

# life groups

NorthStar Church

The Disciple's Dilemma  
Daniel 1 , 1 Peter 2:9-11  
August 28, 2016  
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## MAIN POINT

When the culture contradicts the King, the courageous stand their ground. In the world today, Christians are called to be in the world but not of the of this world. So many try so hard to blend into the culture at the expense of being "on mission". We overcome the fear of rejection by remembering who we are, knowing why we are here, and recognizing where our power comes from. So the dilemma is to be committed to the Kingdom of Heaven or the kingdom of this earth.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Who is one person that comes to mind when you think about courage? Why did you choose that person?

What is the most courageous thing you have ever done?

Is courage always displayed in big, public ways? What are some of the ways courage is lived out in daily life?

Christians are more and more being faced with the temptation to just "be nice" rather than stand on conviction. Today we will see a group of men whose faith was tested. They were tempted to compromise what they knew to be true. But we will see today that when the culture contradicts the King, the courageous stand their ground.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 1:1-21.

What immediately impacts you the most in this text? Why?

What do you think Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were thinking when they were chosen for this process?

These men were stripped of their home, families, and even their names. Have you ever experienced a time like that? When everything you knew was stripped away?

What are some of the ways you see the culture around us right now trying to strip us of the things we should stand firmly on?

What can we learn about the right way and wrong way to stand on conviction in the face of pressure from the stand Daniel took?

When is one time that you have had to stand when you were being pressured to back down?

Daniel and his friends stood firm because they believed in a greater kind of food than the king had to offer. Much more than the vegetables, it was their faith in God that kept them standing strong. In John 6, Jesus helps us see that the real sustaining power for our lives is not physical food, but Himself as the Bread of Life.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 6:26-35.

Why is Jesus better than physical food to sustain us?

When is one time in your life when you have depended on Jesus to sustain you? How did He respond to your need?

Like Daniel and his friends, we are going to face the temptation to compromise. Because we will, we need a greater source of nourishment than what any earthly king has to offer. The source of our courage to stand will come from our faith. When we trust in Jesus as that Source, the courageous can stand their ground when the culture contradicts the King. What does trusting in Jesus as the Source look like? How do you put yourself in the best position to find consistent courage as you trust in Him?

Neither courage or trust are the result of one decision. We learn to trust Jesus and respond courageously in the trust as we rhythmically walk with Him. If seeking the Source of faith and courage is not a steady pursuit in our lives, our conviction will not be there when we need it.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What area of your life are you most tempted to back away from conviction right now?

What is one way you can fight that temptation with faith?

How can we help each other in our group to stand firm?

What are some things we can do to make sure that our church is a church that stands on conviction?

## PRAY

Close your group in prayer and ask for the courage to stand your ground. Pray that you would remember what you know to be true about the King of the Universe, and that knowledge would make you bold for Him. Ask for grace to walk consistently with Christ this week and for the opportunity to show your trust in Him.

## COMMENTARY

### DANIEL 1:1-21

1:1. Although Daniel recorded these events as taking place in the third year of...Jehoiakim, Jeremiah wrote that it was in the fourth year (Jer. 25:1,9; 46:1). Daniel probably used the Babylonian system which did not count a king's year of accession, while Jeremiah used the Israelite system of counting, which did include the accession year. The events took place during the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, probably when he was still co-regent with his father and just after the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.).

1:2. Although Nebuchadnezzar viewed his defeat of Judah as a victory for his gods, Daniel's perspective was that it was the Lord who handed Jehoiakim over to the Babylonians. The historian Berosus mentioned these events when he wrote that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Hattiland (referring to Syro-Palestine). At that time, Nebuchadnezzar took vessels from the house of God, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prediction when Hezekiah showed them to the Babylonian king a century beforehand (Isa. 39:2,6).

1:3. Chief of his court officials means literally "chief of the eunuchs," but since "eunuch" had come to mean "royal official," most likely Ashpenaz was not a eunuch, nor did Daniel and his friends become thus.

1:4. The Hebrew word for young men here literally means “children” or “boys” and probably refers to teenagers, a good estimate being around age 15. Chaldean language and literature refers to an ancient university-style education in Sumerian, Akkadian, and Aramaic.

1:7. Daniel and his friends, whose original names honored the God of Israel, were given other names that intended to honor the false gods of Babylon. Daniel (“God is My Judge”) became Belteshazzar (“Bel Protect Him”); Hananiah (“God Has Been Gracious”) became Shadrach (“The Command of Akku”); Mishael (“Who Is What God Is?”) became Meshach (“Who Is What Aku Is?”); Azariah (“The Lord Has Helped”) became Abednego (“Servant of Nebo”).

1:8. The word determined means literally “set upon his heart,” referring to inner resolve. Daniel decided that he would not defile himself with a diet that included non-Kosher meat such as horseflesh and pork, or drink wine that had been offered to Babylonian gods.

1:15. The fact that Daniel and his friends looked better and healthier is not a biblical endorsement of vegetarianism (Gen. 9:3). Rather, God in His providence made them healthy and strong.

1:20. Throughout the Book of Daniel, there are six different expressions for the king’s counselors. The first two, used here, are diviner-priests and mediums. The word “diviner priests” comes from a root that means “engraver.” It refers to those who engraved Babylonian religious activities and astrological movements of the stars on clay tablets. The word “mediums” means “conjurers.” It refers to those who used spells and incantations to communicate with the spirit world.

1:21. Daniel saw the end of the exile, living until the first year of King Cyrus (539 B.C.) and even beyond that time (see 10:1, where “third year” dates to 536).