

Community Group Sermon Notes March 22, 2026

Executive Pastor, Stephen Chang

Series: Exiles in Babylon: Living as Strangers in a Fallen World

Sermon Title: Faith Under Pressure

Big Idea: What happens when the claims of God collide with the claims of a dominant culture.

Spring Term: Week 12 of 20



Ice breaker: Share about a time when a simple habit or routine (spiritual or not) made a meaningful difference in your life. What made it stick?

Read and reflect on Daniel 6:1-28 in your Bibles, with excerpts below:

Daniel 6:3-9: ³ Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. ⁵ Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.” ⁶ So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: “May King Darius live forever! ⁷ The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. ⁸ Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” ⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing.

Daniel 6:10-15: ¹⁰ Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. ¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. ¹² So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to a ny god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions’ den?” The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” ¹³ Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” ¹⁴ When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. ¹⁵ Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, “Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.”

Daniel 6:16-23: ¹⁶ So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!” ¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed. ¹⁸ Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. ¹⁹ At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. ²⁰ When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?” ²¹ Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! ²² My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.” ²³ The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Sermon and Scripture Application Discussion:

1. D.A. Carson, in Christ and Culture Revisited, argues that “one of the greatest challenges for believers is not just external pressure, but confusion about how to rightly relate Christ to the culture around us.” Across history, Christians have tended to drift toward oversimplified responses, either blending in with culture, withdrawing from it, or trying to control it, without fully wrestling with the deeper, biblical tension. And that’s exactly what you see in Daniel. These aren’t just stories about courage under pressure. These are stories about what happens when the claims of God collide with the claims of a dominant culture that

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insists on defining reality, loyalty, and worship on its own terms. Share a time when you've felt tempted to blend in, withdraw, or control the culture around you.

2. **Order: A Life Aligned with God** (Daniel 6:3 – 9). *1 Corinthians 14:40; Colossians 2:6–7*

Illustration: Like a compass that keeps pointing north no matter where you are, Daniel's life stayed aligned with God even in Babylon. How did Daniel establish order in a culture that opposed his faith? How is godly order different from control or perfectionism? How does spiritual order grow out of relationship rather than religious pressure? Where might God be inviting you to bring greater alignment or structure in your life?

3. **Habits: Faithfulness in the Ordinary** (Daniel 6:10-15). *Luke 5:16; 1 Timothy 4:7–8*. What stands out about Daniel praying three times a day, even under pressure? What habits did Jesus consistently practice, and what do they reveal about His priorities? How do small, consistent habits prepare us for big moments of testing? Which habit (prayer, Scripture, rest, community) feels most life-giving—or most challenging—right now? What tends to disrupt your consistency with God?

4. **Hope: Confidence in God's Deliverance** (Daniel 6:16-23). *Hebrews 10:23; Romans 15:13*. How does biblical hope differ from cultural optimism or wishful thinking? What does it look like to have confidence in the "finished work of Christ"? Where in your life do you need hope to be renewed?

Digging Deeper — (Work through one together, over the week, or assign portions to different members.)

- Spiritual Formation and Transformation. *Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 3:18*. What does it mean to be transformed by the renewing of your mind? How do daily practices cooperate with God's transforming work? Where do you see evidence of transformation in your life over time?
- Faith and Practice (Orthodoxy & Orthopraxy). *James 2:17; Matthew 7:24–27*. How are belief and action meant to work together in the Christian life? What does it look like to build your life on the teachings of Jesus? Where might there be a gap between what you believe and how you live?
- Living as God's People in the World. *Matthew 5:14–16; 1 Peter 2:9–12*. What does it mean to live as light in everyday environments? How does our identity as God's people shape our witness? In what practical ways can your life reflect Christ this week?

Closing Prayer: Let's pray. God, we desire to live lives of order—not to earn access to You, but because we already belong to You. Shape in us faithful habits, not to prove our faith, but as a response to the faith You have already given us. Fill us with true hope—not wishful thinking, but deep confidence in the finished work of Christ. Guide us by Your Spirit to live in this identity each day, reflecting Your grace in all we do. Amen.

Faith in Action:

- **March 28**, Afghan Luncheon, 12 PM, F10; **March 29**, Harvest Sunday, 9 & 10:30 AM, Sanctuary
- **March 29 - April 4**, Prayer Experience, Lobby; **April 3**, Good Friday Service, 7 PM, Sanctuary