

Home Group Notes
Week of January 12, 2025
Daniel Chapter 1



Hello Friends,

In light of what has happened this past week, I plan for our group to spend significant time praying, reflecting, and supporting God work. Some in my group have friends and family in the burn areas. We will want to partner with them in compassion, sharing of our resources, and ready to listen and serve.

This week's chapter is very focused on the faithful response of four young adults. It does NOT reveal the horrible devastation of losing one's family, one's temple, taken prisoner, forced into a culture, away from so many loved ones, etc.

TRAGEDY, TRAUMA, TRADITIONS, AND TRUST

This week's passage is about young adults who went through horrible tragedy. They suffered dark and lasting trauma, lost all their traditions, and this challenged their trust in God. Whew – that feels heavy to ponder.

You may be going through trauma or know someone who is suffering deeply. As I write, I am learning about thousands of families caught in a firestorm in Southern California. Diane is out with a friend to help a young widow with four young kids who just lost her home.

While we are sad to consider the life situation for Daniel and his teenage friends, we can also learn from how they responded.

LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

Read through Daniel chapter one and consider the following questions:

What tragedy and trauma had these four young adults experienced? What all had they suffered?

The devastation of losing one's family, one's temple, one's way of living, the land, etc. In addition, they were taken prisoner (how scary – 'Are they going to torture or kill us?'), forced into a culture, away from so many loved ones, etc.

The list is long.

Their new culture was radically different from how they were raised. What made their new situation very difficult and scary?

- They were already traumatized – it is difficult to think clearly
- They were on trial: How they performed meant life and death
- They were away from all their parents and family, mentors, spiritual leaders
- They were in a land of pagans who worshiped idols and had little regard for people, especially foreigners.

How did they respond to the challenge? What are key words or actions?

- 1:8 – Daniel "resolved not to defile himself"
- This was not a 'spur of the moment' decision. Their response shows that they had this intention because this was their DNA, that they wanted to be people who trusted God
- How can we do the same? How can we be people who have "resolved" to follow Jesus, to live in love and obedience?

What was God doing in their situation?

Notice the many indicators that God was at work, sustaining, supporting, bringing about His will.

- 1:2 – The “Lord delivered”
- 1:8 – “But Daniel” had courage and resolve. This comes from the Lord God
- 1:9 – “Now God had caused the official to show” kindness (Hebrew *chesed* – favor)
- 1:15 – God gave them supernatural growth (healthier, fatter)
- 1:17 – “To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.”
- 1:18 – God gave them favor with the king. The king talked with them, and he found none equal . . . he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

What was God doing amongst the Jewish and gentile people in Babylon?

We believe that God was using these young adults to show the refugees/captives in Babylon to trust God in these times, to live distinctively from the Babylonians (and Chaldeans), to pray and trust God to work among the Babylonians. We believe that people in that pagan culture came to know the one True God, YHWH.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

What happens inside of us when we face tragedy and trauma?

This is a very personal question, perhaps too heavy for some to answer. Be sensitive.

For me, I can lean toward my own ability (what can I do, how can I help, how can I fix this, etc.) OR I can first turn to God in prayer, in teamwork with His family, in obedience to how He has taught us to live. I can sometimes act first then later sort out what is happening “inside.”

What do we learn about living by faith in God while living in a culture that is far from God?

I have never been in so much trauma and tragedy. I can’t imagine what it is to be forced into another culture. However, we do live in a culture that is largely without faith in Jesus.

A few things to learn from them:

- 1) Resolve to follow God even when it is painful, challenging,
- 2) Resolve to treat people with kindness, dignity, and being ready to share our faith. Daniel did this with the king’s servant.
- 3) Trust God with the unknown
- 4) I believe these four knew how God worked in the past. We need to remember how many times God gives us supernatural strength, resources, teamwork, favor with people, and so many other answered prayers.

How is our culture similar to the Babylonian culture?

- As followers of Jesus, we are a small percentage of the people in our culture
- Like Babylon, our culture is very eclectic. People’s circumstances, beliefs, worldviews, and situations vary greatly.
- See 1:4. The handsome, smart, noble people are treated differently. Many people in our culture are not valued, loved, served, etc. All people (including the less desirable) need Jesus, to be loved, etc.
- We will face resistance, hostility, ridicule, etc.

This chapter could be titled, 'Trusting God together in challenging times.' The New Testament has numerous calls to 'do life together' but we are an independent bunch. What is needed for us to truly trust God together like these people did?

- We need to "resolve" together. This requires us to be people of God's Word together.
- We need to love and care for one another. We need to share, be transparent and vulnerable,
- We need to be equipped. Many times, we can think or feel like we don't know how to respond to the lost in our culture. Let's learn, let's team up, let's engage!

APPLY IT THIS WEEK

As you encounter challenge this week, ask friends to pray, share wisdom, counsel or help. Let's give up the independent American ways and trust God together. Let's be like Daniel and his three friends and "resolve" to trust God together.

PLEASE PRAY

O friends, there is so much need in our world and right here in our community. Let's endeavor to pray, to serve, and to trust God together.

- Pray for the many people who have suffered great loss
- Pray for the many churches who lost their campus in the fires
- Pray for and partner up with our Global Partners

I am praying for you shepherds. These are times when we especially need to love and trust God together. I am so thankful for your partnership.

Grace to you,
Steve