

Island Group Discussion Guide

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Week of August 3, 2025



THRIVING IN BABYLON • WEEK 1

GOD IS IN CONTROL • DANIEL 1:1-14

OPENING PRAYER TIME

Begin your meeting with 10-15 minutes of prayer using these prompts:

- Thank God for His sovereignty and control over all circumstances in our lives
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom to navigate cultural changes around us
- Pray for hearts that trust God's plan even when life shifts unexpectedly
- Invite Jesus to help us stand firm in our beliefs while loving others well
- Ask for courage to resist compromise when culture pressures us to conform
- Pray for balance between grace and truth in all our relationships

DISCUSSION

- **Ice breaker:** Have you ever experienced a moment when your whole world changed overnight? What happened and how did you respond?
- **Read Daniel 1:1-4.** What strikes you about how quickly Daniel's world changed from living "every man's dream" to being taken captive to Babylon?
- Pastor Paul emphasized that "*culture changes, God doesn't.*" Why is this truth so important when we're facing rapid changes in our society?
- **Read Daniel 1:3-4.** King Nebuchadnezzar specifically wanted "the best of the best" - the brightest young men to serve in his palace. Why do you think he targeted the young people specifically for indoctrination?
- Pastor Paul said the king wanted to "*indoctrinate them to his language, his culture, his literature*" and "*transform them from the inside out.*" How do you see culture today trying to transform people from the inside out?
- **Read Daniel 1:5.** The king offered Daniel and his friends food and wine from his own kitchen - which seemed like preferential treatment. But Pastor Paul pointed out there was compromise involved. How does culture sometimes try to make compromise look appealing or convenient?
- **Read Daniel 1:6-7.** The Babylonians gave Daniel and his friends new names. Pastor Paul explained that "*culture will try to rename you*" and "*it will try*



to give you a new name that is less than the name that God has given you." What are some ways culture today tries to "rename" or redefine people's identity?

- Pastor Paul said, "*The only one who can name you are the ones who made you.*" **Application question:** How can we resist letting culture redefine our identity when we know God has already named and claimed us?
- **Read Daniel 1:8.** Pastor Paul emphasized that "*Daniel resolved not to defile himself.*" What does it mean to "resolve" something in your heart before you face the pressure to compromise?
- Pastor Paul liked Daniel's approach: "he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way." He called this approach humble and wise rather than indignant and prideful. Why is this approach more effective than being combative?
- Pastor Paul introduced the concept of "*kenosis*" (self-emptying of my will in exchange for God's will), and warned against "*reverse kenosis*" (working your way to the top). **Application question:** In what areas of your life do you need to practice kenosis - emptying your will for God's will?
- **Read Daniel 1:9-14.** Daniel proposed a test - 10 days of vegetables and water versus the king's food. What does this show us about Daniel's faith in God's provision and timing?
- Pastor Paul observed that the church tends to jump between two extremes: the "*truth extreme*" (knowing truth but being mean about it) and the "*grace extreme*" (all love without truth). Have you seen examples of either extreme? What's the danger in each?
- **Read John 1:14.** Pastor Paul pointed out that Jesus was "*full of grace and truth*" and noted that "*grace precedes truth.*" Why is this order important in how we interact with others?
- Pastor Paul asked: "*How do we stand firm in our belief? How do we love others, even who are not like us or believe what we believe?*" **Application question:** Think of someone in your life who doesn't share your beliefs. How can you show both grace and truth in that relationship?
- Pastor Paul said Daniel "*never complained, never whined*" about his cultural shift because "*he knew that God was in control.*" What current cultural changes or personal circumstances are you struggling to trust God with? How does knowing "God is in control" change your perspective?
- Pastor Paul emphasized that "*God's harshest judgments are always carried out with our best interest in mind*" because He wants us to "*share in His holiness.*" How does this truth help us understand difficult seasons in our lives or in our culture?
- **Application question:** As we begin this series on "Thriving in Babylon," what is one specific way you want to grow in hope, humility, or wisdom as you navigate our current culture?

CLOSING PRAYER TIME

Share prayer requests and concerns with the group. Be sure to write these down and send them to all group members so everyone can pray throughout the week, including those who were absent today.