exile.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: 2 Peter 3:10-13***



Admit to Jesus your personal fears about rejection, mockery, or ridicule because of your faith. Ask Him for help to trust Him.

***Biblical passage to guide this prayer: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10***