

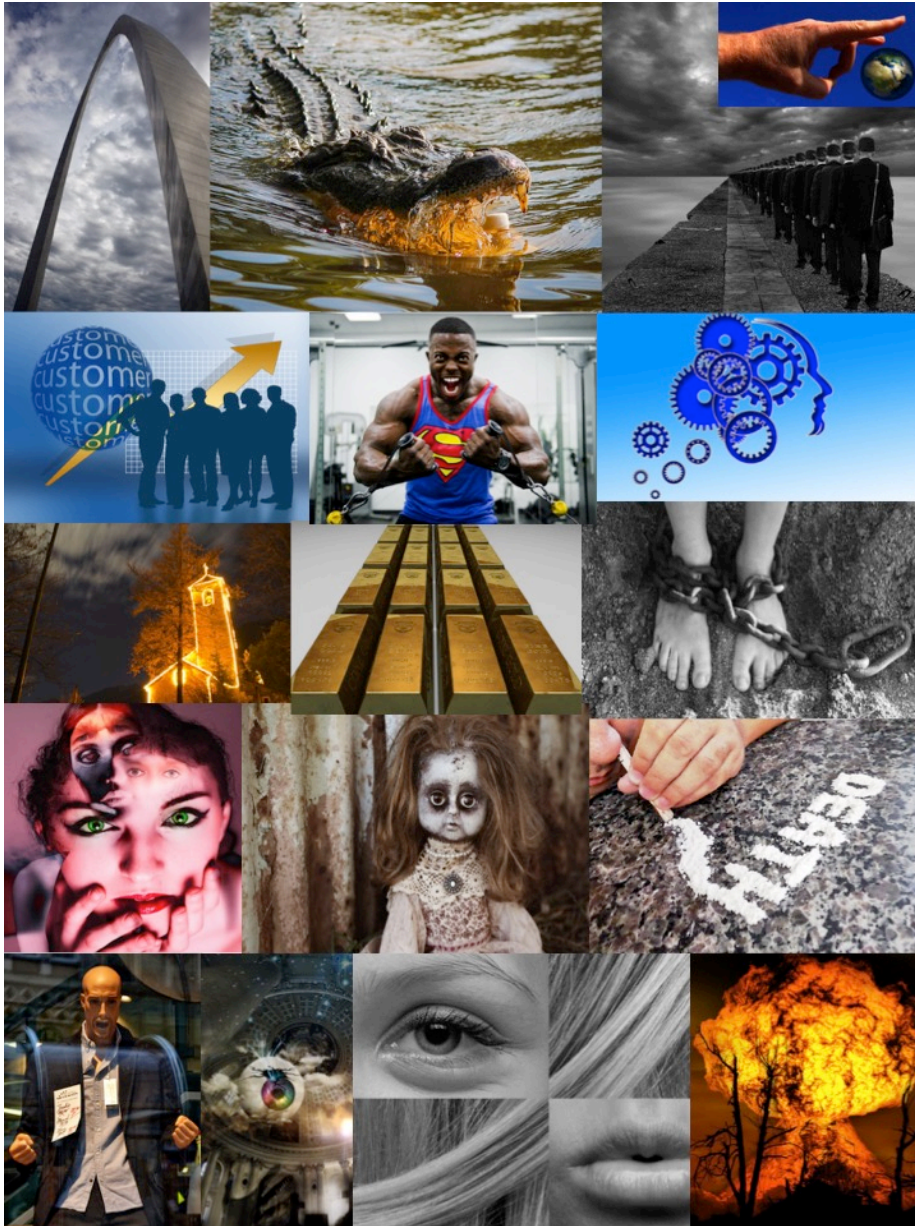
Daniel One

When Vision and Values Clash



WARMUP

After the fall of Jerusalem and the desecration of the Temple, Daniel and others were exiled to Babylon – the city of their enemy and symbol of everything that stands against God. One of their first concerns was how to remain committed to God and undefiled. As a warmup, select one or two of the images below (or find other images) that depict some aspect of choices that defile the soul.



- What thoughts or feelings about being defiled do these images stir up?
- In these depictions of being defiled, where might God be at work?
- Is there anything God is inviting you to? Dangers you need to avoid?

EXPLORE THE SCRIPTURES

Read **chapter one** (one or more times). Try multiple Bible versions. Pay particular attention to the “clash of cultures” in the chapter and Daniel’s response to this conflict.

Discuss: Daniel’s World

1. How does Daniel’s response to the threat of being defiled compare to the themes you observed in the images above?
2. How do you imagine Daniel and his friends responding to their Babylonian oppressors changing the names given to them by their parents? (1:7)
3. Why do you think these four exiled students took such a bold stand for a vegetarian diet?
4. God gave them “learning and skill...and understanding” (1:17 ESV). How might Daniel’s credentials translate into today’s workforce? How might being *defiled* have impacted Daniel’s knowledge and understanding?

Discuss: My World

5. Do you identify with Daniel in any way? In what ways has your experience and your own cultural context been similar to Daniel’s?

6. Do any of the cultural norms that you must live with have the potential to “defile” (v. 8) your conscience or Christian traditions? Are there any customs that are not defiling but are just unconformable because they are unfamiliar?

7. Living and working in the world as a citizen of God’s Kingdom can feel a lot like being in exile. Who are the friends who have been journeying with you (or you hope to journey with) into exile? What makes them uniquely fitted for this journey? How will you need to support each other?

8. What type of friend are you to others? What can your friends depend on from you on their journey? How have you been growing in this area?

Convictions

9. Daniel and his friends had strong convictions. They understood for whom, what and why they were living and what they were willing to die for in exile. As you reflect on this study and your own sense of calling, are there any convictions you see in Daniel that you also have or are in the process of forming?

10. Are there ways your school or work context is pushing back against these convictions and how you feel about these tensions.

PAUSE TO PRAY

Take time alone to pray. Listen to God and tell Him your heart. Ask for courage to make good choices as an exile and to deepen your convictions. Then pray together as a group.

SUGGESTED MEMORY VERSE

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore, he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. (Daniel 1:8 ESV)

GOING DEEPER (OPTIONAL)

Images are everywhere. At the beginning of this chapter, you were asked to select images that depict some aspect of choices that defile the soul. The goal, as mentioned in the introduction, was to help reveal your thoughts and feelings.

Images can also reveal what others are thinking and the values the world wants to project. While many of the images we see each day are positive, not all are. In your work or study places, what are some of these images that might defile your soul? And what are some images that encourage, uplift and bring meaning?

If you can bring images into your workplace, consider taking one or two that encourage, uplift and bring meaning to your soul. Others may comment on images. You may want to be prepared to tell the story of your image to others. What about it is important to you? How does it impact you?