

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – July 7, 2024

Theme: Living out our faith – A study of the life of Daniel. **Topic:** Do not conform to the world

Text: Daniel 1:1-21

Key verse: Daniel 1:8 “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore, he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: Today marks the beginning of our Q3 study series themed “Living out our faith – a study of the life of Daniel”. This theme is apt when we consider that we started the year in Q1 by discovering what constitute the *foundations of our faith* and then proceeding in Q2 to learn how to *strengthen our faith*. The Q3 study series focuses on the practical application of what we learned in Q1 and Q2. The call on us in today’s lesson not to conform to the world (Romans 12:2), using Daniel and his three Hebrew friends as example, is aimed to reassure us that it is truly possible to live differently in a wayward and warped generation. The call pre-supposes that the *world system* is quite different from the *system of God’s kingdom* and indeed the two are at war with each other (1 John 2:15). God’s expectation is that those with hope in Christ and His imminent return must purify themselves, just as He is pure (1 John 3:3). However, it should be noted that choosing to live differently is very costly, which is why Christ clearly laid down for us the terms of discipleship when He admonished us to count the cost if we are truly to be His disciples (Luke 14:26-28).

1. Read Romans 12:2 (a) Discuss, giving examples, what conforming to the world means. (b) Some people have argued that the world we live in today is so complex that it’s just impossible not to conform. Do you agree? Explain your answer.

Our text today details what we may call an *indoctrination programme*. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, had invaded and besieged Jerusalem when Jehoiakim was king of Judah. Precious vessels that were in service in God’s temple were carried away and placed in the temple of the pagan god – a desecration by all standards. The king of Judah and several other Jews were carried into captivity in Babylon. The Babylonians and Chaldeans were known for sorcery, astrology, and magic practices. After a victory, the Babylonians usually took the most talented and useful people back to Babylon and left only the poor behind to take whatever land they wanted and live peacefully there (2Ki 24:14). This system fostered great loyalty from conquered lands and ensured a steady supply of talented people for civil service. Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were among the exceptionally talented young people chosen for preparation for high service through a programme of indoctrination which required them to study, understand and conform to the pagan practices of the Babylonians. Their names were changed to reinforce the desired transformation: Daniel to Belteshazzar (Lady - goddess Bel - protect the king); Hananiah to Shadrach (god of the moon); Mishael to Meshack (Guest of the king) and Azariah to Abednego (servant of Nabu/Nebo – god of light, wisdom, literacy).

2. (a) Discuss the idea of indoctrination and explain, giving examples in our contemporary times, how this phenomenon can negatively impact a people. (b) Read Dan 1:3-4. Why do you think the selection criteria was so strict? (c) Read Isaiah 45:20 and 46:1-2. What was the intended purpose for changing the names of these Hebrew boys? Did the change of names make a difference?

We see Daniel, in verses 8 and 11 of our text, summoning the courage to speak out. First, he speaks to the Chief of the palace officials telling him that he would not defile himself with the royal food and wine. The Chief, knowing the potential consequences for his own life, expresses fear in granting such a request. Daniel, perseveres and speaks to the Guard assigned to him. The Guard disregards the risk and accedes to Daniel’s request. After ten days of the test of eating just vegetables rather than the royal food, the Guard finds Daniel and his friends better nourished than the rest of their selected colleagues. Three years of rigorous training pass and Daniel and his three Hebrew friends come out clean, exceptional – to be elevated later (see Dan. 2:48-49).

3. (a) Why is it difficult for believers to speak out in the face of real or perceived threats? (b) Read Matthew 16:24-25. What is the real risk when we refuse to speak and live out our convictions? (c) Read Dan. 1:17-20 and discuss the various forms of reward when we obey God in choosing not to conform to the world and its practices.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me today that it pays to stick to the convictions of my faith in You. Help me to live my life in line with my heavenly calling. In Jesus’ name. Amen.