

A STUDY OF DANIEL FOR TEEN GIRLS

CITY OF LIONS

Amy Byrd



LifeWay | Girls

CITY OF LIONS



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about the author



Amy Byrd has a desire to make much of Jesus and loves all things student ministry. She has the joy of serving as the Director of Girls Ministry at Hunter Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Amy is also the author of *Worthy Vessel* and co-author of *Dwell*. Her ultimate desire is to see girls know their worth as daughters of the Most High and know Him as their Savior. She's the mom of a handsome little boy, Timothy, and the wife of a hard-working husband. She loves working in her garden and eating chips and salsa. You can connect with Amy on Instagram at amy_byrd.

a note from Amy

Friend,

It is a privilege to meet you here on these pages. I do not know your story. Where you have been. What you have gone through. You do not know my story. (However, you will learn more about me in the pages ahead than you may like to know.)

What I do know is we have a King who was intentional in bringing us together to study the Book of Daniel. I am praying the God who saved my life and continues to transform me from the inside out will do the same for you.

He is strength. He is wisdom. He is perfect. He is good. He is the one true King. And He loves you. And I love you too.

I cannot wait to see where He takes us in the next few weeks.

Big Group Hug!

Amy

how to use

In this book, you will find seven weeks of group sessions and six weeks of personal study. We encourage you to work through the personal study at your own pace, and it can all be completed in an afternoon or over the span of four days. As you begin your group time, watch the video to hear from the heart of the author and get a quick introduction to the session's passage of Scripture. There is also a leader guide included in the back of this study with helpful tips to use during group time. Once girls have completed this study, they will have completed a timeline of Daniel's faith journey and learned what it looks like to stand with faith and integrity in the midst of opposition.

BIBLE STUDY BOOK

Listed below are the different elements in the Bible study book.

Group Discussion

Questions and cultural connections are provided to help guide the conversation.

Personal Study

Personal Bible study which can be done at your own pace will help reinforce the theme and provide an opportunity to dig deeper into the Scripture.

Leader Guide

The leader guide at the back of the study provides ideas for activities and deeper group discussions.

SESSION OUTLINE



Design your group sessions to fit the space, time, and needs of your girls. The following is a sample group session outline you can adapt.

1. Press Play.

Review the material in the previous week's personal Bible study and watch the video.

2. Let's Talk.

Scripture and discussion questions are provided to help foster conversation among the group.

3. Here & Now.

Answer the final questions together and spend some time comparing Babylon to today's culture. Close the session with prayer.



Daniel's timeline

605 BC

(605–562 BC)

Nebuchadnezzar is king of Babylon

First Babylonian invasion of Judah—Daniel and other princes taken into captivity in Babylon

Daniel's ministry begins



573 BC

Nebuchadnezzar's
dream of a tree



572 BC

Nebuchadnezzar's
seven years
of insanity

562 BC

Nebuchadnezzar dies

602 BC

Nebuchadnezzar's
dream of a statue



Shadrach, Meshach,
and Abednego thrown
into the furnace

552 BC

(552–539 BC)
Belshazzar is king
of Babylon

539 BC

Handwriting on the wall
Belshazzar dies
Babylon falls to Persia
Darius the Mede made king

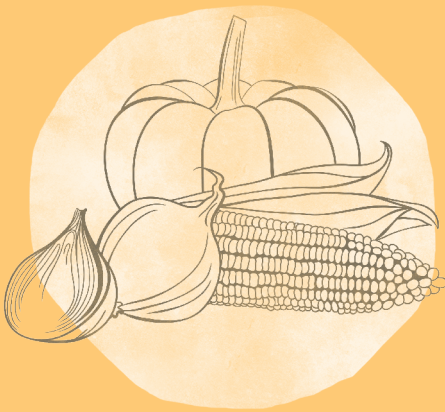


536 BC

Daniel thrown
into lions' den
(88 years old)

SESSION ONE

set apart



press play

Daniel _____ that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. **Daniel 1:8**

Have there been moments in your world that the culture has influenced you to do something? Explain.

What was the eunuch's response to Daniel's request to eat something different?

Why was Daniel able to have confidence in being tested?

What was the result of the testing after 10 days?

Does looking different scare you?

Looking different is _____.

Looking different is _____.

We're not supposed to look like everybody else because we're modeling our lives after _____.

Use the space provided to note any Scripture references or comments from the video you want to remember.

let's talk

We live in a world of much. A world of more. A world of me, me, me. Every day we are bombarded with voices telling us how to look great, get smart, make more, and be the best at what we do. Before our eyes are magazines and TV shows with celebrities' lives featured and celebrated because of the money in their bank accounts, their dress sizes, or the number of followers they have on social media.

Think about it for a minute. Step outside of what you know to be normal and really consider the world around you. What images come to mind when you think about our culture? What do you consider to be the theme of life in general? What is our focus? Our priority?

In what ways does culture shape your life?

That question sounds kind of big, but really, what do you do simply because you have seen celebrities or people in magazines doing it? What do you wear because you've seen "everyone at school" wearing it? (I'll tell you a funny story about that later.)

Whether we notice it or not, culture shapes us! It influences everyone in one way or another. And it may be shaping us in some ugly and dark ways that we don't see. Pride grows deep in us like ivy. Selfishness and sin abound. We run ourselves ragged trying to keep up with the latest trends and be "in" enough so that we don't look odd. And here we find ourselves. You and me. Smack-dab in the middle of a world that influences us every day, and most of the time we don't even notice.

You need to know that I am a normal gal. My "fancy" days often hit their peak with some sassy shoes, a quiet trip to Target, and a Diet Coke the size of my face. I usually only wear my crown on Thursdays—but that kind of depends on the weather. Are you paying attention? No crown 'round here. Just lots of bobby pins and dry shampoo.

I'm going to be honest and let you know that keeping up with our world overwhelms me. From politics to pumpkin protein smoothies, I can never seem to fully grasp the most up-to-date information or keep up with the latest trends. It isn't that I don't like Twitter or know how to work Instagram, it's more that I have learned over time that there is no point in trying to keep up. There is no value in the chase of being in the now—because by the time I catch up to the now I am late. No amount of blonde balayage or likes on my posts are ever going to satisfy me, because I cannot be satisfied by the things of the world. I was made for a different place—a place so different from our culture. It is perfect and holy and forever, while our culture is broken, vulgar, and temporary. And yet here the Lord has placed me. And you.

This seems like the proper time to introduce you to the book of the Bible we are setting up camp in for the next seven weeks. The Book of Daniel. A true story of a young man and his companions who were taken far from home and placed in the middle of a flashy culture, filled with sin. But before we learn more about Daniel himself, let's get a better picture of where he was living when we meet in chapter one.

Babylon was a visual beauty. Think fancy. Think extravagant. Think over the top. We are meeting these Babylonians in a time when their lives were built around having the best, surrounded by luxury and beauty. But they were empty. Take a moment to think about your ultimate picture of luxury.

What do you envision?

Some of us will see a penthouse overlooking Central Park. Others will imagine a giant cabin in the mountains. For me, it is a beautiful home at the beach. We all love beautiful things. If we're honest, we would all love to live a life of luxury. I mean, who wouldn't?

Our study begins in 605 BC when the empire had just conquered Jerusalem. At this time Babylon was ruled by King Nebuchadnezzar. You read that name right. Can we all agree that life is too short to say that name too many times? Let's just call him King Neb.

➔ Take a moment to read Daniel 1:3-5.

In this passage, we see King Neb instruct one of his men to gather a group of children with specific gifts.

1. What qualities and traits did the king require?

2. What do these requests tell us about the king and his priorities?

3. Does this particular list remind you of scenarios you might find yourself in? School tryouts? Being asked to homecoming?

The king and his men wanted those who would serve them to look, act, and think in very specific ways. They were being brainwashed to look just alike. They were being trained by their culture to be people they were not. These boys were even required to change their

names. This was a big factor in brainwashing them to become a part of the king's men. The purpose was to tie these men to local gods and deny the God of their past. Daniel means "God is my judge," but his name was changed to Belteshazzar meaning "Bel Protect the King."

Let's meet the other guys:

| Given Name | Babylonian Name |
|--|---|
| Hananiah "God Has Been Gracious" | Shadrach "Command of Akku" |
| Mishael "Who Is What God Is?" | Meshach "Who Is What Aku Is?" |
| Azariah "The Lord Has Helped" | Abednego "Servant of Nebo" ¹ |

FAST FACT: The Book of Daniel is named after and indicated to be written by the prophet Daniel, who wrote in the autobiographical first person beginning in chapter 7 verse 2 and throughout the rest of the book.²

Babylon was not Daniel's home and King Neb was not his true king. Daniel wasn't born in Babylon. Daniel was born into a wealthy family in Judah. He had a home. A life. And all of that changed the day he was taken to Babylon for the purpose of being trained by Babylonian leaders to deal with Jews who were being brought into the city. This young man was taken from his home where he was comfortable and safe, and planted into the middle of a turbulent and sinful empire. Can you imagine how terrifying that must have been? To be surrounded by a king and leaders who were telling you what to believe, who to be, and even what you must eat? Look back at Daniel 1:5 to see what the king instructed these young men to be fed.

With insight from his God, Daniel knew eating and drinking the delicacies King Neb had commanded was only for sinful purposes and not for their good. In faithful boldness, Daniel suggested a new plan.

➔ Read Daniel 1:8-14 aloud.

What was the plan Daniel came up with for Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and himself?

Daniel was instructed to do something by King Neb, who essentially “owned” him, but rather than doing as he was told, he was obedient to God and suggested a different plan. That’s what I like to call a bold move.

Could he have just done as he was told? Sure. Would the world have ended if Daniel had eaten some cake? Nope. But this is where his story gets life-changing. This will be our landing place for the entire study.

This is the only time I will encourage you to skip ahead in Daniel. Turn in your Bibles to Daniel 2:28 and circle it: “There is a God in heaven.” The Creator of heaven and earth. Daniel’s true King. Our true King. And Daniel only answered to Him. This gives us a glimpse of Daniel’s obedience to the Lord and his trust in God’s perfect plan for his life.

Try to put yourself in Daniel’s place. I doubt you will ever have to say no to cake for the sake of honoring Jesus, but there will be moments in our lives when we are asked to do things we know do not honor Jesus. Cheat on a test. Lie to a friend. Sit among gossip. Go too far with a boy. Drugs. Alcohol. The possibilities are endless. And you might find yourself surrounded by a sea of people who are asking you to do something that you know you should not do. Will you be brave enough to speak up?

Have you ever had a moment in your life when you had to make a bold move to choose Christ over our culture? Explain.

Daniel didn’t give in. For ten days, Daniel and his friends drank only water and ate only vegetables. (Not my kind of diet, but I am proud of them. I would have requested ten days of Diet Coke and chips with salsa, but that’s just me. Normal gal, remember?)

Let’s dig into the rest of this passage and see how Daniel’s plan played out.

→ **Read Daniel 1:15-21.**

How did Daniel and his friends differ from the other young men?

What does the passage say God gave them during these days?

Girls, my heart bursts reading the words in this passage of Scripture. It wasn’t about the food. It wasn’t about the calories. It was about not giving in. Not giving up. It was about the strength to not sink in and be like everyone else, but instead to be bold and different.

Daniel and his friends knew God had called them to be different and He honored them for their obedience.

I love what verses 19-20 say about the king's interview with the young men. Help me finish the passage:

The king interviewed them, and among all of them, _____ equal to _____, _____, _____, and _____. So they began to attend the king. In every matter of wisdom and understanding that the king consulted them about, he found them _____ than all the magicians and mediums in his entire kingdom.

Because these four men were so great? Nope. Because of their mighty God.

HERE & NOW

Remember when I said I would tell you a funny story?

When I was in seventh grade, I had a dream that I walked into school one morning and was surrounded by a sea of pink and purple North Face jackets. Picture this with me, people. Everywhere my 12-year-old eyes could see was a girl wearing the jacket. And I, without a jacket, felt like an outcast. No North Face. What a nightmare! Or so my middle school heart thought. This dream didn't come out of nowhere. That was the year that "every girl" got this particular jacket for Christmas, and I just missed the mark completely. Not only did I not ask for the jacket, I didn't even know it existed until Christmas break was over and everyone showed up to school in their fancy new outerwear! I felt like an outsider. A no-North-Face loser. Different from everyone else.

Now I want to ease your minds and let you know I did survive this outerwear trial. Though it was a close one. The reality is that, while this story is silly, I felt like an outsider because I didn't look like everyone else. I so longed to be like the rest of the girls in my grade. To keep up with the trends. To blend into the crowd and look the same. Certainly I am not alone in this. I believe that in our heart of hearts we can all acknowledge a time and a place in our lives when we have felt uncomfortably different.

But here's the thing—you were created to be different. There is a God in heaven who created you to be His. He created you to look like Him. He created you for another home. Yes, we are here in this time surrounded by Birchboxes, selfies, and boutiques galore—and we are allowed to be a part of these things. But we were created for much more. Just like Daniel,

though we are far from our true home, we can be faithful to our purpose to serve our mighty God in the midst of a city of lions.

In your personal study this week, we are going to dive even deeper into this particular passage of Scripture. Girls, if you will dive in with me I promise you will see things in the midst of God's Word that will rock your world in the very best ways. His Word is active! His Word transforms! And I don't know about you, but my heart never gets enough time spent with Jesus.

Let's do this. Together.

Finish up your group time today discussing your answers to these questions:

Is it possible to be immersed in culture and not be influenced by it? Why or why not?

In what ways can you protect your heart from being consumed by culture?

Are you willing to look different from everyone else in order to honor Jesus? Explain.

List some specific ways this may play out in your own life.

How does biblical community and surrounding ourselves with believers help us in our battle against a hostile culture?



personal study

Hey you!

I'm gonna be really honest. I feel like most of you dread the “homework” portion of these studies that we get to do together. I get it. You just finished your chemistry, government, and AP English, and you have no desire to dive into *more* homework. So let's call it personal study.

We are going to make a deal. I will promise you that your personal study will be exciting and that you will actually learn something, if you will promise me that you will commit and dig in each week.

Deal? Deal.

You have some options when it comes to how you want to handle your personal study week to week.

You can sit down and complete it all in one day or you can break it up into several days of study each week. Along the way I am building in natural breaks for those of you who want to break it up into several days of study, or shorter pauses for those of you who just need five minutes to get a cupcake and a latte. I am a girl who likes options—Can I get a witness?

My hope is that this time of personal study will give you a better picture of the Book of Daniel and will help you apply it to your own life. There will be moments when we learn more about the history of this book of the Bible, and moments when I give you an opportunity to work through some of the Scripture on your own.

Either way I am asking God, in His mighty power, to transform us as we seek Him in His Word.

So, let's go.

SECTION 1: FAR FROM HOME

Daniel 1:1-4

Where we live matters. Where we are from matters. For some of us those places are one and the same. For example, I live in Birmingham, Alabama, and I was born in Birmingham, Alabama. I serve on staff at my home church where I was raised, and I live just a few miles away from the house where I grew up. Growing up in my hometown has certainly shaped me into who I am today. My family. My church. My best friends. My high school. My husband who I met in first grade Sunday school. (Is that not the cutest thing you've ever heard?) My worldview has been shaped by the place I call home.

If I was uprooted tomorrow and placed in a totally different culture, it would be a shock. New people. New sounds. New sights. New cultural norms. New languages. New difficulties. I have experienced that in small doses as I have traveled around the world.

My favorite city in the world is London. The sounds of the city thrill me. The tea and scones make my heart sing. The markets and the museums are incredible. I love to visit for weeks at a time and always enjoy every second that I am on British soil, but in the back of my heart there is always an ache for home.

The very definition of *home* is: a place of origin.³

And the definition of *origin* is: the point at which something begins.⁴

So, where do you live? And where are you from?

How would you describe your home? How does home make you feel?

Let's dig deeper into Daniel's history.

→ **Read Daniel 1:1-4.**

Let's work out some of these details together.

King Neb besieged _____.

The king commanded that some of the people of Israel would be brought to _____.

Among them were _____, _____, _____
and _____.

So if we were to make Daniel and his friends answer the questions that we answered above, they would say:

Where do you live? *Babylon*

Where are you from? *Jerusalem/Judah*

Can you imagine your home being overtaken by a cruel king, and then being exiled to live in a different city far away from your family and friends? Far from the comforts of home. Far from all that you have known for your entire life. Exiled. To serve a king.

The good news, girls, is that Daniel knew that this earth, no matter the location we may find ourselves, was not his ultimate home, and it is not ours either. Daniel trusted his God in heaven and knew that he was created for a different, permanent home where he would spend eternity.

For we do not have an enduring city here; instead, we seek the one to come. **Hebrews 13:14**

Daniel and his friends knew that their God would protect them no matter where they were, even in the midst of a crazy culture like Babylon. Because they were created for more. And their purpose, while away from their eternal home, was to boast of their God and honor Him all of their days.

So, sister. I asked you where you live. I asked you where you are from. Now, I must ask, do you know that no matter where your home may be today that you were created for more? A different home. A perfect, holy eternal home. A place where we will worship God and enjoy Him forever. As followers of Christ, we are promised a place there! Right alongside these noble men who lived faithfully in exile in Babylon, our eternal home awaits!

Have you asked the Holy Spirit to take up residence in your heart and prepare you for your eternal home? Explain.

I encourage you now to take stock of your heart. I don't know about you, but in the midst of our current culture and state of our world, *home* sounds really beautiful right now.

Listen to “This Is My Inheritance” by All Sons And Daughters (*Poets and Saints*, 2016), and maybe grab an ice cream or take a walk before we continue on in our personal study for this session.

SECTION 2: FAITHFULNESS & FOOD

Daniel 1:5-13

I mentioned that I loved visiting London. It holds a really special place in my heart. It also happens to be the place where I tasted one of the most disgusting things ever. Y’all, I don’t want to be dramatic, but I thought my taste buds were going to shut down for life because of what I put them through.

One word: *Marmite*. This is a sticky brown food paste that some Brits spread on toast, pair with cheese, and so on. And, listen, if you are one of the people that loves Marmite, I am sorry but you are crazy and I need to feed you some Nutella. That is the only sticky brown food paste that I am interested in.

Now to get to my point.

In 2011, I was at a church in Highgate for a potluck lunch and found myself in a kitchen surrounded by 20 of my British friends all watching as I was fed an industrial size spoonful of Marmite. No toast. No cheese. Just me and Marmite. As I “ate” the sticky brown paste, I found myself baffled that I was standing in a room full of people who ate this food regularly. This food was a part of their culture. A part of their norm.

Food is used for way more than eating. In every culture, food is a centerpiece. People use foods as vessels of communicating love, thanks, sympathy, and celebration. In Daniel’s day, food also communicated a lot about your beliefs. Jews had a very specific diet that they followed. So when King Neb commanded the men to eat and drink very specific foods, Daniel and his friends had to make some decisions.

FAST FACT: Read more about the food restrictions of Jews in Leviticus 11:1-47 and Deuteronomy 14:3-20. This will help you get a better picture of the food that was deemed “unclean” by the Jews.

Let's work through this next passage together. I am going to give you a chance to write out the key parts as you read them. I will get you started.

→ Read Daniel 1:5-13.

Let me take a moment to remind you that Daniel was defying the command of a cruel king who had kidnapped him from his home and taken him prisoner in Babylon. The boldness and bravery Daniel showed in standing up to the king's command is a testimony of his trust in the God who he served. Clearly Daniel knew that eating the diet provided by the king was about way more than calories and being treated to the spoils of the kingdom. To eat this food was to assimilate to the culture of the kingdom. Daniel and his friends were avoiding the luxurious foods provided by the king as a way of protection. Protection from the temptation to get caught up in the luxury of the city that surrounded them.

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.

Daniel 1:8 (KJV)

Circle these words: "purposed in his heart."

To whom did Daniel's heart belong?

Daniel and his friends were unwilling to do anything that might come between them and their God. The one true God. Not the gods and idols that those in Babylon were worshiping. So they were bold and they took a stand. Daniel "purposed in his heart" not to break his commitment to God.

In our world and current culture, eating specific foods probably isn't going to be the way you are tempted and tested most often. But there are other areas of our lives that might look luxurious, enticing, and exciting, yet may defile us. The definition of *defile* is: to make unclean or impure.⁵ I've also heard it defined as corrupting purity or perfection.

Let's have some real talk for a moment. Being invited to parties. Getting attention from boys. Being included in the popular group of girls. Getting noticed by the scout from that college team. Getting an invitation to a certain school club. Fitting into that super small size you've dreamed about for a year. Getting asked to prom by *him*. All of these things on the surface may be good. Enticing. Exciting.

But are these things going to be used by the enemy as vessels to corrupt the purity and perfection of our hearts? Will they make us more unclean? More impure? Are they simply a part of our culture, and assimilating to the culture makes us just like everyone else?

No, sister, you may not be offered a feast by a king in the middle of a metropolis city. But you are being tempted by the *same* enemy Daniel was in the *same* ways. With pretty things that seem innocent, but are really just trying to lure us into loving and looking like the world around us. And as we learned this week in our group time—we were made for more. A better place. Our true home.

Where are the places that you are being defiled?

What delicacies of today are tempting you?

Cling to Jesus. Trust Him to satisfy you. He is better than any fantasy or feast.

Pause here to take a break. Get some coffee, eat a snack, and meet me back here.

SECTION 3: LOOKING DIFFERENT

Daniel 1:15-20

We paused at a cliffhanger. What makes me smile often while reading Daniel is that it feels like a CW nighttime television drama. Mainly because King Neb threatens to kill a different person for a different thing every time we turn the page.

To summarize where we were yesterday: King Neb commanded that all of the young men in his keep be fed a specific, luxurious diet in order to assimilate these men to the culture of Babylon. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to eat the diet. Daniel spoke with the chief of the eunuchs and requested that he and his friends be tested for ten days by allowing them to eat a diet that was different from the rest of the men.

Let's dive back in.

→ Read Daniel 1:15-20 and answer the following:

What was the result of the ten-day meal plan Daniel requested?

What did the Lord give in reward for the obedience of these men?

What did the king do in verses 19-20?

This is one of my favorite passages in the entire Book of Daniel. This is an incredible moment. Remember the men in the king's keep were being fed the best foods and served the best drinks. They were being spoiled and treated as royalty so they would become more dependent on the king and his kingdom. Daniel and his three friends were eating a bare bones diet. Vegetables and water.

It would seem to me that the men who were fed the fatter, richer diet would be the most satisfied and filled at the end of the ten days. But as we learned in our last segment, it was about much more than food. Daniel and his friends were unwilling to participate in anything that might tempt them to bend to the culture. They refused to defile themselves. And at the end of the ten days, these men looked better in appearance than all of the men who ate the king's food!

Not only did these men look different because they went against the norm and were obedient to Christ, but they also looked physically different from the other men as well! God rewarded Daniel and his friends for their obedience by giving them wisdom and understanding that far exceeded that of even the enchanters and magicians of the kingdom. Why? Because our God rewards those who obey Him.

Obedience to God will cause us to look different. Obedience to God will call us to do difficult things. Obedience to God will require taking risks.

SECTION 4: RESPOND



Friend, God's Word has called us to do a lot of self-examination this week. And that isn't going to stop anytime soon during this study. God's Word is alive and is transformational—meaning that it quite literally changes us. It changes our lives. It changes our days. It changes our details. And my prayer for you at this moment is that you might open your heart and ask God to use His Word to change you.

I do not know you. I do not know about your life. But I do know a God who knows and cares deeply about the details of your heart and your soul. I do know that God longs to have the

affections of your whole heart. He desires that you would flee from the things that defile you and instead seek satisfaction in Him.

Will taking steps toward God change the way your life looks? Yes. 100 percent. Absolutely. Don't you think Daniel felt a little different when he refused to eat the food everyone else was eating?

You will look different. Because, God willing, you will *be* different.

I want you to end this week working through the chart below. This is your call to acknowledge and to act. We are going to end every week like this, so buckle up, buttercup—it's time to take the truth and put it into action.

List some ways your life either shows you are devoted to Christ or to our culture in the chart that follows.

| Culture | Christ |
|---------|--------|
| | |

After you finish, I want you to journal a prayer. Ask God to give you boldness to address all of the items listed under “culture” and to help you learn some tangible ways to surrender those things. Ask God to protect in mighty ways the areas of your heart and your life that are devoted to Him.

5 “He announced, ‘Turn, each of you, from your evil way of life and from your evil deeds. Live in the land the LORD gave to you and your ancestors long ago and forever. **6** Do not follow other gods to serve them and to bow in worship to them, and do not anger me by the work of your hands. Then I will do you no harm.’” **7** “‘But you have not obeyed me’—this is the LORD’s declaration—‘with the result that you have angered me by the work of your hands and brought disaster on yourselves.’” **Jeremiah 25:5-7**

My prayer is that the Lord begins a work in your heart this very moment that changes you. The weeks ahead are going to be rich in truth and hard in practice. Stay with me.