

DANIEL

PATTERNS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Week Seven: Endurance in Exile Daniel Chapter 6

Opening Question: What situation/event/athletic endeavor has required the most endurance from you in your life?

1: CONTEXT

A quick look back: As we end our study of Daniel this week, talk about what parts of this study have “stuck”. Have you learned anything new in these familiar stories? What have you learned about who God is? What qualities or patterns in Daniel’s life stand out to you? What have you learned about the life of discipleship?

Today’s Passage: Our story today introduces yet another king- Darius the Mede- who has now taken over the kingdom and ended the Babylonian empire. Historically, there is debate over who this king actually was, but what is uncontested is that the series of kings from different empires continued to hold Israel’s people in captivity. By the time this most famous of stories happens, Daniel is more than 80 years old and has likely been in captivity for over 60 years. Although our re-telling of this story often focuses on the vividness and intensity of the lion’s den, around the edges of this story is a profile of a man of God who has quietly endured in his faith through every season of exile, and of a living God who is worthy of his trust. Today, we look one more time at the patterns and practices in the life of Daniel and the life of Christ, as we seek to understand what it means to endure in exile.

2: CONTENT

Read Daniel 6 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. Describe in a few words your impressions of the main characters in this section: Darius, the accusers, and Daniel.
2. What specific parts of Daniel’s character are highlighted in vs 3-5?
3. What details do we get about Daniel’s response in vs 10? Why is the last part of this verse so important in helping us to understand the faith patterns in Daniel’s life that help him endure?
4. Daniel exists in part as a “type” of Christ- a person that helps us look through the shadows towards a coming Redeemer. Look carefully at the details related to Daniel’s ordeal as you think through the story of Jesus’s accusations, trial, death, and resurrection. How are these stories similar? What details are particularly highlighted? What does it mean to have an ancient story that is already “echoing” what is to come?

5. What truths do you learn about God from the mouth of Darius in vs 26-27?

3: CONNECTING THE STORY TO JESUS

In Daniel, we have encountered a man who somehow found a way to remain faithful and fruitful throughout the good and overwhelmingly hard parts of his life in Babylon. We have learned that this endurance seems to be rooted in **practices** of prayer, community, acts of mercy, praise. Other parts of Daniel (which we haven't read), tell us about Daniel fasting, mourning, engaging in deep-hearted prayers of confession. We learn that these daily, often unseen faith practices gave Daniel an unexpected ability to endure and to live well in the place he was planted. In the gospels, Jesus also repeatedly engages in **practices** that connect Him to the heartbeat of God. We see Jesus praying, fasting, cultivating silence, seeking solitude, celebrating, fostering community, studying and sharing the Word, worshipping. When Jesus calls his first disciples in **Matthew 4:19**, he doesn't say, "Come and *believe* in Me," He says, "Come and *follow Me*." This means that we don't just *learn* things about Jesus, we actually *do* the things Jesus did. His lived patterns are invitations for our lived patterns. Gifts to help us connect to God and endure in our own places of exile. Talk about this idea of the **practices** of Daniel and the **practices** of Christ, and how they relate to a life of faithfulness and endurance. Do you have any faith practices in your life that help connect you to the presence and faithfulness of God?

4: APPLICATION

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

- We often find excuses about why it is hard to find time for the faith practices (the things we listed above) that Scripture seems to illustrate are our lifelines: We are too busy or too stressed. We don't have enough support around us. Our life is too complicated. Faith practices seem empty or not fulfilling. How does the story of Daniel speak to these excuses? How might we engage in faith practices differently if we thought of them as invitations instead of obligations? How does Christ's life speak to this?
- When Daniel emerges from the den, the narrator highlights his trust in God. In his book "Ruthless Trust" author Brendan Manning writes: "*It requires heroic courage to trust in the love of God no matter what happens to us.*" Talk about this idea of trust. What role does trust have in the life of a believer? What has it looked like or not looked like in your life?
- What truths about God have become more real to you over the past weeks of study? Share with each other.

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 created from Daniel 6:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit-

We praise you and thank you that you are the living God, the only One that endures forever. We trust that despite what we see around us, Your kingdom will not be destroyed, and Your dominion will never end. You alone are the God who rescues and saves. Even today, You perform signs and wonders, in the heavens and on earth. You have rescued us from the power of the lions, from the power of the grave, from the power of death itself. May we never grow weary of a life with you, and may that life give us rooted endurance to the end.

We pray this in the strong and sure name of Christ- Amen.