

Community Group Sermon Notes February 15, 2026

Senior Pastor, Kevin Flannery

Series: Exiles in Babylon: Living as Strangers in a Fallen World

Sermon Title: Living IN Babylon Without Bowing TO Babylon

Big Idea: Keys to living within a culture that doesn't share your faith.

Spring Term: Week 7 of 20



Ice breaker: Pastor Kevin began his message by asking the question: "Have you ever felt that the moral math everyone else was doing didn't add up for you?" If so, describe this feeling and how you responded in that situation.

Read and reflect on Daniel 1:1-21:

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia^[a] and put in the treasure house of his god.

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— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, 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.^[b] 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.

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, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

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. ⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your^[c] food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard 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." 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 than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

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. 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.

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Sermon and Scripture Application Discussion:

Part 1: When the World Collapses, God Is Still Ruling (vv.1–2)

Re-read verses 2, 9, and 17 in the ESV, listening for the repeated word “gave.”

- v.2 – “And the Lord **gave** Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...”
- v.9 – “And God **gave** Daniel favor and compassion...”
- v.17 – “As for these four youths, God **gave** them learning and skill...”

1. How does the phrase “the Lord gave” reshape the way you see this passage?
2. Does it reshape the way you look upon current events in our world today?

Part 2: Babylon’s Strategy – Reshaping Identity (vv.3–7)

3. Why do you think education, language, diet, and names are central to this assimilation process?
4. Where do you see similar identity-shaping pressures in our world today?

Part 3: Three Yeses Before One No (vv.4–7, 17, 19)

Daniel says yes to learning, yes to serving, and yes to new names before he says no to the food.

5. What’s the difference between isolation and wise engagement and what can be the consequences of either?
6. Pastor Kevin said, “*You can study what is false without opposing what is true.*”
Have you ever studied, worked, or lived in an environment that was in tension with your beliefs? What helped you remain grounded in your faith?

Part 4: The Non-Negotiable – Covenant Loyalty (vv.8–16)

7. Why do you think the food becomes the line Daniel will not cross?
8. How have you discerned your non-negotiables? What are they? Share a time when obedience required risk.

Part 5: God Gives, Empires Pass (vv.18–21)

9. Why is verse 21 such a powerful closing note?
10. How does this passage steady you in a time of cultural anxiety?

Closing Prayer: Lord, we ask that You would grant us knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Make us like Daniel—able to live faithfully within our culture, not antagonistically, but courageously—with a winsome, steady, and contagious faith that glorifies You and draws others to You.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Faith in Action:

- February 15, Global Outreach Prayer, 12 PM, B216 Prayer Room
- Who do you know? Help us build the staff team God is calling, visit: www.coswayne.org/join-our-team; Finance Director, Facilities Manager and more.