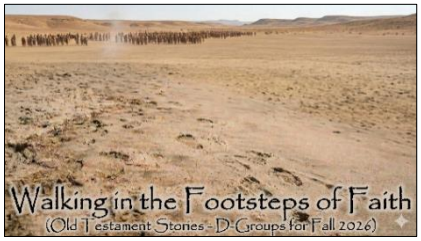
"Walking in the Footsteps of Faith"
OT Stories - Fall 2026 D-Groups



For Wednesday, November 4
Daniel and His 3 Friends (Daniel 1-6)

The Big Picture - Where We Are in the OT Timeline

We make another jump in the OT timeline this week which allows us to focus on some key characters in the later stages of Israel's B.C. story. As a reminder, our previous two weeks have dealt with the "Divided Kingdom" - the 10 Northern tribes called "Israel" and the 2 Southern tribes called "Judah." This stage of the OT story ultimately culminates with both portions being conquered by a foreign nation and a good portion of the people being taken into EXILE or CAPTIVITY (*i.e.,* in the North, by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and in the South, by the Babylonians in 587/586 B.C., at least as the final "fall" of Jerusalem). For the Northern Kingdom, that essentially ended its history as part of God's people, these 10 tribes being absorbed into surrounding nations; those who were not deported became part of the Samaritans' ancestry. For Judah in the South, there was eventually a return of the people - the "post-exile" stage - as Jerusalem and its Temple were re-built (more next week).

For this week, we are focusing on the book of Daniel which spans from around 605 B.C. to around 536 B.C. The story unfolds as part of Babylon's conquering of Jerusalem - actually, chapter 1 records the first wave of exiles, including Daniel and his 3 friends, being taken to Babylon. That basic context becomes important to the characters and stories that unfold in this book. **What does it mean for God's people to live out their faith while in a land not their own?** Our focus is going to be on three specific chapters. *(As a side note, there is great significance in the material we're not covering from this book, but we just don't have time to go beyond these three stories; in fact, the key theme of God's sovereignty ripples throughout this book, even into the prophecies of Daniel in chapters 7-12.)*

The Close-Up for November 4 - Daniel 1, 3 and 6

READ the TEXT: Daniel 1:1-21; 3:1-30 and 6:1-28

A key theme throughout the stories of Daniel: God's SOVEREIGNTY - it means He *"reigns"* above the events unfolding in the world (connected to His providence). The theme is present in the stories we're focusing on today. It's present in the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (on the whole, the interpretation of dreams broadly demonstrates His reign *and* within the individual dreams in Daniel, there is an emphasis on God's sovereignty!). It's present in God's orchestration of geo-political events and the rising/falling of nations. It's a reality often recognized even by those who are not God's people (see 3:28-29; 4:34-37 and 6:25-27). God's sovereignty does *not* mean that everything that happens is exactly what God *wants* to happen (remember Jesus' prayer of Matthew 6:10). It means that God is so at work in the events of human history, that, even as humans have free will, He is still "in control," moving events as He desires when He intervenes. As the book of Daniel consistently emphasizes, that's true not just on the level of our individual lives; it's also true on level of kingdoms and nations! ***Even as the story of Daniel begins, the first two verses point to a reminder of God's sovereignty to clearly establish this truth from the outset (see 1:1-2).***

Some notes on these three chapters/stories:

1:3-21 … Daniel and his 3 friends are taken into captivity. Part of what a conquering nation would do is take the best and the brightest of the younger people, indoctrinate them into the ways of their new land and, hopefully, train them to be a part of the kingdom's ongoing success. Yet, instead of "going with the flow" and being re-programmed, Daniel and his 3 friends "resolved not to defile" themselves *(there was evidently something about the diet being offered that violated their faithfulness to Yahweh)*. A 10-day test affirms their choice as they end up healthier than all the rest. It led to the 4 making quite an impression.

3:1-30 and 6:1-28 … These are familiar stories. Still, make sure you read them each again, paying attention to the details as they unfold (see the next item for a basic grid to lay over each story). *Notice the outcome of each story: not only is Yahweh praised for His sovereignty, but His people are elevated in their position.*

Some commonalities … Each story stands alone, yet, there are themes that run through each: (1) an opportunity to compromise, (2) a choice/decision to refuse that path out of faithfulness to Yahweh *even if/when it means earthly consequence* ("civil disobedience" is appropriate when a command from earthly authorities directly contradicts faithfulness to God) and (3) an outcome (a "reward" as in Hebrews 11:6) that demonstrates God's sovereignty.

Two Key Reminders throughout This Semester

1. **God is ultimately the HERO of these stories; remember, as part of Scripture, God is *revealing* Himself to us. *So, what do we learn about Him through this story? What can we learn from the human characters about putting our faith/trust in Him?***
2. **We read these stories through a Christ-lens. *So, how do we read this story differently in light of Jesus and being His followers?*** Consider both (1) being counter-cultural and (2) the promise of eternity in Christ as part of where God is sovereignly moving history.

Some Additional Questions for Reflection

- ***As you reflect on these stories from Daniel 3, what stands out about a response of faith in God? In your own story, when it comes to both your initial faith in Jesus and your ongoing life of faith, what do these stories teach us about trusting Him/His sovereignty?***
- ***Reflect on the three themes identified above (in the "commonalities" section) - ones that are found in each story.***
- ***How does each of these stories emphasize this basic theme of being counter-cultural - not different for the sake of being different, but different out of faithfulness to God and His commands (consider this for us in the context of NT teachings found in Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:17-24 and 1 Peter 2:11-12)? What does this look like for us in our context?***
- ***What do these stories teach about God's reward for faith and faithfulness (remember Hebrews 11:6)? How do we reconcile that with the reality that this "reward" doesn't* always *lead to the deliverance of His people?* Pay specific attention to the words of Daniel 3:16-18 for an attitude that balances confidence in God's capacity with a recognition that He's not *obligated* to act accordingly.**