



power of peculiarity

The first three chapters of Daniel are a great example of what it means to be God's people living in a land that ultimately is not our home. The first chapter focuses on Daniel and his friends taking a stand to say, "We may live in Nebuchadnezzar's house and be used for his purposes, but we belong to Yahweh and we will remember that every time we sit down to eat." By the time we get to chapter 3, Daniel and his friends had rehearsed this reality so much (at every meal!) that when it came time to make a choice - the fire of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace or the freedom found in belonging to God, it was not even a choice. They could freely claim that even if the fire killed them, it did not own them. This is the power of an "unhooked life", which is a life patterned after practices that, sure, may make us a bit peculiar in this world, but also regularly and intentionally remind us who we are, who we belong to, and what ultimately is real. This is exactly what we'll see in the following passages.

read

Daniel 3:1-18

1 Peter 2:1-17

in addition...

Watch the Bible Project Video: The Way of the Exile <https://youtu.be/XzWpa0gcPyo>

reflect & journal

1. What repeated phrase(s) do you notice in the Daniel 3 passage (hint: Mark Labberton calls them the Mesmerizing Rhythms of Idolatry)? In light of the regular and repeated rhythms we have been talking about with spiritual practices, how might these repeated rhythms also function as "practices"? "Mesmerizing rhythms" come in all kinds of forms -- think about every time your phone dings or when you hear just the first few notes of the theme song for your favorite show. What other "mesmerizing rhythms" of culture can you identify in your life?
2. Daniel and his friends had spiritual practices that made them stand out (a bit weird) in the midst of their surrounding culture (the food they ate, the way they prayed, etc.). How did these peculiarities give them a particular voice in the culture? How did their ability to recognize the ultimate reality of their freedom in God bring others in their realm to recognize God as well (hint: go ahead and finish the story in Daniel 3:19-30)?
3. In 1 Peter 2:9, some translations use the phrase "peculiar people." In what ways does engaging in spiritual practices (see the list from day 2) make us a bit "odd" in our culture? Have you ever experienced being "peculiar" because of your faith in a way that makes those around you curious? How might this catch people's attention in a way that makes them curious about the gospel?
4. What regular and rhythmic spiritual practice(s) can you incorporate into the already existing rhythms of your life to help form in you a secure identity in your true self, who you belong to, and what is ultimately real? I used to plan hour-long breaks in my day to read my Bible, often on campus. Memorizing scripture on your way to/from school? Fasting during certain times of the year (during Lent, if it is your tradition - or even if it is not)? Journaling prayers of self reflection before bed each night? These are just some ideas; what are yours? What is God stirring in you?

pray

- Let your prayer focus today be a brainstorming session between you and God.