

God's Story – Our Story
Characters and Character – A Place at the Table
May 5, 2024

Overarching Theme: 2024 – A Year in God's Story

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: 2024 can be a year of living into God's Story as we journey from Genesis to Revelation together.

Reflect on this Scripture:

2 Kings 25:27-30 (NRSVUE) In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison; ²⁸ he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the other seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. ²⁹ So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king's presence. ³⁰ For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived.

Commentary: The story of Judah's demise as recorded in 2 Kings reveals God's unrelenting judgment against Judah...That is by no means the last word on the matter, however. Rather, alongside the story of God's inevitable judgement because of human will to disobey, is a hint of hope. Despite the willful reversal of the exodus that "all the people" of Judah effected in escaping to Egypt (25:26), the final word is an unexpected account of liberation, however tentative; after thirty-seven years in exile, there is the inexplicable good news of freedom for exiled Judean King Jehoiachin. Despite the capture and humiliation of King Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's successor in Jerusalem, the final episode of Kings reports the exaltation of Jehoiachin above other kings in Babylonian captivity. It was the Lord who had sent the Babylonians to punish Judah, the narrator has asserted (23:26; 24:2-3). Though God is not mentioned in the closing words of Kings, one is invited to ponder if the reality of liberation and favor amid exile is not, finally, also a sign of divine grace.

. -Adapted from New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 3, pp 294-295

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Recall a circumstance in your life that at the time appeared to be hopeless. What helped you get through that season?
2. The loss of homeland and monarchy, plus decades in Babylonian exile left the people of Judah in particularly dire circumstances. Yet the Biblical writers infer that the greatest threat was spiritual. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. The writer of 1-2 Kings ends this book with an epilogue - a sign of hope. What was that sign? What was it significant?
4. Brainstorm together and consider 'signs' that give you hope today.

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:
2 Kings 25:29-30 So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king's presence. ³⁰ For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived.