

Life Group Leader Guide: “Conviction”

Dates: 11/2/19- 11/9/19

Focus: Our values, convictions and identity are determined not by what culture says about those things, but by what God has said about those things. When we allow God to set our priorities, we live as more healthy and fruitful people.

Prep: Your life group will be discussing the idea of convictions tonight. In the passage, Daniel refuses to eat the food provided from the royal court of the king of Babylon. What the passage doesn't make clear is that in Babylonian culture, prepared meat would often be consecrated in the name of their gods. This may seem like a small stand to take, but Daniel knew that he would be disowning his faith in the God of Israel if he partook. The goal of tonight is not to create an antagonism between church and culture. The goal is to clarify that while we should engage with culture, we can't let culture dictate our boundaries- only God can do that.

Video:

Show the video. It is about 4 minutes long. It will set up the conversation on conviction.

Scripture:

Daniel's Training in Babylon

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** 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[a] and put in the treasure house of his god. **3** Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— **4** 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.[b] **5** 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.

6 Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. **7** The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. **8** 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. **9** Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, **10** but the official told Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your[c] 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.” **11** Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, **12** “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. **13** Then compare our appearance with that of the

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young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” **14** So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. **15** At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. **16** So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. **17** 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.

Reflection Time

- We recommend taking about 4-5 minutes for people to reflect after the passage. But before you do, say something like:
 - “I encourage you to first take a couple minutes to reflect on this passage and the video, come up with any questions, connections, or what the passage says to you tonight.”

Question: What are two of your top values in life (things you would never compromise)?

Follow up: Where did you come to value those things (family, career, learned experience etc.)?

Observation: Daniel and his friends were all taken as hostages from Israel to the foreign nation of Babylon. This required them to adapt their lives in every possible way.

Question: What do you think would have been some of the challenges that Daniel and his friends faced in learning to live in Babylon?

Question: Have you ever found yourself rooted in an environment (school, workplace etc.) that had very different values than you? How did you respond to the people in that environment?

Observation: In Jeremiah 29, the prophet Jeremiah writes a letter to the captives in Babylon. Many false prophets have been giving messages about how the end of their exile is near, and that they will return home soon. Jeremiah gives the exact opposite advice. He tells the people to marry, root, and pray for the city they now live in; they won't be coming home anytime soon. It is very likely that Daniel would have heard these words. Jeremiah didn't encourage the Israelites to remove themselves from society, he told them to contribute to it.

Question: How can we have a healthy relationship of engaging with our culture without assuming its values?

Question: How does Daniel's story give us insight into a godly way to influence culture? (HINT: The fruit of his boundaries changed the diet of the entire household)

Question: Have you ever had to draw a boundary in your life because you wanted to honor God? What sacrifices did you have to make for this?

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Question: What do you think would have happened if Daniel had eaten the food that he refused? Were there any benefits to him abstaining?

Observation: Daniel stayed true to his convictions in a small circumstance, but it produced fruit in both his physical body and in his spiritual life. He wound up with a healthier body than the other people that ate the king’s food, but he also grew in his discernment and prophetic insight. Following our godly convictions makes us healthier and also increases our spiritual authority over time.

Question: How do you feel like holding to your convictions has made your life healthier?

Question: Is there a situation you are currently walking through that is pushing the boundaries of your convictions? How are you processing how to move forward?

Question: How do you think we can grow in our convictions without becoming judgmental?

Prayer:

(LIFE GROUP LEADERS): Some people in your group are in the middle of a struggle to honor God with their values and choices. Pray for boldness, that they would gracefully choose the way of God even if it costs them something. Pray that we would be part of God’s plan for transforming the environments around us by representing his heart to our workplaces, schools, and city.