



Summer Days – Sample Lesson

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LEADER OUTLINE

Sample Lesson: The summer of significance: challenging the norm this summer.

Main text: Daniel 1:8-16

Description: As Christians, we're not called to be normal. In fact, we're often called to be the exact opposite! In this lesson, we will talk about some things God is calling us to this summer that are definitely not the norm in our culture.

Supplies: A pen and paper to keep score with, trivia questions (provided below).

Game: Guess the delicacy! Read this list of food delicacies from other cultures and have students guess which are actually edible. The point of this is to show that cultural norms are different depending on where you are.

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. What are some things that are normal in this culture but that contradict God's word?
2. Why do you think Daniel resolved in his heart to not defile himself?
3. What kinds of things do you need to resolve in your heart for this summer?
4. Do you think that your previous summers have been very significant? Why or why not?
5. What about this summer do you want to be different from previous summers?
6. Do you think it's possible to do all things without complaining? Do you think it's worth a try?
7. Why do you think the Bible puts such an emphasis on not doing things out of selfish motives?
8. Do you think it's possible to be happy and selfish at the same time?
9. Do you think it's actually possible to rejoice always?
10. That verse says, "Rejoice in the Lord." What things do you have to rejoice in the Lord about?

OPENING GAME

For this game, allow the whole group to guess or choose 2 or more people to guess for the group. Read aloud these trivia questions about cultural delicacies from around the world, and let the group guess which things are actually enjoyed as meals in each country.

The point of this game is to show that cultural norms are always going to be different depending on where you are.

Questions:

In China:

- a. ***bird's nest soup***
- b. fried pine needles
- c. muddy noodles

In Cambodia:

- a. boiled cockroaches
- b. ***fried tarantulas***
- c. snake hearts

In Vietnam:

- a. ***wine with a poisonous snake inside.***
- b. live squid
- c. fried cockroaches

In Indonesia:

- a. worm pudding
- b. muddy noodles
- c. ***coffee made from cat poop.***

In Sardina:

- a. live octopus
- b. ***maggot infested cheese***
- c. boiled fish hearts

TEACH

Note: We encourage you to use this lesson as a guide, rather than a script. Customize and make it your own.

So, anyone want to go out to dinner in any of those countries? What's crazy is the things we find repulsive here are actually considered delicacies there. Who knows? The people who enjoy those things may find the foods we enjoy here disgusting!

It just goes to show you that cultural norms are always changing. So doesn't it seem kind of silly to build your life around something that will one day change? The kind of life that God calls us to doesn't change. But it does cause us to live opposite the norm.

It's very possible to just breeze through summer, this summer being no exception. It's completely possible to get to the end of the summer, look back, and think, "Well, that was relaxing, no different than any other summer, but it was nice."

This summer could be completely different than that if you want it to be. You could get to the end of this summer and look back on it and think, "That was the best summer of my whole life."

What's going to make it so great isn't going to be how crazy you got or how many vacations you went on. It's not going to be how many times you went to the beach. So what, then? What can make this summer better than any other summer?

Choosing to live with significance.

Read Daniel 1:8-10

"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. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your 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."

Daniel was in a new place with cultural norms that went against his personal beliefs. Instead of waiting until he was in the middle of things to try to make a decision, he resolved in his heart from the very beginning that he was not going to compromise, even if it meant living in a different way than everyone around him was living.

Read Daniel 1:11-15

“Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 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.” So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.”

Daniel decided in his heart how he was going to live, and even though he had to go against what that culture considered normal, he ended up better for it.

You have to resolve in your heart how you will live this summer. If you want to have a summer of significance, you can't just think you can go with the flow and that everything will be okay. You have to decide in your heart to not compromise.

Significance is defined as: Importance, having meaning or value, not accidental or random.

When you think of previous summers, do you think that most things were just accidental or random? The kind of summer that you just let happen? When you think of summers from your past, do you think of them as having meaning and value? What about this summer? Do you want something different? If so, you've got to be intentional this summer. It's time to do things on purpose.

Read Philippians 2:3-4

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others”.

We're not supposed to look out only for ourselves, but for others, too. That goes completely against this culture. Whether you realize it or not, we live in a culture that teaches selfishness. It teaches us to take all we can for ourselves before worrying about anyone else. Get more. Have more. Do whatever it takes to get ahead. But that's not what God wants! In fact, God's Word takes this and turns it completely upside down by telling us to do *nothing* out of selfish ambition. That's crazy!

I'm going to ask you some questions, and I don't want you to answer them out loud. Just answer them to yourself.

Think of the happiest person you know, the person that every time you're around them, their happiness and the way they live their life rub off on you.

Now, think of the most selfish person you know. Someone you never really see doing anything for anyone else.

Are these two people the same person? The answer is probably no. But isn't that interesting? If someone is completely selfish, they should be completely happy, right? Because they're only looking out for themselves! Isn't it funny how that works? When God tells us to do nothing out of selfishness, He knows it's not only the best for others; it's the best for us as well.

Read Philippians 2:14

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing.”

What?

Everything. Not most things, everything.

Do *everything* without grumbling or arguing.

Whoa! Those are some pretty giant expectations, but that's how God's kingdom works. It's contrary to the world and what the world teaches us. But is it worth it? Think about this—God is calling you to do all things without complaining. That's crazy! But think about if you took this summer and dedicated it to trying to follow that. Can you imagine if you were able to spend three months without complaining? Think of how happy you'd be at the end of that!

Read Philippians 2:12-13

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”

Don't just follow God's Word when you're at church or when you're with Christian friends. Remember what God's word says, and apply it in every area of your life. Don't just obey God's word when your youth leaders are around; obey it in all areas of your life.

Think of the summer of significance you could have if you applied God's Word, no matter where you are or who you're with.

Your own personal preference and comfort zone should not dictate what you allow God to do in your life. It may be uncomfortable at first to live out God's Word in front of your friends that aren't Christians. It may be a little awkward

when you don't join in on the things that they all do, things that you know you shouldn't do. But that's how God will work in your life!

Read Philippians 4:4

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

This may be one of the biggest opposites of today's culture. It's not popular to be happy in everything all the time; it's not popular to not complain. It just doesn't seem normal or even possible. But think about this: Paul wrote this while he was in prison! If he can rejoice in the Lord in that circumstance, you can do the same in yours.

Attitude is something that people notice about you almost immediately. If you are always rejoicing, no matter the circumstance, people are going to pick up on that. They're going to be able to see that you're different, and that's going to point back to Jesus.

Wrap-Up

You're the only person who gets to choose what kind of summer you will have. Do you want to have a random summer, one without any real meaning or purpose, or do you want to have a summer of significance?

If you want to have a summer of significance, it's going to mean doing things differently. It's going to mean going against the flow and doing things that are contrary to what everyone else considers normal. It may even mean some awkward situations. But if you go into this summer striving to have a summer of significance, then your summer will absolutely be significant. And that will be worth way more than the hard work it took to get there.

As we wrap-up today's message, I want you to pause for a moment and reflect on what we just talked about.

What one thing stuck out to you? What one truth struck a chord in your heart?

That just might be God speaking to you.

(Pause allow students to sit in silence for a minute or so, allowing God to speak to them.)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss the following questions in small groups:

1. What are some things that are normal in this culture but that contradict God's word?
2. Why do you think Daniel resolved in his heart to not defile himself?
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4. Do you think that your previous summers have been very significant? Why or why not?
5. How do you want this summer to be different from previous summers?
6. Do you think it's possible to do all things without complaining? Do you think it's worth a try?
7. Why do you think the Bible puts such an emphasis on not doing things out of selfish motives?
8. Do you think it's possible to be happy and selfish at the same time?
9. Do you think it's possible to rejoice always?
10. That verse says, "Rejoice in the Lord." What things do you have to rejoice about in the Lord?