BEFORE YOU START

Who's who

Say it like this



DANIEL

DAN-yul

Also called Belteshazzar



SHADRACH

SHAD-rak

Hebrew name: Hananiah



MESHACH

MEE-shak

Hebrew name: Mishael



ABEDNEGO

uh-BED-nee-go

Hebrew name: Azariah

Nebuchadnezzar *(neb-uh-kad-NEZ-er)*: the king of Babylon

Belshazzar *(bel-SHAZ-er)* and **Darius** *(duh-RYE-us)*: the kings after him

Nabu-iddin *(NAH-boo-ID-in)*: a classmate who becomes a rival

Tobiah *(toe-BYE-uh)*: a boy from the boys' street in Jerusalem, kidnapped with them, who drifts away

Ashpenaz *(ASH-puh-naz)*: the official in charge of the young captives

A note on the story. This book retells Daniel 1–6, told by Meshach. Nabu-iddin and Tobiah are made up for the story, and the Bible doesn't say Meshach lived to see the lions' den. Telling it through his eyes as an old man is a storytelling choice. The verses quoted are from the NIV.

The four colors of the sashes are the four strands of the rope. Watch for it.

TALK IT OVER · CHAPTER 1

New Names

Read it: Daniel 1:1–7

Babylon can rename you. Only God gets to tell you who you are.

REAL LIFE

New place, new people, and everybody seems to already know who you're supposed to be: a coach, a roommate, a group chat, your own camera roll. After a while it's hard to tell which version is actually you. Daniel and his friends lost their home, their families and even their names. Babylon tried to rename them. It didn't get the last word on who they were.

TALK IT OVER

1. Do you ever feel like you're playing a character (faking it) just to fit in?
2. Is there a lie people say about you that you've quietly started to believe?
3. Who knows the real you and still likes you?

> *"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."* **Isaiah 43:1**

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Write down the label that's been loudest in your head lately. Next to it, write what God says about you (start with Isaiah 43:1). Show one friend.

Carrying something heavy? Talk to someone you trust. In the U.S. you can call or text 988 any time, day or night.

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TALK IT OVER · CHAPTER 2

The King's Table

Read it: Daniel 1:8–21

Faith that lasts is built one small choice at a time, and the friends you choose shape who you become.

REAL LIFE

Nobody wakes up and decides to wreck their life. It's one shortcut, one party, one photo, one "it's not that big a deal." Then it's normal. Tobiah wasn't a bad guy. He just wanted in, and a little at a time he forgot his name. Daniel didn't make a scene or sneak around. He asked respectfully, made one small choice, and stood next to friends who'd stand with him.

TALK IT OVER

1. What's your "king's table": the thing everyone around you is fine with that you know isn't fine for you?
2. Who makes it easier to be the person you want to be? Who makes it harder? Be honest.
3. What small choice this week would future you thank you for?

> *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* **Romans 12:2**

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Pick one small "no" or one small "yes" and hold it for ten days, like Daniel did. Tell one friend so they can ask how it's going.

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TALK IT OVER · CHAPTER 3

The Dream

Read it: Daniel 2

When life threatens to crush you, don't carry it alone. Pray honestly, together, and thank God first.

REAL LIFE

Some nights your brain won't shut off: money, grades, applications, a family that's coming apart, a future you can't plan. Meshach was scared, and he said so. That was his first honest prayer in a long time. The four friends didn't get any immediate answers to their prayers that night. But they still had their friendship and their faith.

TALK IT OVER

1. What's the one thing you think about that keeps you up at night?
2. Everyone is afraid of something. Is it harder for you to admit your fears to God or to your friends? Why?
3. Who would you call if you really needed someone? Even at 2 a.m.

> *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."* **Philippians 4:6**

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Text two friends: "Can I pray for you this week?" Then actually pray. And let them pray for you too.

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TALK IT OVER · CHAPTER 4

The Fire

Read it: Daniel 3

God doesn't always keep us out of the fire. He gets in it with us.

REAL LIFE

Standing up for what's right usually isn't dramatic. It's not joining the pile-on. It's telling the truth when a lie would be easier. It's saying no and getting left out. And sometimes the fire isn't something you chose: a sickness, a funeral, a divorce, depression. "Even if he does not" doesn't mean it won't hurt. It means you won't be in there alone.

TALK IT OVER

1. Where is everyone around you compromising (bowing down to an idol) right now? What would it cost you not to?
2. Have you ever prayed hard for something and God didn't come through the way you wanted? What did that do to your faith?
3. What fire (tough time) are you, or someone you love, in right now? Have you seen God anywhere in it?

> *"When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."* **Isaiah 43:2**

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Think of someone who's in a fire right now. Show up. Sit with them, text them, bring food. You don't need the right words.

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TALK IT OVER · CHAPTER 5

Just As Before

Read it: Daniel 4–6

Little things, every day, for a lifetime. That's how faith lasts.

REAL LIFE

Most people who walk away from faith after high school don't leave because of one big argument, disappointment or crisis. They drift. The good habits stop and the bad ones start to take over. Then the friend group changes. Then the faith fades. Daniel was in his eighties and still opening his window to pray three times a day, "just as he had done before." The crisis of the lions' den didn't cause that faithful pattern. Seventy years of ordinary days and right choices did.

TALK IT OVER

1. If someone looked at your screen time for a week, what would they say you care about most?
2. Picture yourself five years from now. Is your faith still standing? What has to happen between now and then for that to be true?
3. Who's someone further along in faith you could learn from? Who's someone younger in their faith who's watching you? How can you take responsibility for helping them grow?

> *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."* **Galatians 6:9**

TRY IT THIS WEEK

Pick one small thing (praying at the same time every day, reading a chapter of Luke, coffee with a friend who follows Jesus) and do it seven days straight.

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FOR GROUP LEADERS

Using this book with a group

Five chapters, five Talk It Over pages

Use one chapter a week alongside the series, or read the whole book in one sitting. Encourage your group to read the matching chapter, or the whole Sticking Around book (free, based on Daniel 1–6), too. Let people answer honestly; don't rush to fix. These stories touch real pain: pressure, loneliness, anxiety, grief, doubt and family breakups. Real life is complicated. Sometimes the solutions are not simple. Keep the conversation going. Be willing to stick around.

A SIMPLE PLAN FOR EACH CHAPTER

1. **Read** the chapter on your own or together (about 15 minutes).
2. **Read the Bible passage** listed on the Talk It Over page.
3. **Talk it over.** Start with question 1. Let silence sit. You don't need every answer.
4. **Try it this week.** Ask about it the next time you meet.

> *You don't have to be an expert. Show up, listen well, and point people back to the God who stays with them in the fire.*

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KEEP GOING

The story behind the story

Sticking Around started as a sermon series by Pastor Rick Melick.

Watch the series

All 11 Sticking Around messages on video

capitolcitystore.com/sticking-around ›

Read the book

Sticking Around: Faithfulness in Babylon, free on phone, tablet or e-book

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