

## Small Group Questions

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*The following questions are intended to start conversations.*

*Use only the ones your group finds helpful. Explore others as they come up.*

*Our preaching series this fall will explore the book of Jeremiah (Exiles). A set of questions will be provided each week to help you think about these stories BEFORE you listen to the sermon. It is our hope that this will encourage your own study and prepare you for the upcoming series.*

- What has been your experience with poetry in the past?
- Do you like reading poetry? Why or why not?
- Why does Jeremiah use poetry (as opposed to prose) in communicating his message?
- Read **Jeremiah 2:13-19**. What images stand out for you in this text?
- How does water play an important role in this poem? What is Jeremiah's (God's) concern? How does the image of water help highlight this concern?
- Read **Jeremiah 5:7-9**. This is a particularly evocative poem. How does poetry strengthen what Jeremiah is trying to say? Pay attention to image and emotion.
- What makes these texts difficult to understand?
- If possible, watch [How to Read Biblical Poetry](#) and [How to Read Poetic Metaphor](#) from the Bible Project (also linked on Sermons+). What suggestions did you find helpful? How might you become a better reader of biblical poetry?
- Abram Van Engen, in his excellent book *Word Made Fresh*, encourages people to read poetry for pleasure and to ask questions about what they read. Take some time to read the poems on the following page (ideally, out loud). Which poem did you like more? Why? How did this poem speak to you? What did it say?
- Consider attending the Poetry workshop @ VBC on October 21<sup>st</sup>.

## **The Second Coming**

By W. B. Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

## **Tell all the truth but tell it slant—**

By Emily Dickinson

Tell all the truth but tell it slant—  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind—