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Pastor's Introduction

We are sojourners just passing through. This world is not our home. We await a better city, a heavenly city. The Bible is very clear that this is the posture of Christians in this present world. We are exiles. Oftentimes, Christians bemoan the sin that prevails in our culture, and rightly so, but we should not be surprised by it. We aren't in Zion; we are in Babylon. Jesus told us that the world was opposed to Him, and it will be opposed to His followers as well (Jn 15:18). John Piper writes, "American culture does not belong to Christians, neither in reality nor in biblical theology. It never has. The present tailspin toward Sodom is not a fall from Christian ownership. "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). It has since the fall, and it will until Christ comes in open triumph. God's rightful ownership will be manifested in due time." Christians are watching and waiting...and working for His kingdom.

Our new sermon series, "Exiles", is a study through Daniel 1-7. In this seven-week series, we will examine how Daniel lived out his faith in God as an exile in a hostile land. My prayer is that the Lord will teach us about how to live as exiles in today's culture. We will not surrender or retreat. Instead, we will shine as the light of the world (Matt 5:14).

Ed. TG



Participant Guide for November 14, 2021

Faithfulness to God

Daniel 1

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

1. Has there ever been a time where there was something good and pleasing in front of you that you knew you should stay away from? Share the situation, what choice you made, and why.
2. Daniel was now in a secular, worldly place that was not so different from our own. To protect his holiness, the Bible says that he *resolved* to put safeguards in place. Why is that verse so important in the context of the rest of chapter 1?
3. What was the purpose of Israel's strict dietary laws? Why did God rule that some foods were clean and other foods were unclean?
4. Daniel was concerned about his body and worship of God being defiled. What does it mean for something to be defiled? How could something as seemingly innocent as food defile a person? What are examples of ways that we defile ourselves before God?
5. How did Daniel's adherence to God's law show his faithfulness to God? In what ways did Jesus show his faithfulness to God?
6. When it comes to sin, sometimes we may let "the little things" slide. Why is this path dangerous? Do you believe that God rewards our faithfulness? What does it look like for you to be faithful to Him?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ What safeguards or systems of accountability do you have in place to protect your holiness?



Participant Guide for November 21, 2021

Guest Speaker

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon notes:



Apply

Discussion Notes:

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

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Participant Guide for November 28, 2021

Pointing to the Gospel

Daniel 2

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

1. Has there been a time in your life when you had to ask for help to understand something? Where would you go if you could not “Google” it?
2. Why could the “wise men” of Babylon not interpret the dream? (See their explanation in v. 16). What was Daniel’s response? Why were their responses different if they both knew it was impossible to interpret the dream?
3. Daniel made sure to thank God for revealing this mystery to him, in prayer, and to the king. Why is this important? What are ways we can praise God in our work and lives? Private and public?
4. Eph. 1:9-10 tells us God revealed a great mystery to us in Jesus Christ. In Scripture, “mystery” refers to the revelation of something previously hidden or vaguely known but now is more fully made known. How would proclaiming God’s “mystery” revealed to us in Jesus bring God glory? (See Nebuchadnezzar’s response, Dan. 2:46:47). How should this motivate us to proclaim God’s mystery?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ Who’s your one? God has revealed a “mystery” in your life— “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 ESV). This week, share how God has revealed that mystery in your life.

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Participant Guide for December 5, 2021

Trusting in Trials

Daniel 3

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

1. Has there ever been a time that, because of moral reasons, you did not partake in something that others were doing?
2. King Nebuchadnezzar built up an image and demanded that everyone worship it. This would not have been an option for the Hebrews in the crowd because it would have violated two of the commandments from Exodus 20: “You shall have no other god before me, and You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,” Whenever you are faced with difficult decisions, do you often think back to what God says to do during those times?
3. Verse 7 says that when all the people heard the sound of the instruments being played, people of every nation and language fell down and worshipped the gold statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. The Bible later says in Revelation 7, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” What contrast do you see between these two texts and the object of our worship?
4. It is widely believed for the fourth man in the fire to be God Himself as a foreshadowing to the coming of Jesus. Does knowing that Jesus will be “with you in the fire” during challenging times in your life change how you will live for Him? How so?
5. We may not be told to bow down and worship 90 ft tall idols in our world today, but what would be the equivalent to this in 2021 America?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ What action steps will you take to be sure you won’t bow to the idols of this world?



Participant Guide for December 12, 2021

Sovereignty of God

Daniel 4

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

1. Have you ever been in charge of something, and it completely fell apart?
2. What does the word sovereign mean? (Feel free to use Google or a Bible dictionary!)
3. Daniel 4 is bookended by two songs of praise to God, resulting from two different circumstances. The first follows the furnace story where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego humbly and sacrificially follow God into the flames. What was the gist of this very well-known story?
4. The after-effects of the furnace story are that the Lord was figuratively and literally with them in the fire and lifted them out. Has there ever been a time when God showed his sovereignty over a trial in your life? Why is it important for us to see that the angel was with them in the fire? To show God is sovereign over it.
5. Being a witness to all this, the King praises the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in verses 1-3. Immediately following, King Nebuchadnezzar has another dream and calls upon Daniel for assistance. What are some of the things that will happen to the king (v20-26)? What does Daniel's plea convey to the king (v 27)? Why is practicing righteousness highlighted? Or showing mercy to the oppressed? (Micah 6:8)
6. What happens as a result of v 29-30? What is the result of all this coming to pass (v 33-34)? In response, the king is brought low until he realizes who is really in charge (v 32-33). Contrast the language used in Daniel 4:30 and Daniel 4:34 in the song. Whose dominion is it now? Who is sovereign now?
 - a. Matthew 23:12 rings true here: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." Isn't it interesting that the response to being exalted is praising God, and the reaction to being humbled is praising God? Or to give glory to the rightful King?

Respond

- **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**
- ◆ Knowing God is sovereign over everything, what is one thing you can humbly submit to Him this week? A block of time? A lunch with a colleague? A conversation about Jesus?
 - ◆ In your home/with your family, knowing God is sovereign over both high and low seasons, what is one way you can praise him in response to who He is this week?



Participant Guide for December 19, 2021

Christmas

Luke 2:8-20

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

1. What is your favorite Christmas movie, and why? What special significance does it have? What special feelings or emotions does it stir in your heart?
2. The angel of the Lord delivered the good news of the Messiah's birth to shepherds in a field. Why did God choose to first deliver the message to these men? What is the significance of the message coming to them first?
3. As a class, summarize what the shepherds do after the angel leaves (verses 15-20). How does this passage summarize how the gospel will spread?
4. During everything that is going on, in verse 19, you see Mary's response. What is it? What is she feeling at this moment? When was the last time you paused to see what God was doing around you? Thinking back to the first question, when was the last time God's work in your life stirred the emotions of your heart?
5. The shepherds were Jesus' first evangelists. What can you take away from their model for evangelism? Did they do anything special?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ During the Christmas season, people may be more open to talking about Jesus. With whom will you talk about Jesus this week?

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Participant Guide for December 26, 2021

Exalting Self

Daniel 5

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

1. What are some of the ways that people distract themselves when things are going badly? Why do people turn to distractions?
2. This chapter details the final hours of the great Babylonian empire. How did the king and people spend the night? What cultural comparisons can we make in our time?
3. King Belshazzar saw how God blessed Nebuchadnezzar. He then saw his predecessor fall from power when Nebuchadnezzar forgot God. Yet, King Belshazzar followed his predecessor and forgot God, and exalted himself. What are some of the ways that we “forget God?” How do we end up exalting ourselves when that happens?
4. Read Romans 1:21-28: How do King Belshazzar’s actions correlate to what Paul says in this passage? Will sin stay static, that is, staying the same, or does it typically grow? How so?
5. How does God deal with those who harden their hearts? Knowing this, what should be the response for those who follow Christ? How do we guide our hearts and help guide the hearts of others in our class and community?

Respond

- **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**
- ◆ King Belshazzar spent his last night on earth partying. How did Jesus spend his last night on earth? This week, read Luke 22 and Matthew 26. Are you humbling yourself like King Belshazzar or like Christ?

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Participant Guide for January 2, 2021

Holiness in Persecution

Daniel 6

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

1. Have you heard of persecution before? What comes to mind? How were people persecuted in the early church? Today, in America and around the world?
2. At this point in the story, Daniel is around 80 years old. Daniel has served the Babylonians for over 60 years and is now recognized by a second nation ruling over him. What motivated him to serve faithfully so long?
3. Daniel was being obedient to another prophet's command; Jeremiah says, "Pursue the well-being of the city I have deported you to. Pray to the Lord on its behalf, for when it thrives, you will thrive" (Jer. 29:7). What are ways we can help the "well-being" of Knoxville? How should we be praying for Knoxville? If we do not know how to help or pray, where do we start?
4. The Bible doesn't command us to pray towards Jerusalem, 3-times a day, but Daniel probably did because of 1 Kings 8:46-50 and Psalm 55:17. How does Daniel's Bible reading affect his life? What are ways we can let Scripture affect our daily rhythms, habits, and life?
5. Daniel remained faithful in persecution. Today, our persecution is more private than public, but how can we remain holy—set apart and pure—even during times of trials and persecution?
6. God is all-powerful. He can do any and everything he wants to do. How can this encourage us in our trials and persecution?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ Daniel lets God, through the Bible, dictate how he lives his life, even during persecution. Commit or recommit to daily remind ourselves of God's presence and power in our lives through the rhythms of Bible reading and prayer.

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Participant Guide for January 9, 2022

Citizens of the Kingdom

Daniel 7

Highlight

Which verse(s) spoke to you this week?

Explain

Sermon and discussion notes:



Apply

1. What worries you about the future? What excites you about the future?
2. The opening part of this chapter is about Daniel's dream. As he seeks an interpretation of the dream, he appears to be distressed and scared. Why was this?
3. In verses 9-14, we read descriptions of the Father, the Throne, and Christ. What do you see emphasized in these verses? Why are they significant in the context of the dream?
4. Daniel 7 parallels with Daniel 2 because they both include prophecies about the Kingdom of God, how it will never be shaken, and that the Most High is in total control forever and ever. Why would this have been significant during Daniel's time of kings and leaders trying to build their own personal kingdoms?
5. On this side of eternity, we live in temporary and shakable kingdoms. Our time here is limited. As citizens of the Kingdom of God, what are you doing to prepare yourself and others for eternity so that they may join you in that Kingdom?
6. How often do you think about the end times? What do you anticipate most about the Second Coming of Christ?

Respond

→ **Challenge - What are you going to do in response to the truth communicated today?**

- ◆ Do you live this life given the future life to come? How would your life look different if you did?