

East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide:

Daniel: Living Faithfully in Exile

Speaker: Pastor Keith Jenkins

Date: September 15, 2024

Introduction:

In this powerful sermon, Pastor Keith Jenkins continued the "Citizens of Heaven" series by exploring the story of Daniel and his friends in Babylon. He used their example to illustrate how believers can live faithfully in a culture that often opposes Christian values.

1. Understanding Our Spiritual Exile:

Pastor Keith drew parallels between Daniel's physical exile in Babylon and the spiritual exile Christians experience in the world.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you experienced feeling like an "exile" in our current culture?
2. In what ways can Daniel's situation help us understand our own spiritual journey?

Supporting Verse:

1 Peter 2:11 - "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Peter was writing to early Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire.
- Theological Significance: This verse emphasizes the Christian's status as a spiritual "exile" in the world.

- Application: We should recognize our distinct identity as followers of Christ in a world that often opposes His values.

2. Resisting Cultural Assimilation:

Pastor Keith highlighted Daniel's resolve to maintain his spiritual identity despite pressures to conform to Babylonian culture.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some ways our culture tries to "assimilate" Christians today?
2. How can we, like Daniel, make up our minds to remain faithful to God in challenging situations?

Supporting Verse:

Daniel 1:8 - "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Daniel was a young man in a foreign land, facing pressure to conform to Babylonian customs.
- Theological Significance: This verse demonstrates the importance of personal conviction and resolve in maintaining spiritual integrity.
- Application: We should identify areas where we might be tempted to compromise our faith and make intentional decisions to remain faithful.

3. Subversive Faithfulness:

Pastor Keith introduced the concept of "subversion" as a way of living faithfully within a challenging culture.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Daniel practice "subversive faithfulness" in Babylon?
2. In what ways can we be "subversively faithful" in our workplaces, schools, or communities?

Supporting Verses:

Daniel 1:11-12 - "Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 'Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.'"

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Daniel found a creative way to maintain his religious convictions while still respecting authority.
- Theological Significance: This passage shows how believers can navigate challenging situations with wisdom and integrity.
- Application: We should seek creative ways to live out our faith that don't unnecessarily antagonize others but still maintain our spiritual integrity.

Conclusion:

Pastor Keith Jenkins' message reminded us that as "citizens of heaven," we are called to live faithfully in a world that often opposes our values. Like Daniel, we can maintain our spiritual identity, resist unhealthy cultural assimilation, and practice subversive faithfulness in our daily lives.

Reflection Questions:

1. What specific cultural pressures do you face that challenge your Christian identity?
2. How can you develop greater resolve, like Daniel, to maintain your spiritual integrity?
3. In what areas of your life can you practice "subversive faithfulness" this week?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the example of Daniel and his friends. Give us the courage and wisdom to live faithfully in our own "Babylon." Help us to resist unhealthy cultural assimilation while still engaging positively with those around us. May our lives, like Daniel's, bring glory to You even in challenging circumstances. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

References:

Primary Sources:

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Collaborative Contributions:

LLM Contributions: Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided sermon notes and biblical passages.

LLM Training Data:

LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to April 2024.