



Connection Group Questions

January 17, 2021

Series: Resolution Redo

Message: Stay Pure

*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.
~ Daniel 1:8*

Open

Week one we talked about a “redo.” Jesus invites us to be born again!

Week two we talked about seeking God- in worship, in devotion, in community, in service and in the unexpected.

- *How the search going? Have you made and changes in your daily/weekly routines to seek God more intentionally? Perhaps share what you are doing for devotions, or to build community, or to serve God? Have you had any unexpected God-things happen recently?*

Today we look into the resolution to stay pure. This could feel very personal, or down right invasive!

- *Start by sharing what purity looks like to you- Who comes mind? What comes to mind regarding things we might do, or not do, to remain pure?*

Discuss

Read Daniel 1:1-8

Describe what has happened to Daniel and his friends to really get a sense of what they are going through. If you have a study bible feel free to review the back information on when this happened in the history of Judah.

What is the significance of taking the young men back to Babylonia? Why was it part of the take-over to remove religious articles from the temple? Why would they change the names of these four young men, and what is the significance of their new names? Does it make sense that these boys, in the midst of this experience, could start to experience what we refer to as “Stockholm syndrome?” Describe how that might happen to someone in this situation.

Daniel draws a line. He asks permission to not eat from the kings table. Why is it so important that he asks for permission and what does this tell us about faithful living? Why would eating from the kings table defile Daniel? What does this have to do with eating kosher or remembering the Passover feast?

Read Daniel 1:9-21

Describe what happened with Daniel and his friends. How did God bless them? How did Babylon bless them, or honor them?

Have you been in a situation where you needed to take a stand, or draw a line in the sand, or simply refuse something because of your faith? What was the situation or circumstances of your stand? What was the result? Punishment or reward?

Perhaps think of a time when you wish you had take a stand for God. What do you wish you would have done, and how can that inform your future.

Let's broaden our application of Daniel's example. How else might we pursue purity in our lives? What do you do, not do, as a way to honor God and remain pure?

Do you feel like life is more like Jerusalem, the way things were meant to be? Or more like Babylon, life in exile? Peter (1 Peter 1) describes us as resident aliens, citizens of heaven living in a fallen world. How does this help make sense of our world and our role in the world as God's holy people?

Apply

Jesus tells us, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." ~Matthew 5:8

George said this was perhaps the most inspiring and intimidating of the Beatitudes. The blessing of the priests was to see the face of God (Numbers 6) and the final vision of new creation is to be with Jesus face-to-face. And something in us longs to know and know God. But who among us would say they are pure and without sin?

What does it mean, then, to receive purity as a gift from God through the grace of Jesus Christ? With this gift secure, what can we do to pursue personal purity in our lives?

George ended with the offer of two tables: the table of the world, or the table of our Lord. What does it look like for you to choose the Lord and his table for all you need?

BONUS:

There has been a recent resurgence of Christian Nationalism in the USA. A theological belief that this is a chosen and destined nation to inaugurate the kingdom of God. In other words, we are not living in exile and we are not resident aliens and we are not in "Babylon." Rather we are a chosen nation, we are the new Jerusalem and we must establish this nation as God's kingdom. This is our manifest destiny.

Most evangelical scholars disavow this theological belief. The USA is not the new Jerusalem. The Kingdom of God is bigger than any one nation or people or land mass. And the Kingdom of God will only be inaugurated at the promised return of Jesus and his judgement.

What do you make of Christian Nationalism? What is attractive about it? What is dangerous about it? Why does it seem to be growing, even as religious participation is on the decline in America?

For further reading and discussion on Christian Nationalism see <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/july-august/christian-nationalist-temptation-america-white-evangelical.html>