

# TURN YOUR HEART TOWARDS HOME

By Cecil Culbreth

Scripture: Lamentations 2:19-21

Objective: To show that we can impact the lives of our youth and children through prayer.

Introduction: Home, the word home brings up various memories. Probably many of you in this crowd today the word “home” brings up fond memories. When the prophet Jeremiah wrote these words most of God’s people were in exile—living in Babylon. Jerusalem, home was miles away. These people were living in a different land with different customs.

Jeremiah tells these people the condition of their homeland. It is not a pretty sight. Jeremiah focuses their attention on home because he believes something needs to be done.

What about our home our community? What do we see?

Rather than present a lot of depressing statistical information to you, I think most of you would agree that the moral and spiritual climate of America has seen better days. (You may want to insert an example of something of this nature that has recently happened in the nation, your state or community.)

The prophet speaks about the destruction that has come upon the land. This happened primarily because of the sin and rebellion of the people. There seems to be no hope. Yet Jeremiah turns their attention to home, not to depress them but for the people to do something about it. Jeremiah seems to be saying -- at least love your children enough to try to do something to save their lives.

Today, I am going to ask you to “turn your heart towards home” because I believe God’s Word teaches us that we can make a difference.

Turn your heart towards home because of the:

## **1. People of Home** v. 19 “children”

(Please note that throughout this message the terms children and youth are used interchangeably to refer to those under the age of 20)

Jeremiah’s attention is captivated by the children. He is quick to see and understand the significance of this. It is the children who at home who are being destroyed.

Without children -- there will be no future. In the Jewish culture to have no children was to be cursed of God. If you had a lot of children, you were considered blessed of God.

Do we as a church take this approach to ministry? As a church we must view children and youth as a blessing from God. As parents we must view children as a blessing from God. As a church we cannot approach ministry to children and youth with an attitude that says “we will do this just to tide them over until they get to be adults then we can reach them.”

In Jeremiah’s vision it was the children that were being destroyed. What do we see with our children today? It is the children that are suffering from our permissive society. It is the children who are being destroyed off by the enemy.

Look at the example of Jesus as it relates to our children.

“People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Mark 10:13-14)

Most surveys indicate that between 60% and 75% of all first time conversions take place prior to a person’s graduation from high school. We must turn our hearts toward home and impact the lives of our children for God.

Turn your heart towards home because of the

## **2. Problem at Home** “faint” v. 19

The implication of the word faint is -- they are helpless. The literal meaning is “overwhelmed”.

Jeremiah saw these children as being totally overwhelmed and unable to do anything about their condition. They were helpless.

Those of us raised in decent homes have a hard time seeing how someone could take advantage of a child. Yet history is filled with the examples of cruel people who have exploited, killed, injured, or brainwashed children.

The prophet sees the children as having been ripped off by an enemy and the children can do nothing to change their situation. They are helpless and overwhelmed.

What do we see at home?

We kill our babies before they are born. We raise them in a society that says you can't have God. We feed them a menu of images that is filled with sex and violence. We teach them a morality that says "whatever you think is right is right". Then we wonder why they kill one another and have no respect for life.

Jesus reminded us that we have an enemy. Jesus referred to that enemy as a thief who comes to kill, steal and destroy. (John 10:10)

Before we can change home, we must recognize the problem at home.

Because it involves the kids we have a tendency to blame them for all the problems of society.

But whose fault is it? I don't believe we can really blame the children. After all we adults are the ones that make the laws and enforce the laws. After all we adults are the ones that teach them what is right and wrong by our words and our actions. After all we adults are the ones who say, "Don't do as I do but do as I say." No wonder this generation is overwhelmed. Teenagers access to alcohol starts with an adult.

### **3. Plan for Home**

"arise & cry out" v. 19

Jeremiah does not leave us with just a hopeless situation. He immediately suggests that something be done. "Arise and cry out"—pray. Pray because the lives of children are dependent upon it.

The idea expressed is "put forth an effort". Do something. Don't sit around waiting for something to happen. Be aggressive, be the initiator. Ask God to give you a vision so you can see those kids as your kids.

Jeremiah says to “cry out” to shout for joy. Interesting the word he uses comes from the same root as is used in Ps 47:1 that is talks about shouting for joy. (ranan)

Maybe Jeremiah is trying to get us to understand that it is not just a cry of despair or desperation but a cry of victory. It is a confidence that God wants to do something.

While the situation looks bleak, we do not approach it with bleakness, but with faith. We believe God is up to something.

Jeremiah says to “lift up your hands” (hands palm, comes from root word that means curve)

Lifting up hands was a sign of expectation. It was a sign that you believed you were going to receive something. Jeremiah wants these people to pray with expectation. To pray knowing they will receive an answer to their prayers.

Jesus expressed it this way,

"Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:19 NIV)

What could happen in the lives of the youth and children of our church and community when we adults start agreeing together in prayer for them? Jeremiah is not telling these people to pray just say they could say, “Well we prayed about it.” He was telling them to pray because he firmly believed that pray would make a difference in the lives of these children.

We would not have to spend so much time teaching our kids to “say no to drugs” if we would spend more time saying “yes to prayer”.

When we come together to pray, we make a “prayer force”. We become a group that can see something happen.

Look at what God promised His people:

“Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.” (Leviticus 26:8)

The more people involved, the greater the force becomes. The ratio goes from 1 person taking on 20 to 1 person taking on 100. What a force.

The more people we get praying for our youth and children the more powerful our prayers become. We can indeed become a prayer force.

Jeremiah says, “in the beginning of the night.” In other words, make it a priority. Be willing to make a sacrifice. Why? Because it is home, it is where we live. It is where our kids and grandkids go to school. It is where our kids and grandkids go to church. Jeremiah has presented what seems to be a hopeless situation. The homeland is in turmoil. Sin is rampant. Jeremiah seems to be trying to rouse the people to do something --at least for the sake of the kids. What is the value we place on our kids? Jeremiah seems to be saying, “you may not think this land is worth saving, but it least do something for the sake of the kids. Give them a hope. Give them a future. Give them something worth living for. My generation (I am 61 years old) was challenged -- be willing to die for the cause of Christ. This generation sees death all around them, life means nothing. That is why they kill, rob, etc. This generation needs something worth living for -- let’s give them something to live for ---there is a hope, there is a future. God is on the throne. God wants to pour out of his Spirit. Don’t throw up your hands and say nothing can be done. Lift your voice and say, “With God all things are possible.” If God can raise up kings and kingdoms and pull down kings and kingdoms, God can bring about a heart change at home. Give me some people like Abraham who against all hope believed in hope and became the father of many nations.

Jeremiah says to, “pour out thy heart.” Be passionate about these kids. Jeremiah wants to raise more than just a passing interest in changing the lives of these kids -- he wants people to have a passion “pour out thy heart like water”. These kids may not be “your” kids but have a passion for them. Your kids may be safe in the house -- but there are plenty of kids “in the streets”. There are kids that no one cares about, kids that are unloved, unwanted, and even repulsive. Have a passion to reach these kids with the message of hope.

What if they don’t respond? Reach out to them anyway. What if you can’t stand them? Love them anyway. What if they don’t listen? Tell them anyway. God, give us a passion to reach people with the message of the gospel.

#### **4. Promise for home**

Would Jeremiah ask the people to plead for the children if he did not think something positive could happen? Do we pray just so we can say, “at least I prayed about it”?

Jeremiah was convinced that if God's people would pray, God would answer their prayer and the lives of the children would be saved.

Lamentations 3:21-26

21 this I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.

22 through the lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

24 "the Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I hope in him!"

25 the lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

26 it is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

The promise of 2 Chronicles 7:14 is still true for us today,

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." NIV

1 John 5:14-15

Now this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 and if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him.

What would happen at home if adults in our churches started crying out with a passion for the lives of our children? What would happen if we were as concerned about their spiritual welfare as their physical? What would happen if we spent as much time praying for those weird teens as we do criticizing them? What would happen if we made it a priority to reach the youth and children at home with the message of the gospel?

What would happen if we laid aside our prejudices, our cultural traditions, and our agendas to reach and keep the kids for Christ?

You can join the Prayer Force and commitment to pray on a regular basis for the youth and children of our community.

God has not called us to play our little church games and sit around while the people around us cry out for help. He has called us to bring hope. He has called us to be light and he has called us to be salt.

**There is hope!** God is faithful and his mercies never fail.

God said, "I will pour out of my spirit..."

Regardless of what happens in the White House, He is still Lord. His promise will prevail

Regardless of what CNN or Fox News may report, He is still lord. His promise will prevail.

Regardless of what happens to the stock market He is still Lord. His promise will prevail.

Regardless of what the homosexual movement may do -He is still Lord. His promise will prevail.

Regardless of the ungodliness & unrighteousness that surrounds us, He is still Lord. His promise will prevail.

Regardless of Supreme Court decisions, He is still Lord. His promise will prevail.

Turn your heart towards home.

Commitment: Before the people are dismissed give them an opportunity to commit to be a part of the Prayer Force. Free sign-up brochures are available from His Story Ministries 1-888-845-4673 or by email: [info@hisstory.org](mailto:info@hisstory.org) with the quantity requested and a shipping address.