

## FLOURISHING IN GRAD SCHOOL WEEK 7: PICK YOUR BATTLES

### DANIEL 1:1 - 21

<sup>1</sup> In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. <sup>3</sup> Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility — <sup>4</sup> young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. <sup>5</sup> The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. <sup>6</sup> Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. <sup>7</sup> The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Beltshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. <sup>8</sup> But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

<sup>9</sup> Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, <sup>10</sup> but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." <sup>11</sup> Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." <sup>14</sup> So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup> At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. <sup>16</sup> So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

<sup>17</sup> To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. <sup>18</sup> At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. <sup>20</sup> In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. <sup>21</sup> And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Read the passage out loud together. Give everyone five or so minutes on their own to review it. Invite study members to note things that stand out and add a comment or question about it on their sheet.

### Discussion Questions

How do Daniel and his companions come to be in Babylon? What are we told about them? What are the expectations for them now that they are in Babylon?

To some extent, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego get absorbed into Babylonian culture. At what point does conflict arise for them? How do they handle it? What impresses you about this? How does the situation get resolved?

How might you describe the “policy” of these Hebrew young men in regards to their life in this pagan culture? Why do you think these teenagers had such strong convictions, courage, and wisdom?

How do you balance being in the academy, but not of it? What difficult decisions do you think you will need to make along the way? Are there ways your experience in graduate school might have similarities to the experience of Daniel and his friends? How might this example in Daniel 1 be helpful or encouraging to you?

Where do you see God at work in this passage?

Although these four young men presumably studied hard over the course of their three years in Babylon, verse 17 says that it was God who “gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning.” To what extent do you see your abilities, talents, and intelligence as gifts from God? What are the implications that these come from him?

Are there other things from the passage you want to comment on or ask about?

Spend a few minutes filling in the table below. When you are finished, discuss these final questions together and then pray for one another and for this group. What lessons should we learn from this text? What concrete decisions do you need to make with regard to how you will navigate your graduate student experience? How can this community support one another in these decisions? (Would it make a difference to ask, how can this community support one another in these decisions? I do love that you put “How can WE help in the chart below.))

<i>What decisions do you need to make?</i>	<i>How can we help?</i>