



The Attack on Your Identity Discussion Guide 11/05/17

Open in prayer

Ice Breaker: Describe yourself or your family in one word.

- What do you think has been the biggest cultural change in your lifetime?
- Pastor Loren stated: When culture shifts, we tend toward the extremes. The two extremes are called “flight or fight.” Flight is when the church withdraws from culture. Fight is when Christians lash out at a changing culture. How do you see yourself responding to culture?
- **Here are the question I am struggling with...**
 - What is my role as a follower of Jesus in today’s constantly shifting culture?
 - How can I stand firm in my faith and still be relevant to people who seem so different from me?
 - How should I respond when others say my Christian views are unloving?
 - How does the Christian message apply to everyone when there are so many differences in culture, ethnicity, lifestyle, orientation, political beliefs, and spiritual practice?
 - If I stand for truth, what will people think of me?
 - How can I help my kids engage in culture without losing them to it?
 - What is the role of the church in the 21st century?

I believe Jesus gives us another way. **John 1:14** - “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus demonstrated there is a way to serve God faithfully in any generation. To be committed to God’s Word and offer people the love and grace of God, believers have to face head-on four attacks. These four attacks that threaten our faith, our church, our purpose, and our future.

In Daniel’s story we learn we how to engage our culture without compromising our faith.

Background: After the reign of King David and his son Solomon, Israel divided along geographical and tribal lines. Within a few generations, the ten northern tribes of Israel abandoned their faith in the living God and started worshipping idols. God wasn’t pleased and sent warning after warning to the northern kingdom. Finally, due to their

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disobedience, God allowed the Assyrians to conquer all ten tribes in the northern kingdom (2 Kings 17).

Judah and Benjamin, the two remaining Jewish tribes comprised the southern kingdom. This is where Daniel lived. Despite watching what happened to their northern neighbors, the southern tribes also drifted away from God. God allowed Judah to be conquered by the Babylonians led by King Nebuchadnezzar. Many of the people of Israel became prisoners of war. Exiled from their homeland they were forced to live in a new culture.

Daniel was one of these exiles. In a pagan, ungodly culture Daniel honored God with his actions and speech. His character and conduct stood out. For the next 70 years of his life Daniel faced life-threatening tests, but he never wavered from his faith.

Read Daniel 1

The Big Idea: Our culture is rapidly changing. As a result, truth is relative and moral standards have become ambiguous. Without a firm foundation our identity has become unclear. As Christians we believe we have been created in the image of God; and we affirm He alone has the right to determine our identity and purpose.

Daniel recognized he could be an influence in an ungodly culture.

Regardless of your birth name, our world, and our culture has a way of defining us.

- What are some identities/labels that are associated with you?
- Have you ever rejected an identity someone tried to assign you?

Pastor Loren said, "If you allow culture to name you, you'll often live out that story. One of Satan's strategies is to attack your identity. He wants to give you a different name than the one God has given you, and if you accept this new identity, he can keep you from God's purpose for your life."

- How does God's Word on our identity differ from what we might believe or be told?
- Why is the name changing of Daniel and his friends significant?
- How did their new names undermine their identities?

Daniel → God is my jude to Belteshazzar → Lady, protect the king

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Hananiah → Yahweh has been gracious to Shadrach → I am fearful of God

Mishael → Who can compare to God? No one! to Meshach → I am despised, contemptible, and humiliated

Azariah → Yahweh has helped to Abednego → The servant of Nebo

- How does our perspective or understanding of God affect our identities?
- Pastor Loren made the point that Identity leads to lifestyle, choices, decisions, and purpose. Name a way in which your identity as a Christian led to a choice you made today.

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10 and discuss the five aspects of our identity Peter names.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

One of the ways the enemy tries to change our identities is to make it seem foolish to remain faithful to God, to make it seem ridiculous to believe this Book.

Here's how we can follow Daniel's example...

1. When culture changes, we need to know who we are.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...”
(Jeremiah 1:5 NIV)

2. When culture changes, we are tempted to focus on external qualities....to keep up, to be accepted

“...The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV)

3. A confused identity is Satan's strategy to keep you from fulfilling God's purpose.

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“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10 NIV)

Within your God-given identity is a God-given purpose. God has given you just the right personality, abilities, talents, and gifts to accomplish what you are called to do. You are not an accident. You are here on purpose for a purpose.

4. When we are not connected to our God-given identities, we will allow others to define us.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” (1 John 3:1 NIV)

I will swim against the current of culture by:

- Remembering daily I belong to Jesus.
- Recognizing I don’t have to be ashamed or afraid.
- Realizing my purpose is to be a reflection of grace and truth.

Who God says we are as believers in Jesus...

- You are a child of God - John 1:12
- You are a friend of Jesus - John 15:15
- You are a new creation in Christ Jesus - 2 Corinthians 5:17
- You are God’s workmanship, created to do good works - Ephesians 2:10
- You are a citizen of heaven - Philippians 3:20