THRIVE – **WK 1 Thriving in Babylon**

**Welcome – glad you’re here! The world is changing – it seems to be going crazy - Among the chaos it is possible for you to thrive…**

**How to not just survive, but to thrive in a world that seems to be getting stranger and stranger. \*VIDEO 1 – A World in Chaos**

**Background check**

**The Man - Daniel was a good person living in Israel. Then it happened… an evil maniacal king from Babylon attached and took the best to be his slaves. He was not bored, wrong turn, or on vacation…**

**Daniel was young, upstanding, good looking, strong, smart – we know this from Daniel 1:3 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— (Before they were taken - this was the requirements) 4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, (I’m out already) 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. (had to be able to learn and speak a new language and culture)**

**Daniel was homecoming king material – capt. of the football team – a follower of the one true God – after the attacked, he and his friends were rounded up and taken to – Babylon.**

**The Place – Babylon (modern day Iraq)**

**How bad was it? It was the worst of the worst for a follower of God. In the NT, God used it to describe pure evil. Synonymous with “evil”**

**The state religion was satanic and revolved around human sacrifice, astrology, and the occult. Everything God forbids.**

**The King- Nebuchadnezzar: Evil, violent, unreasonable, cruel, hothead. Destroyed God’s holy temple - stolen treasures of the temple (?Ark?) and put them in the temple of the false god – Marduk (snake dragon).**

**Neb built statues of himself and forced people to worship him. So unreasonable, he killed people who could tell him what he is thinking.**

**None of our govt. officials or pres. has done that. Bad dude!**

**Identity Theft: Abducted – name / identities changed to pagan names.**

**Daniel = God is my judge. New name Belteshazzar = Baal’s prince.**

**Imagine: your name changed from Christian to Satan’s prince.**

**Daniel and his friend’s followers of the one true God – are forced to learn the occult and dark practices of a dark and wicked culture.**

**Imagine you’re in Kidventure / Youth One learning about Jesus… abducted and put in a school of the occult where to study the practices of Satanism. That’s what is happening. Might has well have been taken to Mars.**

**To make it worst he was made a eunuch (explain) Stripped & castrated. His future was robbed. Everything taken… gone. Just a slave to Babylon – when your dead, your name will die with you – forgotten.**

**It seemed to have happen overnight. Listen – our world / our culture has changed, while you were sleeping:**

* **Immorality is celebrated as normal (while Christians are ridiculed)**
* **Death of a giraffe is mourned more than millions of aborted unborn babies killed every year – while body parts are sold off**
* **Christians beheaded & attacked globally - #1 persecuted group**
* **Racism is a growing tension in our nation – Christians take a stand**
* **Violence and attacks are common occurrences (here and globally)**

**Rev 17:3-6. 18:2 – Just before Jesus final return. An angel rejoiced – “With a mighty voice he shouted: "'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!' She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit”**

**Babylon had fallen already, what’s this mean? Welcome to Babylon… not the US – the kingdom of this world. Your address is in Babylon. How do we live and thrive here?**

**Four Truths About Life In Babylon**

1. **We might be here a while (a – while / noun not an adverb)**

**1 Peter 1:6** **So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. *(while still down here – LB)***

**And realize this… it may get tougher as the days move forward**

**You might not get your best life now. Ultimate victory for those who are HIS is the eternal. Life is not good all the time. Daniel addresses this. How to not just survive but thrive in this.**

**Have you ever watched the news, awards show, or in culture – and worried about where we are headed? You know why you felt that way?**

**Philippians 3:20 - For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ…**

**It’s because you don’t belong here. Like Daniel, this place is not our home. I’m Homesick for a place I’ve never been before!**

**We are made for a heavenly kingdom. Not this kingdom.**

**Worry when things don’t bother you or feel too at home here.**

**Written for the people in exile in Babylon… Jeremiah 29:10 This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. (How long? 70yrs – that means, you probably won’t live to see it – everybody likes the next verse – it’s on your Instagram somewhere in a cool font) 11 For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.” (great, when? In 70 years)**

**We know Daniel read this – Daniel 9:2 During the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, learned from reading the word of the Lord, as revealed to Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years. 3 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting. (Daniel 9 records his response / prayer - God, you are awesome, just, good, and right in doing this! Thank you!!!)**

**Knowing 70 yrs, Daniel was encouraged. It will not last forever. Even though I will not see it, God, give me strength to live in it.**

**70 yrs - where God is mocked and followers of God persecuted.**

**70 yrs - where forced to learn & accept a culture they do not believe in.**

**70 yrs - where the leadership is vile, volatile, and explosive.**

**70yrs - in a place they do not belong – their entire lifetime.**

**\*What do we do while we are in a place, that we do not belong?**

**Jeremiah tells them / us - Jeremiah 29:4 This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: (it’s not what you would expect) 5 “Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. 6 Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! (increase, do not decrease) 7 And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. (talking about Babylon) Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare.” (seek to bless it - if it prospers, you will too)**

**In Babylon - 2. We make the best of it**

**Get a job, work hard, raise a family, put pictures on the walls, have children, make a life, honor God, be example in your community, make it better, be a peace maker. It’s not home, but make home for a while.**

**The same principle in - 1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. 12 Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.**

* **It is possible for a Christian to live and thrive in a culture that is not God honoring**

**You can do this – Rom 8:31 - If God is for you, who can be against you. This is not our home, but let’s make the best of it while we are.**

**Some say - I want to move to the country away from everything… I’m not having kids in this world. Listen – the same God who saved you, can take care of you, your children, grand-children. You can thrive!**

**Jesus says it this way – Luke 21:28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (when things get real bad – look up – cause it’s about to get read good)**

**Don’t lose hope, even though we’re going to be here for a while**

1. **We live what is right, even when the world is doing wrong**

**Daniel was plucked from a good place & plunged into an evil place.**

**How did he know it was evil and not just different from what he knew?**

* **Here’s how – Daniel knew what pleased God**

**He knew what sin was, because he knew what God desires**

**How do we know what is right and wrong? How do we determine in a culture that is haywire – what the right choices are?**

**Illus: Say, Jesus shows up, knocks on door - Jesus you saved me what can I do for you? Get me a truck, so I can drive to talk to people. What truck do you want? A FORD. You leave and come back with a DODGE. That would clearly be the wrong choice. Why? Because you know Jesus wants a FORD.**

**When you know what God wants, what he does not want become clear. Working at Texan’s, knowing counterfeits, we studied real money. If we know the details of what is right, we can tell what is wrong. We need to know what God wants – not our feelings, opinions, or perspectives.**

* **While in Babylon - It is vital that we remain – know – and understand God’s will for our life as found in the Bible.**

**It is increasingly vital, in a culture that is confused and changing - we are to stand on what is unchanging. God’s Word and character.**

**Paul says it this way - Romans 12:** **Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, (don’t do and think how everyone else is** - **The tendency in Babylon to bend to this kingdoms way of thinking and way of life) but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (aligning our life to God’s word) Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

**It is not judgmental to say what is right and wrong – based on what the Bible says – it is required – it is called discernment.**

**We live in a world where Christians are idiots and out of date for taking a stand, and everyone else is considered courageous… But, those who know God obey even when it’s inconvenient**

**We are to have biblical discernment (Life Teams this week)**

**If a van pulls up, swings open, a guy w/ 2 machetes, and ski mask says, “Jump in!” Should you get in? You’re being judgmental of guys with skis masks and machetes. Good judgement, is part of God’s plan.**

**However - 2 Judging Extremes**

**(Matt 7:3-20, Matt 18:15-17, John 7:24, 1 Cor 5:9-13, Gal 1:8-92, Thess 3:14-15, 1 John 2:3-5, Rev 21:8, 1 Cor 6:18-20, 2 Tim 4:2, 2 Cor 13:5-6)**

* + **When we accept the sin, and celebrate them**

**Isaiah 5:20 - Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness… (we see it every day, sin celebrated as choice)**

* + **When we condemn the person and never interact with them**

**It is not our job to write anyone off – there is a chance for everyone. It is not our job to judge the world. (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)**

**In Babylon - 4. We will be known by our love, but not always loved back**

**It would be easy to run for the holy hills, join a gated Christian commune, get in a holy huddle - that’s not what God wants.**

**We are to live and love the them while in Babylon - Because God loves them as much as he does you. You might be the only Jesus they see.**

**There is a battle go on for the souls of mankind. God loves everyone: The gang member, inmate, drug abuser, unfaithful spouse, those who struggle with same sex attraction. He loves the crook, the criminal, the liar, the girl looking for love in all the wrong places – and you.**

**John 13:** **34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (not just the easy to love, or those who love you back – in fact Jesus said they will most likely hate you – but…) 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

**\* We do not love to get love back!**

**\* What do we do if they don’t love back?**

**We see Jesus love for us (the cross) – and we keep loving.**

**Love does not accept or condone the sin – but it does keep loving.**

**The world is not the enemy – they are the prize for our love.**

**Next few weeks: Daniel in the worst imaginable place - kidnapped, castrated, forced to study the occult, and serve an evil king - YET - in his 70 yrs. Brought 3 amazing revivals to a dark world. How was he able to more than just survive - but THRIVE! Find out.**

**Prayer – God loves you! Even you. You can thrive – you can find meaning and purpose in this world. Today is your day.**