

## Leader Guide

### Week 4: Daniel and His Friends

#### Daniel 1:1-12

#### Story Synopsis:

Daniel was one of many young men taken captive to Babylon and forced into the king's service. Daniel however, was resolved to remain faithful to God even in Babylon. When offered foods that violated the Jewish law, Daniel remained true to a commitment he had already made and chose not to violate his conscience and sin. God honored Daniel's stand and granted him and his friends favor in the eyes of the king. Daniel provides a role model for us all. His wise friends and tenacity keep him out of trouble and in right relationship with God. The lesson we learn is that commitments that you make with God, your friends and family can help you resist temptation.

#### The Story:

For nearly 100 years, Assyria dominated the Ancient Near East. As Assyria began to decline, Egypt and Babylon battled for dominance. Eventually, Babylon emerged as the next world power. Judah attempted to rebel twice against Babylon and was crushed twice. In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, attacked Judah, but decided to leave Judah's king on the throne and took plunder and captives back with him to Babylon. Daniel was one of these captives.

Earlier in history, Assyria's goal was annihilation of conquered people groups, but now, Babylon's goal was assimilation. Daniel and the other captives were the sons of Judah's ruling class. They were held as hostages with the intent of "reprogramming" the ruling class of Judah with traditions of Babylon. Babylonian rulers intended to put Daniel and the other captives' abilities to work serving Nebuchadnezzar rather than Babylon's enemies or fostering rebellion back home. To that end, Daniel and his friends were trained in the "literature and language of the Chaldeans" (vs. 4). Much of this "literature" would have been religious in nature. The three-year process of training them as scribes would indoctrinate these youths in Babylonian religious culture and work toward the process of assimilation.

As a part of the assimilation process Daniel and his friends were given new names. This was one way the conqueror expressed his authority. Where the name, "Daniel" means "God

is my judge,” his new Babylonian name means “Bel guard his life” or “Belet guard the king” (Bel and Belet were Babylonian gods).

As a part of the king’s household, Daniel and his friends were served with rations from the king’s table. Those receiving such rations were expected to give the king their loyalty in return. Daniel, however, “resolved not to defile himself with the king’s food and wine” (1:8). The use of the word “defile” indicates that Daniel’s resolve had a religious motivation. It is possible that the food Daniel was offered had been previously offered to an idol, though this privilege was normally reserved for the king and his highest officials. It is also possible that the food was not prepared according to the laws of Moses that dictated which animals could be eaten and how they were to be killed, since Daniel requested vegetables and water instead. It is also possible that by refusing the king’s “choice food,” Daniel was refusing to be assimilated and pledge his loyalty to the king rather than to God. Regardless, it was a question of personal integrity for Daniel and God rewarded him for his faithfulness under pressure.

Daniel’s “resolve” is key. It is clear throughout the book of Daniel that Daniel was absolutely committed to obeying the Lord and the Lord alone. Whether confronting a drunk and frightened king, a tyrannical ruler, or a den full of lions, Daniel obeyed God above all else. Over and over again, the Lord also proved Himself faithful to Daniel.

The issues kids face as young people blow up and become big issues as adults. It seems like overnight it goes from “my girlfriend was flirting with another guy” to “my wife has been having an affair.” Good habits started early stop sin before it grows and gives birth to death (James 1:15).

This week we specifically want to talk about internet safety, how pornography is inexplicably linked to human trafficking and how pornography can work its way into the lives of children and adults if we are not careful. Today, both adults and young people face pressure from many sources. The world screams at them “Assimilate! Be like us!” Many temptations are out there. Those who resolve from a young age to honor the Lord with their choices are much less likely to become trafficking victims.

### Points of Application:

- Daniel had committed to follow the Lord before he ever went to Babylon. Daniel’s choice not to defile himself with the king’s food was born out of a habit of obedience. This obedience safe-guarded him from future harm.
- We all face different pressures to assimilate. Perhaps, Daniel’s choice was clear because he was placed in the middle of a foreign culture, but we also face our own

culture's pressure to assimilate. Materialism, sensuality, over-commitment, entertainment at any price—we also have to choose to follow God rather than bow to our culture's false gods.

- Daniel was helped by friends who shared his commitment. When we have safe friends it becomes easier to make wise choices and resist temptation.

# Group Guide

## Week 4: Daniel and His Friends

### Daniel 1:1-12

#### Opener:

Peer pressure activity: Either as people are arriving for your group, or in a message prior to arriving, tell everyone except one group member that you are going to have a “peer pressure” opener. Ask all of your participants, except the “subject,” to come in, as usual, but to sit on the floor or on a table/desk when ready to start instead of sitting in chairs. Observe what your “subject” does – do they follow the nonverbal peer pressure and sit on the floor, or do they sit in a chair? Then start discussion

#### Suggestions:

- Go about opening like it is normal – welcome, make small talk, etc.
- Don't stare or giggle at the individual when they are deciding where to sit.
- If the individual asks any questions just shrug your shoulders
- Choose your one individual wisely, someone who won't be easily embarrassed or ashamed.

#### Questions to ask the individual if they sat on the floor

- Why did you sit on the floor?
- Do you always do what everyone else does?

#### Questions to ask the individual if they sat in their chair

- Why did you sit in a chair when everyone else is sitting on the floor?
- Why wouldn't you do what everyone else is doing?

This is a simple and silly example of peer pressure, but that will be our topic for today.

#### Study the Scripture:

Read through Daniel 1 as a group, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 (especially v.18).

Less time? Read the synopsis in the leader guide.

## Questions for Reflection:

- What are some of the cultural pressures you are most vulnerable to? What God-honoring commitments have you made in those areas?
- Who in your life encourages you in your Christian life? How do your friends impact how you follow God?
- What are areas that you have difficulty? Are there friends or other people that draw you away from God in these areas?
- What habits are you cultivating in your life now that may help you resist pressure tomorrow?
- How do you safe-guard yourself against sexual temptation?

## Daniel and Trafficking

Sex traffickers specialize in exploiting vulnerable children: Children who have already been the victims of abuse or neglect. This may also include: youths who are struggling with learning disabilities or mental health issues, girls who crave the attention of a father figure, boys who are struggling with their sexuality and young people who see their status (or popularity) as coming from things they want, but cannot afford and whose loyalty can be bought with a gift. Children are made vulnerable by the pornification of our culture and the demands of a market where men and women are willing to pay money for sex or sexual experiences (porn, erotic dancing, sex).

Children can't help some of these risk factors but there are some things that are in their control. By committing to honor God with their choices and resolving to value such things as purity, honesty, and virtue, children can make themselves less vulnerable. Sex traffickers look for victims that are easily swayed.

How is this related to pornography? People who look at pornography develop unhealthy sexual desires. Pornography dehumanizes women and men. It teaches our children (and us) that people are a commodity to be purchased instead of sons and daughters, princes and princesses of the Most High God.

A common misconception about porn is that it is a "victimless crime". There are many reasons that is not true, but here are just a few:

- Did you know the average age a person in the U.S. starts "working in the porn industry" is around 14 years old?
- This sadly true statistic exists for many reasons: abuse, homelessness, problems in the foster care system, the breakdown of the family, and manipulation.

- Porn teaches unhealthy relationships and that effect everyone around the user. It changes the user’s worldview and this affects our community as a whole.
- The truth of the matter is that when we support the commercial sex industry through activities such as porn, stripping, or prostitution, we are exploiting someone. We are most likely adding another painful experience to a person who has experienced a lifetime of exploitation. Look at the person behind the porn. That person is a prince or princess of the Most High God. That person is someone’s son and daughter.

Daniel was caught in a situation where much was beyond his control. He had not asked for his nation to be taken over by an invading army. He and his friends did not volunteer to be taken captive to Babylon, forced into the king’s service, possibly made into eunuchs, and expected to assimilate into a pagan culture. Yet Daniel resolved to be obedient to God above all else, no matter what was at stake. Again and again, God honored his choices. Today, we need to teach our children to be like Daniel: resolved to honor God even under pressure.

### Group Activity

Let’s take a careful look at the language, TV shows and music that we let into our lives. “Pimp” has become a cool word these days – e.g., “pimp my ride” – but, in reality, pimps traffick people. They sell women, men and children for a profit.

Think about the TV shows that are popular and music that you hear on Top 40s stations. Do they degrade women? Do they praise abuse? Looking at the table below, think of some currently popular TV shows and music that use the “Bad Language” to glorify the sex industry.

<b>Good Language</b>	<b>Bad Language</b>
Exploited woman/child, victim, survivor	Slut, dirty, promiscuous, whore
Prostituted women/men, trafficked, exploited	Sex work, sex workers, child prostitutes
Vulnerable	Stupid, weak, poor, white trash, ghetto
Purchaser, commercial sex buyer, exploiter, criminal	John, customer, client, “boys will be boys”
Trafficker, criminal, exploiter	Pimp
Child Sex Trafficking, Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking	Child prostitute
Commercial sex act	Prostitution, exotic dancing, stripping, pornography
Exploited, transgender, gay	Transvestite, cross-dresser, sexually confused, fag

## Discussion Questions:

1. Share some examples of TV shows, music, and expressions that glorify the sex industry or the degradation of women.
2. Share some examples of TV shows, music, and expressions that show a healthy view of male and female relationships.
3. How does popular culture play in the “normalization” of sexual exploitation?
4. How can you, as a parent or leader, influence the use of “Good” versus “Bad” examples in language, culture and behavior?
5. We are inundated with the portrayal of unhealthy sexual habits and relationships. What can we do to protect ourselves from this perversion?

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, We pray to you today with the words of Romans 12:1-2,

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Amen

## Taking it home

Statically a child is first introduced to porn at 11 years of age. If you aren't talking to your children about pornography and healthy sexual habits, then someone else will.

There are excellent resources to keep your children safe online and help you protect them from pornography and sexual predators. Every computer, tablet, and smart phone in your house is a portal that can be used for exploitation. Keep your children safe by going with them to [netsmartz.com](http://netsmartz.com) to teach them about internet safety. They have age appropriate games to teach children about online safety.

Talk to your children about what to do when tempted. For example— what do you do if you're at your friend's house and your friend wants to show you a pornographic video or magazine? How do you handle it if your friends are posting inappropriate pictures on FB, Instagram, or Snap Chat?

Also, visit xxxchurch.com to find out about software for your computers that will keep pornography out of your house and to find some tips for talking with your children about these issues:

- <http://www.xxxchurch.com/parents/critical-issues.html>
- <http://www.xxxchurch.com/parents/archive/>

Talk to your children about porn before someone else does.

### Family Night:

Following closely on last week's suggestions, plan a weekly "family night." Use some of these nights to play some netsmartz games with your younger kids. Use these nights to plan events with your child in which you get to know their friends (ie. movie night, bowling, baseball game, ice skating). Talk to your child about their friends. Talk about which friends are "safe" and how we can know that. If you are feeling crafty, write thank you notes together to your safe friends, thanking them for helping you make wise choices (think about using fun colors, glitter pens, or different craft supplies).

Pastor Judah Smith from the City Church in Seattle has an amazing series on sex and the relationships between prostitution and trafficking that would be appropriate for teenagers to adults. Check these out yourself, and if you feel it would be appropriate, recommend them to your teenager or young adult.

- Part 1: [http://thecity.org/message/jesus is bringing sexy back](http://thecity.org/message/jesus-is-bringing-sexy-back)
- Part 2: [http://thecity.org/message/jesus is bringing sexy back1](http://thecity.org/message/jesus-is-bringing-sexy-back1)
- Part 3: <https://vimeo.com/37497562>
- Part 4: <https://vimeo.com/38337966>
- Part 5: <https://vimeo.com/38752937>
- Part 6: <https://vimeo.com/39608238>
- Part 7: <https://vimeo.com/39983500>
- Part 8: <https://vimeo.com/40838103>

If you would like something shorter to watch together with your teenagers, check out these great format informational videos about pornography (PG13).

This one is particularly good for teenagers:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NH8NIZ8bOWc>



This one is a great overview for parents:

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaNQTIgr250&list=PLiOhapMbl19UjcBfjM\\_rALEQow3XbwVif](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaNQTIgr250&list=PLiOhapMbl19UjcBfjM_rALEQow3XbwVif)

This one talks about demand for commercial sex:

- <http://vimeo.com/70635973>

This article and associated video talk about the effects of pornography on the brain:

- <http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-pornography-and-the-brain/>

### Learn the basics of internet safety

Children use a variety of online services, and each of these services can have different safety concerns. However, there are some basic tips which you can employ no matter how your children use the internet.

- Keep the computer in a high-traffic area of your home.
- Establish limits for which online sites children may visit and for how long.
- Remember that internet technology can be mobile, so make sure to monitor cell phones, gaming devices, and laptops.
- Surf the internet with your children and let them show you what they like to do online.
- Know who is connecting with your children online and set rules for social networking, instant messaging, e-mailing, online gaming, and using webcams.
- Continually dialogue with your children about online safety.