

## Day 1

January 1



*Pray | God, remind me that this world is not my home,  
and I am yours.*

### IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF THE WORLD.

Christian musicians who make a living, reach the lost, or get airplay, owe a debt to their predecessors. Petra, Rez, Stryper and others endured hard times, being attacked by the world for bringing God into something that by its very nature was a rebellious expression. What's more, by Christians, who did not understand. Christian musicians are acutely aware of trying to be in the world but not of the world. It's a razor's edge keeping ministry intact while avoiding the sex, drugs, and what rock 'n roll does to one's pride. Maybe you can't relate personally to this example, but, wherever you find yourself you too are confronted with ways to be in the world but not of the world. Examples from Daniel and Jesus's lives show us how to apply it in our own lives.



*Read | John 17: 14-18 / Romans 12:2 / Matthew 7:13-14*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Everything that ever happened, is happening, and will happen to you is no accident. The God who made you and saved you put you exactly where he wants you. In what specific ways can or does this realization re-shape your attitudes and interactions with others?

As you review today's verses, what are some important keys to dealing with how the world treats you when you follow Christ rather than the ways of the world?

Danger lurks in taking the easy road: conforming to the world rather than living devoted to God. Reflect on the last few days, weeks, or months. Do you see areas of compromise? Take a moment and pray that God will strengthen you to address them.

## Day 2

January 2



*Pray | Ask God to keep you from being so comfortable that you forget him.*

### HARD TIME IN A VELVET PRISON.

It's a plausible title for a best-selling novel or something Netflix or Amazon streams direct to you for movie night. In a world where imitation is the highest form of flattery, the plot could be lifted right from the opening chapter of the book of Daniel. There is so much potential. It could be done as a war story about those taken into a bizarre captivity. It could be a psychological thriller about the effects of a prison experiment with no walls. It could even be a science fiction thriller involving abduction and the realization that in time we become those who abduct us by being peacefully integrated into their culture, religion, and way of life. Think carefully about the reasons why Daniel and his friends survived, even thrived, in their strange captivity.



*Read | Daniel 1: 1-7*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

The Babylonian, like other empires, was methodically precise at conquest and subsequent rule. The goal was creating good Babylonians, not making better Israelites through higher education. If you were one of the people hauled off into captivity, would you possess the spiritual skills to survive?

Daniel and company were subjected to a Babylonian four-step program of: Isolation, Indoctrination, Assimilation, and Confusion. In what ways does today's world actively use these same four steps to remove you from your faith? How does being "of the world" put our faith at risk in the world?

Names convey identity. Consider the Hebrew meanings of the names:

Daniel -- "God is my judge." Hananiah -- "The Lord is gracious."

Mishael -- "Who is like God?" Azariah -- "The Lord helps." What would it do to your faith if you were forcibly taken by Muslims and re-named for Muhammad?

## Day 3

January 3



*Pray | That God will help you resist the counsel of the wicked*

### ARE YOU PREPARED... TO SURVIVE?

With an icy winter storm officially ushering in “winter” it is easy to review the list of things that go into your car with the change of season. The winter boots, hats, gloves, blankets, shovels, snow scrapers, snacks, and jumper cables get stashed in our cars for winter. Maybe you start keeping more gas in the tank for those inevitable days when a 30-minute commute becomes a two-hour parking lot freeway experience. Ever take time to wonder if you have applied the same sort of preparations to your own, or your children’s, spiritual lives before you head out into the world daily? Think for a moment about the Bible only following the captivity of Daniel and company. Is it because they were prepared, and other captives were not?



*Read | Psalms 1:1-2 & Daniel 1: 8-16*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Everyone has convictions. However, not everyone resolves to resist temptation by sticking with their convictions. Sometimes our convictions are instead treated as suggestions, and applied situationally. The Psalmist offers a hack for resisting temptation. Do you regularly apply this hack in your life?

Daniel does not offer passive acceptance of temptation; instead, he chooses action. He approaches not one, but two people, with the power to help him. It is important to resist temptation using humility, reason, and wisdom. How can you apply these in your life?

Daniel and his friends stepped out with a risky faith. God responded by giving them growing favor among men. This week, take a situation you find yourself in, step out in risky faith, and see what God will do for you that he may be glorified.

*Day 4*  
*January 4*



*Pray | Ask God to make you better by using you for his purposes*

TEN TIMES BETTER THAN EVERYONE.

10X - To gamers it is a multiplier, meaning gains will be multiplied by ten. Tools and machines are force multipliers for being more efficient. The cell phone in your pocket or purse churns through mathematical computations in ways rooms full of mathematicians only dreamed about. Daniel and his friends are embarking on a lifelong habit of defying kings to follow the one true God. Without getting too far ahead in the story they choose to do so in faith. They are OK, even if God chooses not to save them, because they had clean consciences for choosing God's decrees over the king's. God elevates these men who did not even really assimilate properly by making them ten times better than everyone else in the kingdom's advisor pool.



*Read | Daniel 1: 17-21*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Certainly these young men had to put in the time and do the homework, but reminiscent of King Solomon, God pours extraordinary wisdom onto them. Who should be glorified through this? (Hint: Everyone not getting a 10X Godly wisdom multiplier was not glorifying correctly.)

These Israelites are “every person” characters: they could be anyone, could be you. Through their faith, God uses them to influence a pagan empire. America is not “Christian;” we are a pagan nation. Where is God pushing your faith to influence the world right now?

Daniel and company practiced a “no compromise” faith in God, regardless of cost. They did not compromise, EVER! On a scale of 1-10 (1 hiding it vs. 10 every day 100 percent “in”) where do you rate yourself? What can you do to increase your rating?

## Day 5

January 5



*Pray | God, help me see the signs, and to be the sign that points to you.*

### HARBINGERS OF SALVATION.

Vocabulary.com defines a harbinger as: “something that comes before and shows what will follow in the future.” The Bible is filled with Daniels and others who are harbingers. They all point us toward the duality of Jesus Christ, who as wholly man and wholly God, brings eternal salvation. Daniel shows how Jesus will live a perfect life in an evil world, and encourages us to do the same. Daniel’s influence likely extended far beyond his life. Cyrus sent the Israelites home and allowed Nehemiah to restore Jerusalem’s walls. The Babylonian archives contained information about a star signifying the birth of a great king of the Jews. How sad that a foreign wise man knew more about Israel than King Herod. Daniel was a busy man indeed.



*Read | Luke 24: 13-35*



*Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on the following questions.*

Solomon, Daniel and his friends were all harbingers of God’s wisdom. Jesus is the embodiment of God’s wisdom. How can you emulate Christ while living in a sinful world so as not to become defiled by the readily available temptations of sin?

The entire Bible points to Jesus as God’s only salvation plan. Imagine hearing it firsthand from Jesus himself! If you don’t know God or are having trouble seeing how it all points to Jesus, consider joining a Story of God through our church website, a small group, or Men’s/Women’s ministries.

Daniel and his friends were God’s missionary infiltrators behind enemy lines. Daniel’s influence spanned multiple kings and empires. God, in his intricate wisdom, was preparing future wise men to search for the true king. What impact are you having for today, for the future?

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