

SERMON STUDY GUIDE



October 1, 2023 // Thriving in Babylon // Character



ABOUT THIS SERMON SERIES

We live in a defining hour of history. The Western world and our country's moral landscape have changed and are changing faster than we can keep pace. What was once wrong is now right and what was once unacceptable is now celebrated. We are living in a type of **"Babylon"** and the question is how will we respond? How will we find hope when it seems all is lost?

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS

- What are you looking forward to most during the Fall Season? Do you do anything special to celebrate the changing season?
- What is one thing that you do to help manage stress in your life? (Exercise, listen to music, fishing, etc.) How has that helped you?

GOING DEEPER INTO THE MESSAGE

Read Daniel 1:8-14

Point 1 – Pre-decide to live by the culture of God’s Kingdom.

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” Psalms 119:11, NIV. Daniel and his friends were able to hold fast to their convictions not to defile themselves because they had convictions to begin with. They didn’t wait until a problem arose to decide how they were going to deal with it. They educated themselves about what was expected of them by God and they decided that serving God was worth it. When we get to know God by familiarizing ourselves with His scripture, we are far more capable of living by the culture of the kingdom than being at the whim of whatever culture is popular during our time.

Daniel decided that even though he was in a new land, with a new people, being taught new ideas and values, he was going to hold fast to Him who never changes, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. He had to decide that for himself. While his friends were there with him and they were probably encouraging each other to hold fast to God’s expectations of them, at the end of the day, they individually had to choose to stay true to God.

This would have been quite difficult. They would have seen all of the rich foods that the other Hebrew men were eating. They would certainly have smelled everything that was being served. But this would have been infinitely more difficult had they not chosen ahead of time what they were going to do. Daniel had resolved (reached a firm decision about) not to defile himself. He was firm in his commitment to his God and himself. He was not going to be deterred.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When was the last time you felt pressured by another person or situation to go against your conscience? How did you manage that difficult situation?
- In what areas of your life have you “pre-decided” to obey God? What do you do to follow through with this commitment?
- In your opinion, what are the factors involved with temptation? How do you conquer temptation in your life?

Read Daniel 1:11-13

Point 2 – Stand your ground with tact and respect.

Daniel and his friends responded to the demands of the Babylonian food/drink requirements with respect, gentleness, and tact. They followed through with their convictions by taking a new course. They went a different way than the rest of their cohort in the Babylonian University. Daniel and his friends went to the chief of the guards (vs.8), courageously requested a different diet, and then tactfully put a timeline on the dietary experiment (vs.12-13).

Daniel recognized that the way he responded would not only impact his own safety but also impact the witness he had for God in Babylon. Daniel and his friends became witnesses to the head of the guards and the other young men going through the same training. They didn't force their convictions on anyone else. They didn't expect anyone else to act like Jews. Why would they? They grew up in Babylon...not Israel. Daniel truly lived out the call of Christ to be “salt” and “light” to his captors.

It's the same with our lives as Christians. The way that we live out our convictions is just as important as the convictions that we hold.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are your convictions in your life right now? Do you place the burden of your convictions on anyone else? Is this wise?
- How do you set an example for people around you in your actions? How would you like to set an example in your actions?
- Ask God to give you His heart for why you're doing the things that you're doing for Him. See if this request changes how you stand your ground.

FINAL CHALLENGE

- How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?
- How does this week's message shape or nurture your relationship with God?
- BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?