

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends
God Is Stranger: Ezekiel and the Stranger, June 16, 2019

The Big Idea

Just like God's people that had been carried off far from home in Babylonian exile, the Church is living in exile as our world becomes more secular. But God is faithful and has not left us! In fact, He's still speaking and calling us to listen. Will we listen?

Where we are in the Bible

Ezekiel 16 is just one example of Ezekiel's message to the Israelites in the exile. Ezekiel was a prophet among God's people in Babylonian exile. Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Jerusalem, plundering the temple and taking more than 10,000 captives to Babylon, including officials, craftsmen, and nobles. This deportation included the priest Ezekiel (2 Kgs 24:10–16; Ezek 1:2). Ezekiel lived far from his home country of Judah, which was subservient to Babylon. A few years after the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry, Judah's King Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who retaliated by destroying Jerusalem after two more years of brutal attack (2 Kgs 25; Jer 39:1–10). By 586 bc, both the city and the temple were in shambles. Some months later, the Jews living in Babylon heard the news (Ezek 33:21–22).¹

Other scriptures to consider

Luke 15:11-32, The Prodigal Son and his father
Revelation 14:1-11, Babylon as a symbol
James 1:19-25, Quick to listen and doers of the Word

Finding a bit of ourselves

- Have there been times when you felt "far from God"? What did it feel like? How did you respond?
- Explore the different challenges people of faith have in an increasingly secular world. How do we navigate those challenges?
- Describe how you typically solve a personal problem. Where is God in that process?

Where do we go from here?

- Was there a time when you heard God speaking?
- Reflect or discuss the 3 tips in the sermon on listening to God's voice (*Make Space, Don't Rush, Remember*)
- Brainstorm one practical step you can take to listen to God.

Prayer focus

Consider God's faithfulness in prayer as you:

- Thank Him for always being there with love and grace.
- Invite Him into your troubles and confusion.
- Glorify Him in your celebrations.

Also, take time to listen in silence. Allow your mind wander if it does, and wait long enough for the Spirit to guide you back into focus.

¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

