

Daniel 1:3-21

November 24, 2024



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

God is sovereign (on the throne, working, and in charge), even when it seems like the world is against us. Even in difficult circumstances, we are called to remain faithful to God and not conform to society's expectations that aren't in line with God's Word.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How do you react when things aren't going your way?

What are some instances in Scripture when God worked in unfavorable circumstances for the good of His people?

Can God still work in places where ungodly people are in authority?

Last week, we read that the Lord handed over King Jehoiakim of Judah (Daniel 1:2). This week, we'll read the account of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who were plucked from their home as teenagers and thrown into Babylonian brainwashing



training, where they had to make a decision: conform to Babylonian customs or remain faithful to the one true God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 1:3-7.

What is happening in this passage?

What do you think is King Nebuchadnezzar's goal?

Why do you think the chief eunuch changed their names?

King Jehoiakim of Judah's defeat was recorded in Daniel 1:1-2, and in today's passage, we see Nebuchadnezzar begin to integrate the newly conquered Israelites into Babylonian society. This process of assimilation, which would benefit Babylon in many ways, involves a three-year training program in which Daniel and his friends would learn the Chaldean language and study Babylonian customs.

We learn in this passage that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were of the noble line from the tribe of Judah and were among the best and brightest young men in the Israelite population (vv.4,6). Scholars believe Daniel and his friends are around the age of fifteen when they entered their training.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, whose names honor the living God, received new names honoring Babylonian gods:

- Daniel ("God is my judge") became Belshazzar ("Bel protect his life").
- Hananiah ("the Lord shows grace") became Shadrach ("command of Aku").
- Mishael ("Who is like God?") became Meshach ("Who is as Aku is?").
- Azariah ("The Lord is my help") became Abednego ("Servant of Nebo (Nego)").

Nebuchadnezzar sought to change their identity and conform them to Babylonian society, which we might conclude could be possible, given the idol worship that was taking place among the Judahites before the exile. But Daniel and his friends represented a faithful remnant who did not intend to forsake the one true God.



We still encounter this challenge today: society attempts to get us to conform to its standards, but rather than give into public pressure, we're called to be transformed only by the Lord (Romans 12:1-2).

🌿 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 1:8-16.

What is happening here?

What was Daniel doing in this passage?

How do we see God at work in this passage?

Part of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah's training involved a steady diet of food not approved by God. For example, this would've included meat that was not kosher and wine that had been offered to Babylonian gods. Instead of taking the easy road and giving in, Daniel and his friends choose the risky road: faithfulness to God's law.

In the face of injustice, in a frustrating situation that could certainly ignite the temper of fifteen-year-old boys, Daniel and his friends were instead respectful to those in charge, even suggesting a compromise that benefitted all parties. They exemplified a way of living that the apostle Paul encourages us to embrace: "If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).

God rewarded their faithfulness, granting them favor from the chief eunuch (v.9), and Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah flourished.

🌿 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ DANIEL 1:17-21.

What is happening in this passage?

What was the outcome for Daniel and his friends?

How do we see God working here?

In addition to physically flourishing (v.15), Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were granted knowledge and understanding from the Lord (v.17). Yes, it is possible for God to use "secular" education and jobs for His glory! After their three years of training, thanks to the hand of the Lord, Daniel and his friends were found to be not only at the top of their class but also "ten times better than all the magicians and mediums" (v.20) in the kingdom and destined for public service under a pagan king. Like Esther, they were perfectly placed to be used by the Lord for His glory (Esther 4:14).

In times of defeat, God is still working. Warren Wiersbe says it best:



“The events recorded in this chapter should be a great encouragement to us when we experience trials and testings and become discouraged; for when God is not allowed to rule, He overrules. God is still on the throne and will never leave us nor forsake us.”

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What similarities do you see between what Daniel and his friends experienced in Babylon and what Christians face in our society today?

Read Romans 12:1-2. Do you think there is pressure in our society to conform? How do we live in society today without conforming to it?

How can we live more like Daniel and his friends (and in alignment with Romans 12:18) in a time when we feel like authority figures in our life are more like King Nebuchadnezzar than Jesus?

How can we look for God’s hand at work even in situations that don’t seem to be working out in our favor?

PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Thank God for working even in hard circumstances. Ask Him to help you live peacefully with others without conforming to the world’s standards. Ask Him to show your LIFE group how He wants to use you for His glory.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead to next week’s scripture passage as we begin our study of Daniel: The Triumph of Our God.

December 1, 2024 --- Daniel 2:1-23



COMMENTARY

Daniel 1:3-21

1:3. Chief of his court officials means literally “chief of the eunuchs,” but since “eunuch” had come to mean “royal official,” most likely Ashpenaz was not a eunuch, nor did Daniel and his friends become thus.

1:4. The Hebrew word for young men here literally means “children” or “boys” and probably refers to teenagers, a good estimate being around age 15. Chaldean language and literature refers to an ancient university-style education in Sumerian, Akkadian, and Aramaic.

1:7. Daniel and his friends, whose original names honored the God of Israel, were given other names that intended to honor the false gods of Babylon. Daniel (“God is My Judge”) became Belteshazzar (“Bel Protect Him”); Hananiah (“God Has Been Gracious”) became Shadrach (“The Command of Akku”); Mishael (“Who Is What God Is?”) became Meshach (“Who Is What Aku Is?”); Azariah (“The Lord Has Helped”) became Abednego (“Servant of Nebo”).

1:8. The word determined means literally “set upon his heart,” referring to inner resolve. Daniel decided that he would not defile himself with a diet that included non-Kosher meat such as horseflesh and pork, or drink wine that had been offered to Babylonian gods.

1:15. The fact that Daniel and his friends looked better and healthier is not a biblical endorsement of vegetarianism (Gen. 9:3). Rather, God in His providence made them healthy and strong.

1:20. Throughout the Book of Daniel, there are six different expressions for the king’s counselors. The first two, used here, are diviner-priests and mediums. The term “diviner priests” comes from a root that means “engraver.” It refers to those who engraved Babylonian religious activities and astrological movements of the stars on clay tablets. The word “mediums” means “conjurers.” It refers to those who used spells and incantations to communicate with the spirit world.

1:21. Daniel saw the end of the exile, living until the first year of King Cyrus (539 B.C.) and even beyond that time (see 10:1, where “third year” dates to 53).

