

Return to Me

(For syllabus and resources for this series type bit.ly/nlncmu into any browser.)

Getting Started:

What are some modern day icons and what do they signify?

Practicing God's Presence

Week of 5/27: Lifestyle 02: Gratitude in Everything

Monitor my temptations to have an ungrateful heart with a scripture reminder: What do I have that I did not receive? ... So, why do I boast as if it were not a gift? (1 Cor 4.7).

This week: Physical 06: Consider the Flowers

Consider how the flowers grow; they do not work or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these! (Luk 12:27 NET). Fresh cut flowers are beautiful and help us reflect on their creator. Their fleeting beauty reminds us of the promise of lasting beauty in the next life. Purchase cut flowers for your home or office and notice how they affect your mood and bring life to the room.

Return to Me (Jeremiah 3.21-25 & 4.1-4)

Context & background

In Jer 2.1-3.20, God confronts Israel's betrayals, prostituting themselves with 1) idol worship and 2) political alliances with Egypt & Assyria. What can you tell us about 1? About 2?

Why do you suppose [Baal & Asherah worship](#) were so attractive to the Israelites?

Note that Israel crossed the Jordan River from life in the wilderness (where they survived as shepherds) into Canaan (where the terrain was appropriate to grow crops). In the new home God gave them, they noticed that the Canaanites worshipped Baal (the rain god) and Asherah (the fertility god) and fell into thinking that these were the reasons the land was so bountiful. So they felt justified in adding them to their "godhead." God saw this as a major betrayal.

What metaphors does the Bible use to help us understand God? ([Three Biblical Metaphors](#))?

3.21-22a:

What's going on in v21?

What do you think of God's response? What does it say about his posture toward us?

3.22b-25:

How might v25 guide us when we respond to God's call to repentance? See also [Confession](#).

4.1-4:

Do you think God's forgiveness of us is dependent upon our action? Why or why not?

Connecting to life:

The Israelites sins were betraying God through idolatry and political alliances. How are we tempted to betray God today?

Tim's best practice for "Returning to God." Comes from [Beyond Conversion 1](#).

1. First remember that Jesus still sees us with that same mixture of *sorrow and love*, even when we slip back into some degree of self-rule.
2. Offer gratitude for the seat that still awaits us at the family table.
3. Humbly confess that we allowed something, anything other than Jesus, into our center.
4. Invite Jesus back into our center, in full confidence that he will gladly respond.
5. Return to our seat at the Father's table; it's still waiting.

Session objective: To see that repentance is more than remorse, it must lead to a change in life action.

Wrap up: PGP reminder → Prayer → let's worship together!

Jeremiah 3:21-4:4 New Living Translation (NLT)

Jeremiah: 3.21 Voices are heard high on the windswept mountains,
the weeping and pleading of Israel's people.

For they have chosen crooked paths
and have forgotten the Lord their God.

Lord: 22 "My wayward children," *says the Lord*,
"come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts."

People: "Yes, we're coming," *the people reply*,
"for you are the Lord our God."

23 Our worship of idols on the hills
and our religious orgies on the mountains
are a delusion.

Only in the Lord our God
will Israel ever find salvation.

24 From childhood we have watched
as everything our ancestors worked for—
their flocks and herds, their sons and daughters—
was squandered on a delusion.

25 Let us now lie down in shame
and cover ourselves with dishonor,
for we and our ancestors have sinned
against the Lord our God.

From our childhood to this day
we have never obeyed him."

Lord: 4.1 "O Israel," *says the Lord*,
"if you wanted to return to me, you could."

You could throw away your detestable idols
and stray away no more.

2 Then when you swear by my name, saying,
'As surely as the Lord lives,'
you could do so

with truth, justice, and righteousness.
Then you would be a blessing to the nations of the world,
and all people would come and praise my name."

Jeremiah: 3 This is what the Lord says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem:

Lord: "Plow up the hard ground of your hearts!
Do not waste your good seed among thorns."

4 O people of Judah and Jerusalem,
surrender your pride and power.
Change your hearts before the Lord,
or my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire
because of all your sins."