



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Daniel 1:1-8; Galatians 5:7-9; Matthew 6:24, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Proverbs 4:25-27

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

Read Daniel 1:1-8. This week we learned about Daniel, a man with heroic integrity. Daniel was indoctrinated for the three years by the Babylonians who tried to teach him to worship the Babylonian gods. Peer pressure can be a very powerful motivator. Our convictions can change with our surroundings, and our human tendency is to bend to what those around us are doing. Sometimes we lose focus on who we really are because it becomes more important to us to just fit in. Our friends are particularly influential. We don't want to lose our friends, so we tend to do things that will please them. This tendency gives our friends tremendous influence over us. There are times we have to stand alone to avoid compromising our beliefs and convictions.

- Have you ever compromised your convictions because of your surroundings or your friends?
- Who is in your circle and how do they influence your thoughts and actions?

Lord, help us to be honest with ourselves about the company we keep. Help us to identify toxic relationships in our lives and bring healing to those relationships. Give us the courage to stand up to peer pressure no matter our age.

DAY 2

The King of Babylon tried his best to change Daniel's identity by influencing his culture. Today, culture is widely affecting our identities. Many Christians have gotten caught up in the increasingly bankrupt culture that surrounds us. **Read Galatians 5:7-9** to see why adopting these values is a problem. When we try to have the best of both worlds, we exchange the truth of God for a lie and the glory of God for idols. When we get caught up in the secular world, we worship created things instead of the Creator. This leads to what some have termed “Cultural Christianity.” Cultural Christianity means pursuing the God we want instead of the God who is. Jesus said that anyone who wishes to become His disciple must “deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

- As our culture has changed, how has your relationship with God been affected?
- How can you guard against becoming a “Cultural Christian?”

Thank God for His word and His grace. Pray that you would not be lukewarm. Pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to increase your faith and your love for the Word of God.

DAY 3

Daniel was heroic when he chose to serve God and not the King. **Read Matthew 6:24.** When reading Matthew 6:24, some people disagree with the scripture and say, “I work two jobs so I believe that you can serve two masters.” The reason they say that is because they don't understand the Greek word translated “serve.” It refers not to an employee but to a slave. A slave is one who is constantly and entirely devoted to his master. Romans 6:17-18 says that though you were once a slave of sin, God has freed you to become a slave of righteousness. You can serve God only with entire and exclusive devotion, with single-mindedness. In Matthew 6:24 Jesus is saying that if you try to serve two masters, God and riches, you will love one but hate the other. The orders of these two mas-

ters are diametrically opposed. One commands us to walk by faith, the other by sight; one commands us to be humble, the other to be proud; one commands us to set our affection on things above, the other on things of the earth; one commands us to look at things unseen and eternal, the other at things seen and temporal. You can't obey both orders, and you can't serve two masters.

- **What battles for God's place in your life?**

Thank God for being your Master who loves you perfectly and provides for your every need.

DAY 4

Daniel may have wrestled with the thought or temptation of compromising his behavior but in the end he stood strong. Temptation comes to everyone. In the Lord's Prayer we ask God to guide us so we will follow His will and not unnecessarily place ourselves in the way of temptation. **Read 1 Corinthians 10:13.** Life is not black and white, and when gray areas come along, we may not be certain whether we're doing the right thing or whether this or that is okay for a Christian to do. Here's a little litmus test to apply when that happens.

- *First, pray about it and bring it into the clear light of the presence of God.*
- *Second, think about how you would feel or what you would say if you were explaining your actions to God. If you were face to face with God, would you be proud or ashamed of having done this thing. If it's something you would be ashamed of, don't do it.*
- *Third, pray that you won't fall into temptation. You can't go through life without temptation, but you can pray that you won't give in to it.*

Pray to God to guard your eyes, ears, mouths, feet, and hands and what you say and hear and do. Pray the Lord's Prayer and mediate on the words.

DAY 5

Daniel's character was tested. The leaders try to sabotage him but were unable to find a single negative thing to say about him. How wonderful that he could stand confidently in that freedom! It is critical that you develop a life of integrity so that you can reap all the benefits God has promised you in His Word. What does it mean to be a person of integrity? Being a person of integrity means that you do what is right because it is right. Living a life of integrity means being honest, trustworthy and reliable. When you live an open life before God and a few other Christians whom you trust, you can enjoy freedom from sin's power over you and the confidence that you're growing leaps and bounds in your faith each day. Pursue accountability to help you live openly. **Read Proverbs 4:25-27.**

- Are you hiding from the truth in some area of your life?
- Who holds you accountable?

Praise God for knowing all things. Confess and repent any negative habits and pray for change where you need it. Commit to being a person of honesty and integrity.

DAY 6

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.