

# Small Leader Guide:

## Daniel 1 – Faith in Babylon – Part 1



### Warm Up

#### Icebreaker Question:

- What's one thing from your childhood or upbringing that has significantly shaped who you are today?

#### Leader Tip:

- Go first with a brief, personal example that isn't "too spiritual" (e.g., a family habit, coach, or tradition). This will set the tone for honest sharing and help quieter people feel safe to speak.



### Know It

#### Sermon Overview

This week we began a 12-week journey through the book of Daniel, exploring how to maintain faith in a world that constantly pressures us to conform. Daniel and his friends were taken from everything they knew at age 15 and placed in Babylon, where the culture systematically tried to make them forget their identity as God's people.

#### Central Question:

- What do you do when the world you knew is gone and everything around you is designed to make you forget who you are?

#### Leader Tip:

- After reading this, ask someone to restate the central question in their own words. This helps ensure people are tracking with the main idea.

#### Key Takeaways

##### God is Sovereign Even in Difficult Circumstances

- Daniel 1:2 says, "The Lord handed" Jerusalem over to Babylon
- God allowed this discipline, but He remained on His throne
- There are boundaries around what can touch us—God is still in control

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### Leader Tip:

- Some in your group may be walking through hard things. Be sensitive; emphasize hope in God's sovereignty, not blame or shame.

Three Ways the World Pressures Us to Conform:

- Isolation - Separating us from family, faith, and foundation
- Indoctrination - Teaching us different values, language, and worldview
- Identity Theft - Changing our names/identity to reflect the world's values

### Leader Tip:

- As you review these, ask for quick, one-sentence examples from the group (e.g., “What’s one way you see ‘isolation’ happening in our culture?”). Keep it moving, not a full discussion yet.

Daniel Determined Before the Pressure Hit

- Daniel 1:8: "Daniel determined that he would not defile himself"
- He made his decision about who he would be BEFORE facing the test
- This was a heart, soul, and mind decision

### Leader Tip:

- Emphasize “before the pressure hit.” This sets up the application questions later about pre-deciding how we’ll respond to temptation.

## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Text

What stands out to you most about Daniel being only 15 years old when taken to Babylon? How might that age make his faithfulness even more remarkable?

### Leader Tip:

- Invite students/young adults to share here if you have them. Affirm that God can use faithfulness at any age.

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Why do you think the pastor emphasized that "the Lord handed" Jerusalem over (v. 2)? How does God's sovereignty in difficult situations change our perspective?

#### Leader Tip:

- If the conversation drifts into trying to explain all suffering, gently bring it back to this text: we may not understand all "why's," but Daniel shows us how to trust God in the middle of it.

The Babylonians changed Daniel and his friends' names from Hebrew names (honoring God) to Babylonian names (honoring false gods). Why was this significant? What does it teach us about identity?

#### Leader Tip:

- If answers get abstract, ask: "So what messages does our culture try to 'rename' us with today?" to make it concrete.



#### Share It

#### Personal Reflection

Which of the three pressures to conform (isolation, indoctrination, or identity theft) do you feel most strongly in your own life right now? Share an example.

#### Leader Tip:

- This can get vulnerable. Model honesty without oversharing, then thank people specifically for what they share to build trust.

The sermon mentioned that algorithms and social media are designed to influence and shape our thinking. Have you noticed this in your own life? How?

#### Leader Tip:

- If your group is quiet, give 30 seconds of silence and ask everyone to think of one example from their own feed before answering.

When have you felt pressure to compromise your faith for the sake of fitting in, advancing your career, or keeping peace with others?

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#### Leader Tip:

- Watch time here—this can open deep stories. If it takes off, allow a few to share more deeply and gently say, “We’ll have to keep moving, but this would be great to revisit one-on-one or in triads.”

#### Going Further

Pastor Todd shared that only 5% of people who say they attend church regularly actually do. What factors do you think contribute to this gap? What pulls people (or you) away from consistent church attendance?

#### Leader Tip:

- Guard against this turning into a rant about “those people” or sports. Redirect to heart issues and personal reflection: “Where do we feel this tension ourselves?”

Daniel "determined" before the pressure hit. What decisions can we make NOW about how we'll respond to future pressures or temptations?

#### Leader Tip:

- After some sharing, ask: “Can we make those decisions specific and practical?” Encourage people to move from vague (“I’ll trust God more”) to concrete (“When \_\_\_\_ happens, I will \_\_\_\_.”)

Joshua 24:15 says, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." What would it look like for you to "draw a line in the sand" in your life today?

#### Leader Tip:

- This is a key moment. Give extra time here. You might even say, “Take a minute silently and ask the Lord, ‘Where are you asking me to draw a line?’ then we’ll share.”



#### Live It

### Application Questions

For Parents:

- How can you be more intentional about knowing what your children are being taught—in school, through friends, and online? What's one practical step you can take this week?

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#### **Leader Tip:**

- If your group is mixed (single, married, no kids), acknowledge that: “For those who aren’t parents, think about spiritual influence you may have over nieces/nephews, students, or kids at church.”

For Everyone:

- Where do you find your primary identity—in Christ, or in your roles (job, parent, spouse, hobbies, sports)? How can you shift toward finding your identity first in Christ?

#### **Leader Tip:**

- Ask follow-up questions like, “What would someone close to you say your identity is in?” This can give helpful outside perspective.

Pastor Todd mentioned we have six days a week for hobbies and sports, but often sacrifice the one day for worship and spiritual foundation. How does your weekly schedule reflect your priorities? What might need to change?

#### **Leader Tip:**

- Keep a “grace, not guilt” tone. If someone feels convicted, affirm that conviction as God’s kindness, not your group’s judgment.

## **Practical Applications**

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to put into practice:

Determine Your Line:

- Write down 2-3 specific areas where you will not compromise, regardless of cultural pressure. Share this with an accountability partner.

Family Meeting:

- If you have children, hold a family meeting to discuss your family's values and commitment to Christ. Consider creating a family mission statement based on Joshua 24:15.

Digital Audit:

- Review what you're consuming online this week. Check your screen time, social media follows, and content. Ask: "Is this shaping me toward Christ or away from Him?"

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#### Education Check:

- If you're a parent, schedule time to review your child's curriculum, meet with teachers, or have a conversation with your kids about what they're learning.

#### Prioritize Worship:

- Evaluate your Sunday morning routine. What changes could you make to prioritize gathering with God's people? (Remember: grace, not legalism—but intentionality matters.)

#### Identity Reminder:

- Each morning this week, remind yourself: "I am a child of God. My identity is in Christ alone, not in what I do or what others think of me."

#### **Leader Tip:**

- Don't try to do all of these as a group. Ask each person to pick ONE and say it out loud. Consider following up next week: "How did it go with the challenge you chose?"

#### **Memory Verse**

Daniel 1:8a - "Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank."

Challenge: Memorize this verse as a group and text it to each other during the week as encouragement.

#### **Leader Tip:**

- Practice it together once or twice out loud. You can have one person start and another finish, or say it phrase by phrase as a group to help it stick.

#### **Closing Questions**

- What is one thing God is calling you to do differently after this discussion?
- How can we pray for you this week as you seek to stand firm in your faith?

#### **Leader Tip:**

Aim to hear from everyone on question 1, even if it's brief. This helps move from "interesting discussion" to actual life change.

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### Live It

#### Prayer Focus

- Pray for strength to determine our identity in Christ before pressure comes
- Pray for parents to be engaged and aware of what's influencing their children
- Pray for our church family to be faithful in gathering and growing together
- Pray for courage to draw lines in the sand and live countercultural lives for God's glory
- Pray for anyone struggling with where to find their identity

#### Leader Tip:

- Consider breaking into smaller groups of 2–3 for prayer so more people feel comfortable praying out loud. You can assign each mini-group one or two of the prayer focus points.

#### Looking Ahead

Next week we'll continue in Daniel, exploring how Daniel navigated the tension between honoring authority and staying faithful to God. Come prepared to discuss how we can be "in the world but not of it."

#### Leader Tip:

- Remind the group of time and place for your next meeting, and encourage them to read Daniel 1 again (or Daniel 2 if that's where the sermon is headed) before next week.