

## CoreGroup Guide | Shift Happens - Part 3

Written by Christopher Burford and Jenny Huffman

### A Note from Pastor Charity

As we settle into 2026, we are leaning into a few new rhythms to help us stay grounded and connected to Jesus in this new year:

- During each sermon series, we will highlight one of our Six Shared Practices. Our practice for this series is **Prayer**. Click on [this link](#) to review the Start, Grow, Stretch for Prayer, assess where you are right now, and choose a next step.
- You are invited to a new monthly gathering called **Prayers of the People**, a simple service of prayer, silence, and contemplation. Second Tuesday | 7:00pm | Clayton Site.
- This semester, each CoreGroup guide will include a **memory verse** that you can learn on your own or together with your group. To see the recommended verse for this series, scroll down to the *Going Deeper* section of this guide.

Thank you for continuing to show up and practice the way of Jesus together as a CoreGroup!

### Welcome

Hello friends and welcome to the third week of our series *Shift Happens: When Life Doesn't Go As Planned*. In the first week, we looked at how our response to unexpected loss could be a faithful step towards a deeper relationship with God and others. Last week, we discussed what to do when our actions and choices are the cause of the shift. This week we ask: What happens when our faithfulness still leads to failure? God, we followed your guidance, we looked in the Bible, and we prayed. How could our response to a shift be fruitless with all of that preparation? That doesn't make sense! Friends, let's pray first and then wrestle with this one together.

### Opening Prayer

Hey God, today we are talking about some tough situations. Times when we think we are doing things right and it doesn't seem to work. Please guide our conversations in ways to help us understand. Open our minds to thoughtful ideas and lead us through this time with inspired conversations to feel seen and comprehend deeper meaning. Thank you for always loving us. It is in your name we pray, amen.

### Ice Breaker

Every once in a while, somebody tries to recapture the magic of the moment only to realize they didn't get it right. [Woodstock '99](#) comes to mind as an example, with its major heat issues, price gouging, security lapses, and significant safety concerns. Others tried to create magic and it turned into a disaster like the [Erye Festival in 2017](#). What plans have you made recently only to have them go sideways? What's something that did not work out despite your best efforts?

## The Head

Our reading this week comes from the Old Testament Book of Jeremiah. Now, to set the scene for this group of verses, it is important to know a little about the political unrest at this time. Babylonians were a group of ruthless people that mounted a military invasion of Israel that lasted around ten years. The battle was not constant, though, and the Babylonians allowed Israel to pay tributes to survive for a time.

Despite those tributes, the Babylonians relocated many influential people, ransacked large areas, and left the remaining survivors on edge. During this time, God sent people known as prophets to help convey his will. Jeremiah was one of these prophets. Throughout these verses, Jeremiah was imprisoned at the palace within the walls of Jerusalem because the King of Israel, Zedekiah, was frustrated with Jeremiah's prophecies against him and his rule. But that didn't stop Jeremiah from listening to God.

### ***Jeremiah 32:6-15***

*<sup>6</sup>Jeremiah said, The **LORD**'s word came to me: <sup>7</sup>Your cousin Hanamel, Shallum's son, is on his way to see you; and when he arrives, he will tell you: "Buy my field in Anathoth, for by law you are next in line to purchase it." <sup>8</sup>And just as the **LORD** had said, my cousin Hanamel showed up at the prison quarters and told me, "Buy my field in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for you are next in line and have a family obligation to purchase it." Then I was sure this was the **LORD**'s doing.*

*<sup>9</sup>So I bought the field in Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver. <sup>10</sup>I signed the deed, sealed it, had it witnessed, and weighed out the silver on the scales. <sup>11</sup>Then I took the deed of purchase—the sealed copy, with its terms and conditions, and the unsealed copy—<sup>12</sup>and gave it to Baruch, Neriah's son and Mahseiah's grandson, before my cousin Hanamel and the witnesses named in the deed, as well as before all the Judeans who were present in the prison quarters. <sup>13</sup>I charged Baruch before all of them: <sup>14</sup>"The **LORD** of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Take these documents—this sealed deed of purchase along with the unsealed one—and put them into a clay container so they will last a long time. <sup>15</sup>The **LORD** of heavenly forces, the God of Israel, proclaims: Houses, fields, and vineyards will again be bought in this land."*

- At first, these verses don't seem to make sense. Why did God instruct Jeremiah to complete a local land purchase while Babylon is laying siege and destroying everything? What does it mean that houses, fields, and vineyards will again be bought in the land?
- In verses 6-8, it seems likely that Jeremiah received prophecies through dreams or meditations and was left to determine what they meant in the moment, even in prison and during war. What does this tell us about Jeremiah?
- Follow this for a minute. Leviticus is an earlier book in the Old Testament, written about 600 years before this event in Jeremiah happened. Leviticus 25:25 says "If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold." Why is it significant that they were following this law even in impending doom?

## The Heart

If we were to read a little further in the Book of Jeremiah, we would learn that this war did not end well for the Israelites. In fact, the Babylonians would end up burning Jerusalem to the ground. Israelites were enslaved and taken to Babylon. The massive temple would be leveled, which meant physical connection to God was lost, according to tradition.

Of course, God had a different plan. Later stories from Israelite captivity showed that God never even left! Let's shift our perspective to look at this from a different angle.

- In what ways do you find hope and trust in this story from a prison in Jerusalem?
- How would you describe God's character in this interaction? In what ways have you experienced God in a similar manner?
- Although we don't hear about prophets as much now as we did in Biblical times, how does God still communicate with us in this way today?
- Share a story of a time God provided guidance to you during a big shift. Did this happen through prayer, worship, reading scripture, talking to others, or maybe something else?

## The Hands

So how do we expand this to our lives today and to the shifts we experience? How can we lean into guidance from our faith, lessons from the Bible, and the sound advice from others?

- In the face of a huge shift happening, God inspired people to choose hope and invest in the future. With the shifts we experience today, what does investing in hope look like? What are some tangible examples of that investment?
- The deeds to the property in Jeremiah were placed in clay jars and sealed for a future investment. What talents, experiences, or resources do you have stored in your jars?
- The Holy Spirit isn't mentioned by name in the Old Testament, but that friend of ours certainly nudged Hanamel into visiting his cousin Jeremiah. How has the Holy Spirit nudged you during a past shift? How might that memory encourage your actions today?
- In light of this week's discussion, how can your CoreGroup be praying for you?

## Closing Prayer

God of power and justice,  
like Jeremiah you weep over those  
who wander from you,  
turn aside to other gods,  
and enter into chaos and destruction.  
By your tears and through your mercy,  
teach us your ways  
and write them on our hearts  
so that we may follow faithfully  
the path you show us. Amen.

*Written by Christine Longhurst, Assistant Professor of Worship and Music, Canadian Mennonite University*

## Going Deeper

This semester, each CoreGroup guide will include a memory verse that you can learn on your own or together with your group. The recommended memory verse for the *Shift Happens* series is Isaiah 43:19 from the Common English Bible (CEB):

***“Look! I’m doing a new thing; now it sprouts up; don’t you recognize it? I’m making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness.”***

Here are three simple ways to practice memorizing a verse:

1. **Write it** (one time a day on a notecard, in your notes app, or on your mirror).
2. **Say it out loud** (at the same time daily - driving, brushing teeth, before bed).
3. **Pray it** (turn the verse into a one sentence prayer for yourself or someone you love).