THRIVE – **WK 2 - Living in Babylon**

**The sun has set – he looks to the west - remembers sunsets on the Mediterranean – the mountains – his farm. He misses home. Has not seen his family in a year – plucked from happiness and plunged into hell on earth (explain) Daniel – has determined to honor God and make the best of it…**

**Last week - short version: Once upon a time in Israel an evil maniacal king from Babylon attacked and took the best of the best as slaves. The exile was to last 70 years – their lifetime.**

**Babylon - the worst imaginable place. In Rev. symbolizes pure evil.**

**Main character – Daniel and friends - Kidnapped, castrated, forced to study the occult, & serve the bidding of an evil king. It was unexpected and not what they wanted – incredibly difficult.**

**Revelation compares this world to Babylon – A place we do not belong temporary - but we can still thrive – God Loves the people of Babylon**

**If you missed last week – go online and listen – they all work together - upon each other.**

**\*\* Whole series is about, How to Thrive in a place we don’t belong**

**I want to broaden this to your world - work / school / home life – in a Babylonian culture. In a place that does not honor God…**

**Daniels story is powerfully encouraging - Daniel 1:5 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. (Babylon University) 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 (God is my judge), the name Belteshazzar (Baal’s prince); to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. (class of 595BC)**

**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. (Now understand – Daniel held to strict diet laws to honor God.) 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel,**

**He was kidnapped, forced to study the occult, castrated, his identity stolen (that is bad day) but how does he respond?**

**With respect and kindness in such a way he received favor…**

**Daniel did not keep a chip on his shoulder**

**He did not act angry – vindictive – bad attitude. Just the opposite, he character was such that he found favor with those over him.**

**(he asked but the answer was no) 10 but the official told Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? (would look sick and weak) (you don’t understand how bloodthirsty this king is…) The king would then have my head because of you.” (Forget you! We are doing it anyway! My God is greater! He does not freak out… but respectfully goes to the next line of authority…) 11 Daniel then said to the steward 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 young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” (He liked Daniel so he said – let’s try it) 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 (fatter) than any of the young men who ate the royal food. (In that culture if you were skinny you were poor and sick if you were heavy you were rich and healthy) 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. (diet was changed… no bacon – here’s broccoli.)**

**17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. (remember they were forced to learn the lit and teaching of the occult – who gave them success? God) And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. (A God given spiritual gift)**

**18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so, they entered the king’s service. (after 3 years – they alone were picked over everyone to serve directly King Nebuchadnezzar) 20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.**

**What were Daniel three big secrets?**

**1. Optimism**

**He never became a Daniel Downer… woe is me – woe is us… doom**

**Why was he so optimistic? Daniel understood and knew:**

* **He knew that - Even in Babylon God is in control**

**Even in Babylon God is good and God is in control – always.**

**God is in control – of who is in control. (Roman 13)**

**We need to understand a core principle how Daniel Thrived… it’s this**

**God’s Sovereignty**

**Explain – sovereign and good**

**Truth is - There are things – that I do not understand that God does or allows… I’ll have a list of questions to ask him. But I can have peace knowing… God is in control and sovereign.**

**Let’s go back… Israel was overcome by Babylon – attacked by Nebuchadnezzar. But, right at the beginning Daniel says God is in control! - Daniel 1:1** **In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. (that is the factual event – but why? Notice next…) 2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. (What? God had a hand in this) These he (Nebuchadnezzar) carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. (Marduk- snake dragon god)**

**Daniel knew - that sometimes a short-term success of the wicked is God’s will.**

**They were taken to exile – by the will of God.**

**That does not seem, right?**

**Jeremiah 29:4 This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon… 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. 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. (I did this for your good – for your future – my plan was for you to be exiled)**

**A contemporary to Jeremiah, Daniel - Habakkuk 1 (God when you bring justice to Judah? Why are you tolerating evil? God says, I’m not, but my plan will shock you) 1 “Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. 6 I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole land to seize dwellings not their own. (God continues – they are feared and dreaded powerful and coming your way – by my will)**

**WHY? Long story short. God had chosen them to be a special / chosen people to bring the world the messiah. But, they were in a cycle of sin & rebellion (the OT). After 250 yrs of warnings – God did what he said he would do - discipline them.**

**Even today - 1 Peter 4:17 – Judgment begins with the house of God.**

**It starts here. God is holding us to a high level of accountability.**

**Hebrews 12:5-11 / Pro 3:11-12 - God disciplines those who he loves – his kids!**

**Daniel understood that God’s love for them – meant discipline.**

**This messes with our mind – those who are Christians trying to do their best, feeling disciplined – while those who do not know God seem to be doing great – that does not seem fair.**

**He knew - God loves his kids, so he disciplines them**

**God’s sovereignty discipline is displayed in his love for us**

**Discipline not a well-liked issue – no one likes it. My kids growing up – were they disciplined? Yes – ask them. But did I ever discipline other people kids? (neighbors, restaurants, shopping, at church – etc.) No. Why? They are not my kids.**

**Looking back – maybe you can see how God disciplined you and drawn you in and helped you through your circumstances to teach you his Love.**

**Know this – if this is you today, and you feel like you are being disciplined by God, know that he loves you and He has brought you hear to know that he is for you.**

**Daniel was part of a nation that was being discipled. His circumstance was miserable… it was not his fault! But he understood – God was good and in control – so he remained optimistic.**

* **He knew that - Panic and despair are not from God**

**There is tendency to look at the world – news – culture – your job – your circumstance – and feel despair and panic – run for the hills!**

**We sing great songs about God’s power, sovereignty, and ability –then we see the paper and our family – our marriage and get are overwhelmed by despair. We cannot live well and thrive in our Babylon if we’re pessimistic.**

**Watching a Cowboys game on DVR – after you heard we won. No need to get scared when they are down in the 4th quarter – you know who wins!!! Remember we win!**

**2. Humility – you see over and over in Daniel**

**Daniel 1:8-14, Daniel 2:26-30, Daniel 4:19, Daniel 6:19-22**

**The servant over him – the guard, steward who was over him – the king when he stood before him… humility by showing respect.**

**When God tells Daniel - Neb finally gets it you think Daniel would relish it – but instead (Daniel 4:19) “I wish it anyone but you…**

* **He knew that - Everyone deserves respect – even God’s enemies**

**Daniel modeled the attitude of Christ even to his enemies…**

**2 Timothy 2:24 A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people. 25 Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts, and they will learn the truth. (NLT)**

**Humility is one of the most attractive things you could ever be.**

**Want to reach your family / friends – be positive and humble.**

**3. Wisdom (Daniel 1:4-8, 17-20; Daniel 6:10; Acts 4:18-20)**

**If your school curriculum forced your kids to study the occult – what would you do? Change it if you can, but if you can’t…**

**What did Daniel do – he was valedictorian! Guess what that gave him the opportunity to do – say this is a bunch of junk!**

* **He knew that - There’s a big difference between what we don’t like and what God forbids**

**He could have rebelled – complained – refused – failed and spent the rest of his life in chains… but instead – he became knowledgeable, excelled, and was smarter than the magainin’s and enchanters… and stood before Neb and said – “let me tell you who the real God is.”**

**He knew the difference between what he didn’t like and what God forbids. He picked his battles:**

**You want to change my name – whatever – call what you want.**

**You want to castrate me – well… what can I do?**

**You want to make me learn the occult – I will, but won’t believe it**

**You want me to eat what God forbids – I can’t. I’ll accept what happens.**

**You want me to worship a false God – never. God alone is my judge!**

**What incredible wisdom – picking his battles.**

**They’ve changed my clothes, they’ve changed my name, they’ve changed my habits, and they’ve changed my schedule – BUT, THEY WILL NOT CHANGE MY HEART!**

**Let’s bring it home –**

**Carlsbad Caverns – San Antonio. Nikol walking – sore. Huge space – well lit – they turn the light on. If I were to turn my light on my watch – that little light could have saved us and lead us out.**

**The darker it gets – the more power a little light gets!**

**If Babylon is where God has put you – it’s a divine assignment.**

**You may seem like you are the only one in your home, school, job, world living for God – just push the button. Be positive, hopeful, humble respectful, wise in God’s Word and shine the light of Christ – AND THRIVE!**