

Small Group Discussion Guide: Living in Babylon (Daniel 1:1–7)

Sunday Sermon, Sep 20, 2026

Leader's note. Feel free to pick the questions that fit your group and let the conversation run.

Sermon Recap

The sermon argued that Christians today live as exiles in Babylon, and that Daniel shows how to live faithfully there without becoming Babylonian or hiding from it.

Exile can be God's tool. John Newton's story and the words of "Amazing Grace" showed how hardship can lead us to depend on the Lord and to hope instead of bitterness.

- **God, not Babylon, was in control.** Verse 2 says the Lord gave Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Judah's exile was a wake-up call to return to God.
- **Babylon's strategy was assimilation.** The king took Judah's best and brightest and gave them three years of Babylonian language, literature and lifestyle, hoping they would become docile Babylonians.
- **Exile is a theme of the whole Bible.** It runs from Eden, to Joseph in Egypt, to Daniel, to the early church under Rome. It can also describe a deep longing that things be as they ought to be.
- **Two extremes to avoid.** Becoming Babylonian (absorbing the culture until nothing distinct is left) and hiding in Babylon (withdrawing from any real engagement).
- **Four takeaways from Matthew Hosier.** Remember you are exiles. Know who you are in Christ. Live faithfully and wisely, alert to cultural idols. Don't be surprised if faithfulness brings hardship.

Discussion: Daniel 1:1–7

Have someone read Daniel 1:1–7 aloud. Then have someone read Psalm 137:1–4, which the sermon paired with this passage.

1. What does Babylon do to the exiles in verses 4–7: their education, their food and their names? What is the goal behind each?
2. Verse 2 says the Lord gave Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Why does it matter that the narrator credits God, not Babylon, for what happened?
3. The vessels of God's house were placed in the treasury of Babylon's god, and in Psalm 137 the exiles wept and could not sing. What was Babylon saying, how did the exiles feel, and where is there room for honest lament in your own prayers?
4. Newton's life included captivity, a near shipwreck and years of regret. The sermon said God sometimes uses exile to lead us to dependence, hope instead of bitterness, and trust that he is with us when we aren't where we want to be. Which of those do you most need right now?

Going Deeper: Our Own Babylon

The sermon admitted that calling life in the western United States "exile" can feel like an overreach, especially next to believers who suffer real persecution. Let the group wrestle with that honestly before moving on.

5. The sermon defined exile both literally (forced to live outside your homeland) and more broadly (a deep longing that things be as they ought to be). Does the broader definition fit your experience, and where do you feel that longing most?
6. Babylon tried to assimilate Daniel through language, literature, food and new names. What are the modern equivalents, and are you more tempted to become Babylonian or to hide in Babylon?

Personal reflection

7. Of the four takeaways (remember you are exiles, know who you are in Christ, live faithfully and wisely, don't be surprised by hardship), which do you most need to hear this week, and where might you be treating Babylon as if it were Jerusalem?
8. Where does your primary identity come from on a normal week, and what competes with "child of God" for that place?