Rejoicing in Victory

Points of Connection:

Daniel was born handsome, wealthy, smart, athletic—everything you would want to be. However, this privileged position did not deter him from depending upon God’s grace (not his abilities) when faced with the test of assimilation.

God never promised Daniel worldly success (promotion, riches, even health). The true victory Daniel won was measured not by his excellence in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar, but in the perseverance of his faith through trials, and the true rewards are mercy to be forgiven of our sins, grace to be made holy and righteous like Christ, and love to be accepted and deemed worthy for who we are as adopted daughters and sons.

Areas for Application: Where are you seeking for victory?

When you are in a tight spot (midterms, a big game, an important interview) what do you fall back on? How do you depend upon your mind, sense of humor and athleticism instead of grace to succeed in times of stress? How might you change if those abilities were taken from you?

How do you define failure? Does a loss or a bad grade make you feel worth-less? When in your past have you been convicted of sin and felt overwhelming guilt and self-loathing? How should the grace of God’s Spirit alter these reactions to failure?

Are you ready to stand before the Eternal King and Judge? What will your answer be when Christ asks, “Who are you?”

Further Resources:
1. Victory Beyond Competition studies- www.princeton.edu/~aia/vbc
3. Daniel 1 mp3 - www.princeton.edu/~aia

Summary:
The book of Daniel begins with a description of the exile of Israel’s elite to Babylon, under the tyrannical reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, chapter 1, focuses specifically on the ‘training’ required of these enslaved Jews, namely in the learning and culture of the Babylonian Empire. Under this guise is an attempt by the captors to inculcate and assimilate the best and the brightest of the people of Israel into mainstream Babylon. This assault is met, as depicted in Daniel 1, by the faithful response of the prophet Daniel, as he (1) recognizes the assault on his identity as a Jew, (2) chooses to battle against this forceful assimilation, and (3) is blessed by God with the power to not only withstand temptation, but to attain success.

Background:
Author: Daniel
Audience: Israelites exiled in Babylon
Date: 6th Cent. BC
Issues: Living as a faithful Jew in a hostile environment

Purpose of Devotional:
These devotional exercises are intended to aid the Princeton student athlete in their Christian walk through accessible, applicable resources connecting the teachings of AIA’s GameTime meeting with the weekly personal devotions of each student.

Key:
= factoid and detail highlighting the cross-cultural connection between the exiled Israelite and the modern Princeton Christian.
= question designed to apply truths in Daniel to modern life at Princeton.
Recognizing the Assault

Points of Connection:

Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon sought the best and brightest Israel had. Just so, Princeton seeks the gifted and talented of the US and the world.

The conscious goal of the Babylonian captivity was cultural assimilation (making Jews think/act like Babylonians). Just so, Princeton seeks (not maliciously) to train and educate students towards it’s (secular) ideals.

‘El’ and ‘Yah’ are Hebrew words for God– incorporated into the Israelite’s names but removed from their Babylonian replacements. (Hananiah-Shadrach; Mishael-Meshach; Azariah-Abednego [Dan. 1:7])

Areas for Application: How are you being assimilated?

Busyness– Princeton calls us to join this group, bicker this club, take (& ace) these classes, etc.
- Looking at the past week, how have you chosen to allocate your time/resources? Why?
- How do these decisions correspond to your priorities? How are they influenced by desires to please others or to justify yourself to others?

Competition– Standing before the king (not King), professor, coach, or interviewer is a difficult place to rely upon grace and God for self-worth and identity.
- What makes you feel better about yourself: accomplishing modest goals or succeeding where others struggle? Why?
- Are you able to ‘rejoice with those who rejoice,’ even when you yourself are failing?
- Do you ever bring competition into your spiritual life, comparing your knowledge, discipline with those around you?

Resolving to Battle

Points of Connection:

Daniel, when attacked by unchristian cultural assimilation responded by resolving to fight for his identity. Princeton and society at large present similar challenges that require active resistance. “If you’re just ‘going with the flow’ then you’re not moving towards God.”

Battles entail battle fields, common meeting places. Daniel chose to stand publicly for God in his secular situation. Christians today must also engage culture and non-believers in the secular sphere of the classroom, eating club, or job place. Inoculation, not quarantine, is the training model for Christian engagement.

Areas for Application: How are you fighting with purpose?

- Are you living in Princeton or merely at Princeton? How do you avoid difficult interactions during your daily life? (e.g.– Do you hang out with your non-Christian teammates? Would you take ‘faith busters’ (REL 251) or Peter Singer’s Practical Ethics?)
- How are you living radically different? When you choose hang out at the street or partake in precepts, do you blend in? How might you think/act differently if your Christian convictions informed every aspect of your life?
- Do you have a support network? Where do you look and who can you turn to for biblical teaching, emotional support, and ethical guidance in the turmoil of Princeton?

Name Change Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Babylonian</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>My God (el) is my Judge</td>
<td>Belteshazzar</td>
<td>‘Bel’ (a god) protects me</td>
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