

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Dave Cover | Daniel 1 Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To unpack what being faithful to God amidst our cultural pressures looks like.

Icebreaker: If you have ever lived in a different country or a different part of the country, what was it like being an "American" or a "Midwesterner" in a different culture?

Discussion:

Transition: The book of Daniel is closer the end of the Old Testament history. God's people at this time, the nation of Judah, had been unfaithful to their commitment to God. After repeated ignored warnings, God gives his people over to another nation, Babylon, to wake them up. Jews, those from the tribe of Judah, are taken from the land God had promised to give them, Palestine, in order to live in Babylon under Babylonian control. This exile took place in three phases. Daniel and a small group of elite youths are taken in the first wave of exile.

Read:

[Daniel 1:1-2](#)

¹In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ²And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

1. How would being taken into exile have been spiritually disorienting?

Read:

[1 Peter 1:1](#)

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

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To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

2. Peter calls Christians living in various countries exiles. Dave said in his sermon that we are exiles as well. How is that true?

Read:

[Daniel 1:3-8](#)

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—
⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶ Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

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.

3. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are all renamed based on Babylonian gods and goddesses and given food from the King's Table as a way to try to assimilate them to Babylonian idols and worship. How do you feel pressure to assimilate to our cultural idols?
4. We are not sure what it was about eating from the King's Table that Daniel viewed as defiling. But, he did view it that way and therefore found a way to be faithful to God. What might being faithful to God amidst some of these cultural pressures look like?

Optional Dig Deeper

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Read:

[1 Peter 2:11-12](#)

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

How does Peter unpack what it looks like to be faithful to God living in exile?

Read:

[Daniel 1:9-21](#)

⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

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.

¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

²¹ And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

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5. What does God show about himself to a people in exile?

Sharing and Prayer:

Option 1:

- Consider splitting up into men and women or into smaller groups this week.
- What is an area you feel cultural pressure to assimilate that you would like prayer for being faithful?
- Pray for each other that we would truly believe God is worthy of our trust.

Option 2:

Have each person read a line of the prayer.

“Lord, when I become disoriented by the clash between circumstances and the reality of your word, sustain me.

Lord, when I become confused by the fulfillment of your promise, renew me.

Lord, when I become impatient in my lack of understanding, give me strength to endure.

Lord, when I become dismayed by the frustrations of this world, give me perseverance.

Lord, when I become hardened the leading of your Spirit, soften me again.

Lord, when I become afraid, give me comfort.

Lord, when I become uncertain, give me surety.

Lord, when I become perplexed, give me peace.

Lord, be my all. Into your hands I commit my spirit again.

Amen.”

(From Kari Kristina Reeves, Canyon Road: A Book of Prayer)