



## **WEEK 2 • GROUP GUIDE • MESSAGE BY ERIC PARKS**

### **START**

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Thinking back on your life, did you ever make crazy plans to do something? If so, what was it? Did you actually go through with the plan?

### **SHARE**

Welcome to our teaching series entitled, “Pardon the Interruption.”

This series about interruptions will last through Christmas this year. It is appropriate for this time of year, since the birth of Jesus Christ happened to be the biggest historical interruption the world has ever known. When we think of interruptions, we don't typically welcome them and even tend to get frustrated when they come since they are not part of our plans. The very nature of an interruption means you were in the middle of doing something and now you suddenly are doing something quite different.

There is a great quote about life's interruptions; “Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.” Each one of us has plans or purposes that we are living out with some degree of expectation that we will arrive or see those things happen. Almost all of us have experienced seasons where those plans seem to be derailed or drastically changed and we are set on a whole new course. Looking back on those interruptions in life, some of us would say that it was the best thing to ever happen to us, while others might say it was the worst thing to ever happen. Whether it is a job change, an abrupt shift in family dynamics, relational break-ups, or a change in the way you live life...interruptions cause us to see life differently. Pardon the interruption...

Not a single story through scripture ever starts with “then someone had a great plan.” Noah didn't plan on being a boat builder, Moses didn't plan on confronting Pharaoh, and Mary didn't plan on getting pregnant. God interrupts to show us our new plans at times.



The people of Israel had their plans interrupted as they were exiled by God and found themselves living in a foreign culture with radically different values. This caused a great crisis among the people, who wondered where their God was.

#### Let's read Jeremiah 29:4-14

Huey, F. B. (1993). Jeremiah, Lamentations gives a great overview of what is happening to Israel:

Verses 4–23 contain the contents of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles. It is significant that the Lord, not Nebuchadnezzar, said, "I carried into exile." The first person pronoun served notice to the exiles that what had recently happened to them was under God's sovereign control. The thrust of the message to the exiles was to settle down in Babylon for a long stay; the exile would not be brief. Apparently the exiles were impatient to return home, encouraged by the false prophets among them. They were given considerable freedom in Babylon, being able to move about freely and have normal life with only the restriction that they were not allowed to return to Judah. Life in Babylon was not rigorous as evidenced by the fact that when allowed to go home, some did not want to return (Ezra 8:15). The exiles were the "good figs" Jeremiah had spoken about (chap. 24).

The Lord allowed this to happen to his people. Why do you think that was?

Even though his people were in exile, how do you see God's grace to his people in this story?

God's people did not receive all the details about how things would happen. Why is it hard for us to not know the details in life?

### **GROW**

God does not always tell us the details of how the plan will happen, but God does give us promises that are true and right. As Christians, we can hold on to those promises. We believe the word of God is "inerrant" which is simply the doctrine that the Bible is without error or fault in its teaching. God does not contradict himself; so what he says, we can believe will happen. The difficult part is even though the promises are true, we struggle in the waiting to see things or situations redeemed. It is sometimes in this waiting that God accomplishes some of the biggest changes in our hearts and lives, even when we fail to recognize that is what's happening. With God, there are far greater purposes than we can imagine at work around us.

Rick Warren says this about purpose,

The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose for his purpose.

#### Let's read Ephesians 2:8-10 and Romans 8:5-6

How do you react to the truth that we have been created to do good works that God "pre-



pared in advance for us to do?”

When we stop thinking just about ourselves and allow our minds to be governed by the Spirit of God, what does that bring into our lives?

Regardless of what we face, we can have “life and peace” in the middle of any situation. Have you ever sensed this type of peace?

## **MOVE**

So in a life full of interruptions, how are we to live? How are we to think about others without losing ourselves in the process? Jesus is our model. Jesus was always the most important person in any room he ever walked into and the remarkable thing was that he never took advantage of that...ever. He never used his status to get into high society. Instead, he made himself nothing and served others in humility.

Jesus wrung himself out for others and in humility became obedient to death on a cross for us.

Let's read Philippians 2:1-11

What does it look like to be humble?

What stands in your way at times when you want to serve others?

When you serve others, how does it impact you?

This week, what is one thing you can do to imitate Christ's humility?

## **PRAY**

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

## **TO GO**

Ephesians 1:11-12 (The Message Translation)

It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for.

