

DANIEL

PATTERNS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Week One: The Unexpected Way of Discipleship

Note to Leaders: You will need a way to watch a short video this week. You may also want to print the study this week for participants since it has lots of context information!!

Opening Time: Ask everyone to share their name and a little bit about themselves (may want to do this each week if your group changes). What drew you to be part of this Bible study? Do you have any previous experiences- good or bad- in past Bible studies? Have you ever spent any time or heard any teaching on the book of Daniel? If so, what do you remember?

SETTING THE STAGE:

There are all kinds of ways that we could study the book of Daniel and different directions that we could take for our particular weeks together. But our chosen “path” for the weeks ahead is to look at Daniel through the lens of discipleship. What do we learn from Daniel about what it looks like to have a life rooted in God, especially during seasons that don’t look the way we expect? How do we actually live out this call to trust God in the real story of our life? To help form this lens, we are also going to pair our passage from Daniel each week with a story of Jesus from the book of Matthew. How is Daniel giving us a whisper about what is to come in the person and reign of Christ, and how does the life of Jesus help us to look back and see deeper lessons and truths in the book of Daniel? To explore these questions, we will use the first 6 chapters of Daniel, which each present a distinct story and window into a pattern of discipleship.

CONTEXT:

As we begin a study, it is often helpful to learn a few details about the book we are studying. We don’t assume that anyone in the room is a scholar on the book of Daniel, so these details can help everyone start with the same basics and locate where this book sits in the big story of redemption. You can review these each week. Quickly discuss/review/ask/share the context questions below:

Who wrote the book of Daniel?

Like many books of Scripture, there is some debate about this question. But the traditional understanding is that the book was primarily written by the historical person of Daniel and compiled with the help of an editor. The practice of writing about yourself in the 3rd person was a common ancient practice, as it was considered “bad taste” to write about yourself in the 1st person!

Where does the story take place?

In a kingdom called Babylon, where the captured people of Israel are living as exiles.

When does the story take place?

The book depicts events from about 605 BC-536 BC, although the visions in the book pertain to both the near and far future.

Why was Daniel (and the whole nation) taken into captivity in the first place?

From the time of king Saul (the first king of Israel), the people of Israel had been living as their own nation. As instructed all the way back to Abraham, but especially to Moses, this nation was supposed to be marked by people who loved God and loved neighbor. But historically, the people of Israel kept being drawn to other gods, and they treated each other and their neighbors with injustice. Much of the Old Testament is God warning the nation through the prophets to come back to their real identity. But when they refuse to listen- after hundreds and hundreds of years- God enacts discipline through moving them into exile. Daniel and his friends are part of this exiled people.

Who was the intended audience?

The most likely intended audience were the people in captivity in Babylon along with Daniel. However, this book became important for the people of Israel long after their captivity in Babylon, as they continued to wait for the “everlasting kingdom” that God promises in Daniel 2:44.

Why was Daniel written?

To encourage faithful living in the middle of difficult circumstances. To remind the people (and us!) that God is still and always in control of their lives and the world, even when everything around them seems to tell a different story.

CONTENT:

As a group, watch this video from the Bible Project titled: “The Way of the Exile,” which gives an overview of Daniel and its connection to the life and purpose of Christ. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/the-way-of-the-exile/>

After you have watched the video, discuss the questions below:

1. What did you notice in the video? What ideas were familiar? What ideas were new? What did it make you wonder about?
2. What does the video present as the “three ways” you might live as a follower of God in exile? (leader note: 1. revolt, 2. compromise, 3. serving and seeking the well-being of those around you). Can you think of ways that you have seen any of these three options being lived out in the faith communities you have been part of?

APPLICATION

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

- Most of us are not living the kind of exile that Daniel and his friends lived- being held as captives against our will in a foreign land. But the video says that we are all still exiles in a sense. Talk about this idea of exile. What does this really mean? Do you have experiences of feeling like an exile either in your faith or in other areas of your life?
- The video says that we all still live in some type of Babylon. What things in our world or culture seem to hold us "captive"? Are these things that we choose, or things that are just part of the cultures we live in?
- The video presents this "third way" to live as exiled people: to serve and seek the well-being of those around us. In what places or situations do you find it hardest to serve and seek goodness for the people around you?

4: PRAYER

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

- Use words/images/themes from the overview to guide your prayer.
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

Father, Son, and Spirit-

As we begin this season of studying your Word, we ask that You would open our hearts to Your story. Teach us what it looks like to be people who follow You and trust You in the middle of lives that feel far from simple. Show us places- maybe even today- where we might in some small way serve and seek the well-being of those around us. We know that this is the pattern of a disciple, because this is the pattern of Christ. So help us, God, to be strangers and aliens who love this world in such a beautiful way that Your face shines through.

In your name we pray, Amen.