

THRIVING IN EXILE

THE LESSON: DANIEL 1

The New Testament writers used the word “exile” to describe believers. They wanted to remind us that there’s a disconnect between *who* we are and *where* we are: we don’t really *belong* to this world, though we do have a purpose in being here. When we accepted God’s call to be “set apart”, we embraced an identity and mission that places us at odds with “the course of this world” and “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

In a way, this means living out our lives “behind enemy lines” – surrounded by pressures and temptations to align our thinking, speaking, and living with a world that is at root hostile to our faith. This tension that we live with means that we will be presented with many moments throughout life in which we must decide whether to conform to the world or hold fast to a way of living that shows who we truly are.

One of the gifts that we have in the Prayer Book tradition is a collection of devotional practices designed to keep us in alignment with God throughout our lives, both in the small daily things as well as in the big “milestone” moments. Throughout the coming year, we’ll delve into many of these, exploring the spiritual realities that govern Christian living as well as touching on the devotional and liturgical patterns that can help to tether us to our true identity. We’ll look at baptism, matrimony, and burial; times of sickness, penance and thanksgiving, as well as those times when we simply feel “at sea”.

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Some amazing and inspirational stories come to us from the Old Testament book of Daniel. When he was just a youth, Daniel’s city was conquered and pillaged and he along with his friends were taken into captivity. They were exiles in a very literal sense. Check out what happened next.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER))

1 Peter 2:11 says, “*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul*”. Have you “resolved” in your heart to remain faithful to God and to your identity in him? Take some time to consider and pray about whether there are any areas of your life where you’ve allowed the world to define and direct you. Present those areas to God and ask him to help you resolve to remain faithful to him now and throughout your life.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (THE SECOND COLLECT, FOR PEACE, FROM MORNING PRAYER, BCP PAGE 11)

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DANIEL 1: A HOLY RESOLVE

¹In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ²And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. ³Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴youths without blemish, of good appearance and skilful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. ⁶Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

⁸But 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. ⁹And God gave Daniel favour and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." ¹¹Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹²"Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." ¹⁴So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. ¹⁶So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. ²⁰And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.