



Be Diphurent

RECAP

This week's focus: To make a difference you have to be different.

Have you ever found yourself completely out of your element? Whether through a family move, job transfer, or going off to college? Or maybe you did not change, but everything around you did. When times like that happen, it can leave you feeling whiplashed. We struggle to get our bearing. We wonder what is going on and who we can trust. Even positive change can be disorienting. But if the change is a negative one, it can leave us questioning our own worth. It can make us wonder if we are being punished or cast aside. It can cause us to question our faith and be perplexed about where God is, and what He is up to.

The good news is that we are not alone. These circumstances happen to people every day. But that fact does not offer much consolation about how to handle such times. When we begin to open our eyes to the powers at work in our world, we will see that there's a spiritual agenda working against the people of God and the Spirit of God.

In Daniel's day, Babylon was the conquering force that dominated the land. The Babylonian culture, values, and ways were forced on the people being conquered. The agenda of Babylon was to overpower their enemies and enculturate the best of the best in neighboring countries.

In the opening chapter of Daniel, he and three other young men (likely teenagers) were removed of the birth name given by their parents and instead had the government legally change their names. Those name changes, listed below, is an attempt to forcibly convert them from devotion to the true God to devotion to the demonic spirits worshipped as gods in Babylon.

Hebrew Name

Daniel: "God is my judge"

Haniah: "God is gracious"

Mishael: "There is none like God"

Azariah: "God has helped me"

Babylonian Name

Beltshazzar: "Baal protects his life"

Shadrach: "Under the command of Aku"

Meshach: "There is none like Aku is?"

Abed-Nego: "The servant of Nebo"

When we look at the Bible though Daniel's story, it stands out as an example of people struggling to come to terms with calamity and change. These four young men have undergone a bewildering series of upheavals. They watched their country, homes, and family being destroyed. They were transported and trafficked over 700 miles to live in the capital of the country that conquered their homeland. They were enrolled, against their will, in a school to be trained in the ways of their conquerors, and they had their names changed. All of this was done to them to alter their identity and change their allegiance. By looking at what happened to Daniel and the decisions he made, we can learn ourselves how to shine bright by living faithfully for God in the darkest of times.



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SHARE (5-10 min)

1. Icebreaker Question: As a child who was your favorite hero (real or imagined)? Who did you look up to?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Daniel 1:1-21 & John 1

1. How do you see the spirit of Babylon at work in our culture today? What are some of the ways you've seen people blend into the culture?
2. Read Isaiah 39:6-7. God warned Israel for 490 years to return to Him and rest the land or there would be consequences. They eventually went into exile for 70 years. Why do you think they didn't listen and obey?
3. Review the name changes in Daniel 1:7. Why is this significant? How does the culture around us today try to redefine our identity and change our loyalties to counterfeit gods?
4. In addition to Daniel 1, read Ephesians 6:11-13. How have believers been equipped to take a stand against the spirit of Babylon?
5. Share about a time when you were pressured to conform but you stuck with Biblical convictions and maintained God's pattern for living. What resulted from your taking a stand?
6. In the message, Ron said, "If you want to make a difference, you've got to be different." In what ways are you being called to be different in your work, school, family, and social media. How do you respond differently without being weird?
7. What steps will you take this week to maintain your integrity as a follower of Jesus and stand up for what's right when everyone else is going with the flow?
8. Outside of your spouse, who do you have in your life to help you live a life of integrity, (who you are when no one is looking)? Other than Jesus, who can you go to this week when you're being pressured to conform?
9. Ron said, "Truth without grace is hurtful. Grace without truth is hollow. Truth and grace together are healing." What does it mean to share the Gospel with grace and truth with the people in your life (Jn. 1:14)?

SUPPORT (15 min)

Break up into groups of two or three. Pray for our church, city, and country. Pray that God would awaken the believers around us to stand firm in biblical convictions. Pray that we would be thermostats of God's grace and truth and set the spiritual temperature in the culture around us.