

ZONDERVAN

*Gospel in Life Study Guide*

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## Session 1 City The World That Is

### Introduction

*gospel*<sup>™</sup>*life* is an eight-session course on the gospel and how to live it out in all of life—first in our hearts, then in community, and ultimately out into the world.

Session 1 opens the course with the theme of the city, our home now, the world that is. Session 8 closes the course with the theme of the eternal city, our heavenly home, the world that is to come. In between we will look at how the gospel changes our hearts (Sessions 2 and 3), changes our community (Sessions 4 and 5), and changes how we live in the world (Sessions 6 and 7).

### How To Use This Guide

This guide includes eight group studies as well as individual *Home Studies*. Each group study consists of:

- A Bible study on the theme of the session.
- A ten-minute DVD presentation by Timothy Keller followed by group discussion questions.

The *Home Studies* introduce the theme of the next session. They are printed on gray pages to distinguish them from the group studies on white pages.

Instructions are in italics and surrounded by these brackets: [ ]

This guide uses the New International Version (NIV) translation of the Bible.

Notes for leaders are located in the back section on pages 148–233.

# Session 1 City The World That Is

## Bible Study

*[ Pray as you begin, asking God to be at work in the group. ]*

*[ In 586 BC, Jerusalem was destroyed and the elite of Jewish society—the artisans and professionals and leaders—were taken to Babylon by force. The prophet Jeremiah received a word from the Lord and wrote these exiles a letter. Read aloud Jeremiah 29:4–14, and then work through the questions below. ]*

1. What specific directions does God give the exiles for relating to the city of Babylon in verses 4–7? How do you think the exiles felt about this?
2. What is the relationship between the “prosper you” of verse 11 and the “prosperity of the city” of verse 7?
3. What was the purpose of the exile, according to verses 11–14? Why do you think these verses were included in the letter?



#### 4. Rodney Stark, a sociologist of religion, writes,

Christianity served as a revitalization movement that arose in response to the misery, chaos, fear, and brutality of life in the urban Greco-Roman world... Christianity revitalized life in...cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent urban problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments... To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective...services.<sup>1</sup>

**Is this still true of Christianity today? If not, why not? In what ways does Christianity “revitalize life” in your area?**



**[ Watch the DVD for Session 1. ]**

DVD Notes

**[ Use this space if you would like to make notes. ]**

<sup>1</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1997), 161.



# Session 1 City The World That Is

## Discussion Questions

*Remember a city is defined as “any place of density, diversity and cultural energy.”*

1. Was there anything from the DVD that was new to you, or had an effect on you? Did you hear anything that raised more questions in your mind?

2. J.N. Manokaran, a pastor from India, writes in his book *Christ and Cities*, “Cities should not be seen as monsters...but communities of people with need.”<sup>2</sup> How do you view the place in which you live? What emotions come to mind? What do you value about it?

3. We heard in the DVD that,

In the city you are going to find people that appear spiritually hopeless. You're going to find people of no religion, people of other religions, and people with deeply non-Christian lifestyles, and you're going to discover that many of them are kinder, deeper, and wiser than you. You will also find that many of the poor and the broken are much more open to the gospel of grace and more dedicated to its practical out-working than you are.

Has this been the case in your own experience or in the experience of people you know? Share examples.

<sup>2</sup> J.N. Manokaran, *Christ and Cities: Transformation of Urban Centres* (India: Mission Educational Books, 2005), 13.



4. It is often said that Christians today have little impact on the world around them. Is that a correct assessment? Why? What prevents us from becoming more engaged in the world around us?

5. The Hebrew word translated “prosper” means “to be healthy, to increase, to have things go well.” It means growth in all its dimensions. What types of growth within the Christian community can prosper the places in which we live?

6. In what specific ways can you and your group seek to serve and love your place of residence, rather than resemble it, or remove yourselves from it? What can you and your group do to become genuinely interested in its peace and prosperity?

