



Discussion Guide

Date: 7/26/2026

Sermon Title: Do I have free will?

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, thank you for being a God who knows us, loves us, and calls us into Your good purposes. Open our hearts as we study Your Word together. Help us hear these familiar words with fresh ears and discover what they meant to Your people and what they mean for us today. Give us wisdom to understand Your grace and courage to respond freely to Your invitation. May Your Holy Spirit guide our conversation, deepen our faith, and help us trust you more completely. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

OPENING QUESTIONS: Choose one of the following questions to start your group or class with.

1. Are there any life situations or conversations that you misread or took out of context? What happened?
2. What Bible verses have you experienced taken out of context in our society or by you yourself? How did you deal with that and make sense of it all?

PURPOSE:

Jeremiah 29:11 may be one of the most quoted verses in the Bible. It appears on graduation cards, coffee mugs, and social media posts. Yet it is often read as an individual promise that God has scripted every detail of one person's life. Jeremiah is writing to the Jewish exiles living in Babylon. The "you" throughout this passage is plural. God is speaking to all the people, not simply one individual. God's promise is that He has not abandoned His covenant people. His ultimate plan is redemption and restoration.

This raises an important question: If God has plans for us, do we actually have free will? The Wesleyan tradition answers with a hopeful yes. God's grace always comes first, but God never forces our response. Love cannot exist without freedom. God desires our salvation and invites us into His purposes, yet we remain free to accept or reject His grace each day.

DIGGING IN TOGETHER: Read Jeremiah 29:4–14 together. Use these questions to study the text.

1. Who is Jeremiah speaking to?
2. Read Psalm 137:1-4. What emotions do you hear in the voices of the exiles?
3. How does this deepen your understanding of God's promise in Jeremiah 29:11?
4. Where are God's people living?

5. What instructions does God give the exiles before promising restoration?
6. What words or phrases stand out most to you?
7. What surprises you about God's instructions?

Interpretation Questions

1. Why do you think God tells His people to settle down instead of escaping Babylon?
2. How does knowing the "you" is plural change your understanding of verse 11?
3. What do God's plans actually appear to be in this chapter?
4. How does this passage challenge the popular understanding of Jeremiah 29:11?
5. What does this passage teach us about waiting?

Wesleyan Reflection Questions

1. If God truly gives us freedom, why do you think He takes that risk?
2. How does prevenient grace help explain God's work before we choose Him?
3. Can you think of times God was working in your life before you recognized Him?
4. What does it mean to cooperate with God's grace?
5. What daily choices help us grow in Christ?

SERMON QUESTIONS:

1. The sermon from Pastor Allison acknowledged Jeremiah 29:11 was written in the context of Psalm 137:1-4. What was your reaction when you learned the true context? How does knowing the people were exiles change the meaning of this verse for you?
2. We learned that the exiles in Babylon asked, how could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? When have you felt spiritually displaced, and how did you maintain your faith during that time?
3. The sermon unpacked how this verse has been misunderstood over time. How do you understand the balance between God's sovereignty and human free will? Where do you see this tension playing out in Scripture or in your own life?
4. The sermon mentions the prophetic voices like Jeremiah to God's people. What role do prophetic voices play in your life today, whether through friends, scripture, or inner conviction, and how do you discern when to listen to difficult truths?
5. Pastor Allison said, "Real love requires real choice." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
6. Re-read Jeremiah 7:5-7. What are the "ifs" in this passage that are mentioned in the sermon? What does this tell us about the nature of God's promises and our responsibility?
7. The sermon suggests that consequences of our choices are not magically solved but that God's compassion remains. How have you experienced both consequences and compassion in your spiritual journey?

REFLECTIONS:

1. Have you ever expected God to remove a difficult circumstance when instead He invited you to remain faithful through it?



2. The sermon mentions that God calls us away from "mistreatment of others, away from injustice in the world." What injustices is God calling you (or us as a group) to address?
3. How does the promise that God will not give up on us, even after repeated failures, challenge or comfort you in your current circumstances?
4. Where might God be inviting you to trust Him even though the future isn't clear?
5. What does "hope" look like in your life today?
6. How have you experienced God bringing good from situations that were never good themselves?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Faithful God, thank you for loving us enough to invite us rather than force us. Thank You for pursuing us with grace long before we ever sought You. Help us trust that Your plans are always rooted in Your love and desire to redeem Your people. Give us wisdom to recognize Your voice, courage to respond in faith, and perseverance when life feels uncertain. Teach us to choose You again today. Shape us into people who freely follow Christ and reflect His hope to the world. May our lives bear witness to the grace that first found us and continues to transform us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND:

Choose ONE of the following practices to focus on this week:

1. Listen for the Call this week by spending 10 minutes each day in silence, asking God: "What are you calling me toward? What are you calling me away from?" Then take time to journal what you sense or feel.
2. Make the Choice by identifying one specific choice you've been avoiding. List the potential consequences of different options. Pray for wisdom and courage to make a change if needed.
3. Extend Compassion by thinking of someone living with consequences of poor choices. Reach out with a message of grace and support (not judgment). Consider: How can you reflect God's "unrelenting compassion" to them?
4. Study in context another "greatest hit" verse(s) you love. Read the entire chapter (or book if it's short) around it. Write down how the context changes or deepens your understanding.