

DANIEL

PATTERNS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Week Two: *Knowing our Real Name* Daniel Chapter 1, Matthew 16: 13-18

Opening Question: What is the story of your name? Does it have special meaning or significance?

1: CONTEXT

A quick look back: Spend a few minutes reviewing the big picture of Daniel from Week One. Who wrote Daniel? When is it happening and why? What are the book's main purposes? What is the "third" way of living as an exile?

Today's Passage: When God began to create His people as a nation all the way back in His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12,15), His mandate to them was to live in such a way that they would be light and blessing to the nations around them. For generation after generation, God's people forgot this call to love God and neighbor, instead serving other gods and committing acts of deep injustice against each other. God tried to call His people back to their true identity over and over again, but in their refusal, He initiated discipline through sending them into exile in a foreign empire called Babylon. The story of Daniel zooms in on this time of exile, and specifically on the stories of several young men who, despite their nation's disobedience, are firmly rooted in who they are and Whose they are...

2: CONTENT

Read Daniel 1 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A or B) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text?

What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group and share your observations, writing them on a board or a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. We don't have any information about Daniel before this book, but what do we learn about him from vs 3-4? What characteristics/background does he have?
2. One of the questions that the book of Daniel puts before its reader is, "Who is really in charge here?" The events in this passage seem to be driven by the king, but look through this passage and find the places that list what GOD is doing (hint: verses 2, 9, 17). What do we learn?
3. What are the different ways that king Nebuchadnezzar tries to have his captives become part of *his* culture? Why would a king treat captives this way?
4. One of the key moments in this passage is the king changing the names of the people he has captured. See if anyone's Bible explains the translations of the original and given names. What do you learn? What is the king trying to do?
 - a. Daniel=God is my judge/Beltshezar= Bel will protect

- b. Shadrach= God has been gracious/Shadrach= inspired of Aku
 - c. Mishael= who is what God is/Meshach= belonging to Aku
 - d. Azarial= Yahweh has helped/Abednego= servant of Nebo
5. Daniel makes no statements of faith in this passage, but what do his actions and requests tell us about his life with and in God?

3: CONNECTING THE STORY TO JESUS

In our passage today, the king seeks to rename, recreate, and reform the men from Judah. But we know that only the Creator of the Universe holds that kind of authority and power. And in the presence of Jesus, our true names, our true identities, our created purpose is restored and renewed and revealed. **Read Matthew 16: 13-18**, and discuss how this passage relates to Daniel 1. What is the significance of Jesus renaming this fiery, outspoken, and often quick-to-act disciple with the name “rock”? What does it tell us about Jesus and how He knows us/sees us/changes us?

4: APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.

- In this exiled kingdom, Daniel and his friends are in essence offered “the best life”- good food, good wine, the best of culture, a place at the table with the most popular and powerful. What does current culture or even college culture sell us as being “the best life”? What are the storylines that promise ease or happiness? Which of these promises or ways of living are the hardest for you to resist?
- Daniel’s story clearly does not start in Chapter 1. We understand through his actions that long before he was taken to Babylon, he already somehow knew God as true and faithful. Do you have any experiences in your own life/history that have particularly taught you about the goodness or faithfulness of God?
- We are often quick to put on the identities that our culture, families, or friends label us with- smart, dumb, beautiful, popular, quick-tempered, difficult, anxious, overachiever, hopeless, athletic, outgoing, introvert, extrovert, etc.. But the New Testament reveals all kinds of “names” that describe who we *really are* in Christ. Here are a few: Child of God, God’s handiwork, Accepted, Image-bearer, Beloved, Friend of Jesus, Home for the Spirit, Chosen, Righteousness of God, Hidden in Christ, Conqueror. Which of those names do you need to remember and claim again? Choose 1 for the week and carry it with you.

4: PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your “wonderings” from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

*God of the Universe,
 What a mystery and a gift that You know our name. There are so many times that we forget who we are. That we start wearing names and identities that pull us away from You and from who we are in You. Thank You for being a God who over and over and over again calls us back to the truth. For being a God whose faithfulness in our past gives us strength for our today. And for being a God who holds our names, our lives, our being, in Your divine love. We pray this in the most beautiful name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*