

FIELD-TESTED SERMON RESOURCES

SERMON SERIES

TRUSTED | BIBLICAL | FIELD-TESTED

Thank you for downloading this sample PDF from our Sermon Series line of resources.

When you stand up in front of students to proclaim the Word of God, you need trusted, creative, and biblically solid content. YM360's Sermon Series are exactly what you're looking for!

Field-tested, from-the-trenches of youth ministry, YM360 Sermon Series are complete detailed sermon outlines, discussion questions, and graphic packages designed to help you lead students closer to God through proclaiming His Word.

SERIES OVERVIEW FOR BABYLON: Following Jesus in a Foreign Land

Have you ever gotten that feeling that you're out of place or that you don't quite belong? As we try to live lives that honor and glorify Jesus, we often run into roadblock after roadblock. We can sometimes even feel like we're exiles living in a foreign land, similar to the Israelites in Babylon. The truth is, our world operates under entirely different motives than we do, and whether we like it or not, a part of being a follower of Jesus is learning to be an exile in a strange land. In a world with totally opposite rules and expectations, we have to learn what it means to live according to God's Word and stand strong in our faith even when the world says it doesn't make sense.

"BABYLON" COVERS THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES AND PASSAGES:

- **Session 1 – Maintain Your Identity (Daniel 1) |** We all have a God-given identity, but when we're exiles in a foreign land, will we choose to keep it or give it away? We're all faced with the decision to conform to the world or stand strong in our faith, but sometimes we don't really know how to do that. Thankfully, God has given us all that we need in Jesus so that we can maintain our identity in Him.
- **Session 2 – Be a Leader (Daniel 1:8) |** Our world centers around the desire to gain more followers, but at the cost of looking the same as everyone else. Being a leader in Babylon means that we're going to look different, and sometimes we can believe that we're not qualified. But in Jesus, we're given the strength to be leaders, not followers.
- **Session 3 – When We Lead, Others Will See (Daniel 3) |** When God calls us to step out and lead, it can be scary. You know you're supposed to, but it's tempting to think that no one will follow and you'll be left alone. However, the truth is that leading isn't about gaining a following. When God calls us to lead others, He's calling us to stand out by following Him wholeheartedly. When we do this, other people see it, and God is glorified.
- **Session 4 – God Is Still Good (Daniel 3:16-18) |** It's sometimes easy to fall into believing that God is only as good as His gifts are. And when tribulations come, it may feel as if our world is crumbling around us. How are we to believe that God is still good even when it seems like Babylon is winning? Because He sent Jesus to die for us, we can know that God is still good.

"BABYLON" IS PART OF YM360'S SERMON SERIES LINE OF RESOURCES AND IS IDEAL FOR:

- Any large group setting
- Mid-week youth service
- "Master teacher" format

BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE . . .

EVERY SERMON SERIES FROM YM360 COMES WITH:

- **Detailed Sermon Outlines** – Every Sermon Series comes with detailed sermon outlines. Teach them "as is" or adapt them to suit your specific ministry context.
- **Discussion questions** – Questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives. You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go.
- **Title and Background slides** – These are designed to be dropped into your favorite presentation software to help you build a creative environment around your sermon. Use them as a backdrop for song lyrics, Scripture passages, teaching points, and any illustrations you choose to display.
- **Artwork for promo and social media** – Social media images, web banners, and a printable poster file are included. Perfect for newsletters, websites, social media platforms, or print them off for posters and bulletin inserts.
- **Logo (including native logo design files)** – We include a logo file and the native design files to allow you to use the logo in ways you see fit.
- **100% downloadable and adaptable**

Each YM360 Sermon Series comes with title and background slides, promotional art (including Instagram images), and logo treatments. Here is what to expect.

**BACKGROUND AND
TITLE SLIDES**



**PROMOTIONAL
ARTWORK**



**INSTAGRAM
IMAGES**



**LOGO
TREATMENT**

BABYLON

NOTE: Each YM360 Sermon Series also comes with the native files of the logo in case you want to replicate the design for other uses.

Babylon Sermon Series | Session 1: Maintain Your Identity

How To Use A YM360 Sermon Series | YM360 Sermon Series are designed for use by a communicator in a large group setting. Each series download provides various elements such as a detailed sermon outline, suggestions on illustrations or images, Scripture passages, background information, and application points that you can use to craft a message that speaks to your students in your specific context.

This series download also includes discussion questions that can be used to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

Make sure to leverage the series logo, title slide, background slides, and social media artwork this YM360 Sermon Series provides for promotion and message support. We've even included the native design files to allow you the freedom to use the logo in any way that meets your needs.

This YM360 Sermon Series was created to be suitable for all types of churches and ministry environments. It was intentionally designed to provide you with everything you need while also allowing you the freedom to make it fit your particular ministry context. Nobody knows your ministry like you do. Therefore, we encourage you to make any adjustments to this series you feel are necessary to best fit the needs of your students, church, or ministry context.

A Prayer Before You Prepare | Heavenly Father, all glory, honor, and praise belongs to You alone! You are worthy of all of my adoration. You alone formed the world and called what You created "good." Thank You for being who You are. Thank You for creating me in Your likeness. Thank You for Your abundant mercy and grace. Every good gift, including Your Word, is a gift to me. Today, I want to worship You! Let my life be for You and Your glory. Lord, please give me Your wisdom and insight now as I approach Your Word. Help me to discern the truth of this text. Help me to not rely on my own understanding. Remove my ego, wants, and selfish desires. Guide and direct me as I prepare to teach the truth of Your Holy Scriptures to the students whom You love and have placed within my care for such a time as this. May the words I speak be those You want spoken, may the words they hear be those You want heard, and may Your name be glorified through it all. Amen!

Babylon Teaching Guide | A One-Page Glimpse Of Everything You Need To Prepare

Series Snapshot | *Babylon* is a four-session sermon series that will help your students understand that as they follow Jesus, their lives will look drastically different than the world around them. Students will learn what it looks like to stand strong in their faith even when they are faced with all the world's temptations, and they will be better prepared to live for God in our modern-day Babylon.

Series Overview | Have you ever gotten that feeling that you're out of place or that you don't quite belong? As we try to live lives that honor and glorify Jesus, we often run into roadblock after roadblock. We can sometimes even feel like we're exiles living in a foreign land, similar to the Israelites in Babylon. The truth is, our world operates under entirely different motives than we do, and whether we like it or not, a part of being a follower of Jesus is learning to be an exile in a strange land. In a world with totally opposite rules and expectations, we have to learn what it means to live according to God's Word and stand strong in our faith even when the world says it doesn't make sense.

- **Session 1 - Maintain Your Identity (Daniel 1)** | We all have a God-given identity, but when we're exiles in a foreign land, will we choose to keep it or give it away? We're all faced with the decision to conform to the world or stand strong in our faith, but sometimes we don't really know how to do that. Thankfully, God has given us all that we need in Jesus so that we can maintain our identity in Him.
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Babylon Series | Session 1

Large Group Teaching Summary | We all have a God-given identity, but when we're exiles in a foreign land, will we choose to keep it or give it away? We're all faced with the decision to conform to the world or stand strong in our faith, but sometimes we don't really know how to do that. Thankfully, God has given us all that we need in Jesus so that we can maintain our identity in Him.

Key Takeaway | In Jesus, we can maintain our God-given identity.

Scripture Focus | Daniel 1:1-21

What You May Need | *Optional Illustration:* Changing to Fit In (Personal Story), *Optional Illustration:* Making Friends Quickly (Personal Story)

Babylon Sermon Series | Session 1: Maintain Your Identity

I. Introduction

- A. Tonight, we are starting a new series called *Babylon*.
1. As we begin this new series, it is important to understand what Babylon is in Biblical times so that we can understand what Babylon is in our present times. In short, the nation of Babylon has overtaken Israel and is now taking the Israelites into captivity, back to Babylon, to serve their king.
 2. All throughout Scripture, the name “Babylon” is used to represent a foreign authority that rules very differently than God. If Israel is the nation that operates under God’s perfect rule, then Babylon is the nation that operates under man’s sinful rule. Babylon has different guidelines, values, and a completely different way of living, and they will try to get the people of God to live their way instead of God’s way.
 3. Does this sound familiar at all? You shouldn’t have to think about it for very long to see that this is a lot like what followers of Jesus experience today. Our friends, our school, our city, our teams, and maybe even our families will try to convince us to live in a way that often contradicts our faith. Our world constantly tries to convince us that its way of life is far better for us than God’s way of life.
 4. In this way and so many others, we live in our own Babylon type even today. As followers of Jesus, it can often feel like we’re out of place, and the temptation is to try to fit into the world around us. To give up what we know is true so that we can feel like we belong.
- B. And this longing to belong somewhere is not a bad thing! WE’VE ALL BEEN CREATED WITH A SOUL THAT LONGS TO BELONG. But again, the problem is that when we are surrounded by the people and culture of Babylon, our soul will try to conform and take on Babylon as its home.
1. ***Optional Illustration: Tell a story about a season of life or a culture of people that make friends really fast and describe those friendships as if they have more depth than they really have. However, the reality is that these friendships are made for survival and out of their loneliness. It could be your first semester in college, a new school after a big move, or even a time your friends shunned you.***
 - a) Ex: I tell a story of my first few days at college and how people would meet new friends and talk about them as if they were their soulmates and were inseparable even though they had known them for less than a week. The reality wasn’t that they were super close, but that each was super lonely and needed new friends because we missed what we had.
- C. In these types of friendships, we reveal our soul’s deep longing to belong to something or someone at almost all costs. When surrounded by something different from what we’re familiar with, we can go into panic mode and latch onto the first thing we see.

II. Tension

- A. WE WILL ABANDON OUR IDENTITY IN ORDER TO BELONG
1. ***Optional Illustration: Tell a story about a time you personally clung to something new and/or foreign to fit in.***

- a) Ex: I tell a story about moving to a new school in 3rd grade and having grown up an Arkansas Razorback fan my whole life. However, at my new school in Texas, all the kids around me were Texas Longhorn fans. In order to survive and make new friends, I adopted a new sports team to be a fan of, cheer for, and wear the colors of so that I could make new friends. I abandoned something foundational to how I had lived before in order to live in this new world.
 2. When you feel the need to belong strong enough, you will abandon your identity, convictions, and beliefs and craft a new one. This isn't always terrible, but a lot of times, it's really unhealthy.
 3. This is that moment when you go to college, you come back home, and your parents are like, "Who even is this person?" Because in just six short months, you have moved to a new place, made new friends, been exposed to new information, and in your introduction to adult life, you've become someone different than you were. You've crafted new beliefs and started believing something totally new.
 4. But this isn't just something that's going to happen when you graduate and move off to college. This is something that is happening right now. Because the truth is that if you're a part of the family of God, then you're in the process of being transformed and being made to look more like Jesus. But every time you walk out the front door, the world wants you to look different. It's going to give you a different message. It's trying to give you different hopes and promises that honestly don't fill you up.
 5. And sometimes, it's just small changes. It probably won't start with a big change or altogether abandoning your faith. It'll usually start with a slight adjustment or adding a little something onto a belief until you look up and you're a long way from where you used to be.
 6. And I have found that more often than not, when we haven't already come face to face with this truth and tried to prepare for it, then it's that much easier for the world to change us. And all of a sudden, we've abandoned our entire identity in Jesus and placed our identity in the world – in Babylon.
- B. This is the kind of scenario we step into in Daniel 1 as we see a group of young men who strongly believe in God and how He wants them to live. But all of that is challenged by the Babylonians and their way of life. Which identity will they cling to, and what do they do to stay faithful to it?

III. Scripture

- A. For some background, this is what's happening in Daniel. As I mentioned earlier, Babylon defeated Israel and took some of the Israelites into exile. Exile is just a big word for being thrown out or taken away. They are now living in a world that is not their own, under rules that are not their own, gods that are not their own, and expectations that are not their own.
1. As people of God, this idea of being exiled might feel really familiar to you. It's that tension we get in our souls when we realize everyone else lives a certain way or is doing something that doesn't align with who God is. It's the feeling that you don't quite fit into the world's standards. It's the feeling that there's a better way, a better life, a better place out there.

Babylon Sermon Series | Session 1: Maintain Your Identity

2. During this exile, Daniel and his three friends, whom you might also know if you grew up in church, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are asked to be servants in the king's court. And there's a particular way of life when you're in the king's court. There are specific things that you do, that you say, even that you eat and drink. But all these expectations would require Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to compromise their identity in God. They're faced with the decision that you and I face every day – do they stand strong in their God-given identity and consequently stand out, or do they conform to the Babylonian identity so they can fit in?

B. Read DANIEL 1:1-7

1. These four men are at the top of their class. These guys are like the varsity athletes, the best of the best, the smartest and wisest. These are some of the most successful men among the Israelite people. It's precisely why they are chosen for the king's court.
2. So, the king brings them in and tells them they are to eat the food and drink the wine of the king's court, but this doesn't match up with the strict dietary restrictions that the people of Israel have been given. The point of these restrictions is that Lord wants His people to look and behave differently than the rest of the world around them.

C. Read DANIEL 1:8-10

1. Daniel basically hears this requirement and says, "Hey, we've been given instructions on what to eat from God, and we want to stick to those requirements." And the king's eunuch looks back at Daniel and says he's worried that if they don't eat the king's food and drink the king's wine, they'll start to look sick, skinny, and weak. And then it'll be known that they haven't been eating the king's food, and the eunuch will be held responsible for it.
2. So, what does Daniel do here? How does he deal with this push to conform to Babylon when God's directions are so clearly different?

D. Read DANIEL 1:11-21

1. So again, what Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are being told here in Daniel 1 is that if they conform to the Babylonian way, if they conform to the world's way and abandon the way of the Lord, they'll be the strongest and the smartest and the wisest people in the land. They'll gain more by doing this the world's way than they could ever get by doing it the Lord's way.
2. But Daniel tells the eunuch to give him and his friends only vegetables to eat and water to drink and to test them for ten days. First of all, this is the quickest fitness plan ever to exist. Ten days?! But Daniel assures the eunuch that they will look healthier than all the other men who were eating the king's food and drinking the king's wine. By doing things according to how the Lord had commanded them, they will be stronger, wiser, smarter, and healthier than anyone else who is doing it according to the world's way.
3. In our day and time, we don't really use food like that, so we have to think about how this applies to us. What are the things the world tries to use to get you to conform to its way of living? What lie does the world try to sell you by saying, "You can only be successful in this world if you do this..."? What is the king's food and wine for me, a 16-year-old?
4. I think it looks a little something like this...

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- a) You will never be successful if you don't go to a big college
 - b) And you won't go to a big college if you don't take so many classes that you're regularly in tears
 - c) And to make it in those classes, you're going to have to cheat to maintain a high enough class position
 - d) Oh, and you're going to need scholarships, so overload your schedule and fill it up with community service, which is a good thing, but you're going to have a super unhealthy relationship with it
 - e) Next, you need love. So start dating
 - f) And you'll really only understand love once you start having sex and having a lot of it.
 - g) So just pretend to be married so that one day you can be good at being married.
 - h) And if you do all these things, you'll be happy...which is the ultimate goal in life, right?
5. Welcome to Babylon. Is that not the message of being great and successful in the world you live in? Is that not what is force-fed to you every day?
 6. "Take 17 AP classes and stress yourself out so that you can get ahead in college," but you hate the life you're living right now. "Be famous on social media; go viral! Connect with thousands of people!" But no one's going to really listen to what you have to say because it's for no good reason. And none of those people really care about you – only what you can produce.
 7. I was watching a movie the other day called Castaway, and the premise is that this guy gets stranded on an island by himself, and his only friend is a ball that he names Wilson. And we think to ourselves, "Oh, how depressing. His only friend is Wilson." But y'all, we're all staring at Wilson every day; it just looks like your phone.
 8. I hear a lot from parents that they just want their kid to be like every other kid. Why? Statistically, the average teenager is depressed, riddled with anxiety, and emotionally homeless. You know that all of this is true. You know that's how your friends feel. You know that's how you feel. You live in this world. You navigate this world every day. You're living in Babylon right now.
 9. You're living in a world that tells you that if you do these certain things, you'll be successful and happy. But ask any adult in the room – it's all a lie. None of these things are fulfilling. Our degrees, all that studying and stressing over school, it doesn't fulfill us. Our dating life when we were teenagers never fulfilled those promises. As a matter of fact, it just made for some pretty awkward and hard conversations when you meet the person you want to marry and be with forever.
 10. Don't. Buy. Into it.

IV. Application

A. How will you live in Babylon?

1. WILL YOU CHOOSE TO MAKE GOD SUPPLEMENTAL?

- a) When you go out into your everyday life and try only to use God as a supplement to your life, it's like trying to eat the king's food and adding in a carrot every now and then. But at the end of the story, Daniel and his friends are ten times more than the Babylonians thought they would

- be. They're ten times smarter, ten times more fit, ten times healthier, and ten times wiser because they remained faithful to the Lord.
- b) God isn't going to honor something that causes us to regularly abandon Him. He won't honor relationships that cause us to regularly abandon Him. He won't honor the pursuit of scholarships that causes us to regularly abandon Him. Because look at how He treats Daniel. The one who stayed faithful to Him and the way He asked him to live.
 - c) But the hard truth is that some of us, if not all of us, are trying to live in Babylon and just use God as a supplement to the life we want to live. And what ends up happening is that we look just like Babylon. We're tired, empty, depressed, and unfulfilled.
 - d) Giving our life to Jesus isn't about what we might "miss out on" according to the world; it's about what we gain even though it looks different. And in the end, we are better off than the rest of the world because Jesus offers us something the world could never give us – joy, hope, unconditional love, and eternal life in Him.
2. OR WILL YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE GOD'S WAY?
- a) We can't move out of Babylon. We're here until the Lord says otherwise. But we don't have to live by its rules.
 - b) We can choose to live differently and lean into Jesus and His ways to guide us in this world even when it looks crazy. We can choose to see how Scripture points to a full life and that the world only leads us to emptiness. We can choose to define success by God's standards and not the world's. We can live as faithful exiles in Babylon who are set apart to make a difference for the glory of God.
 - c) Why would we choose to live any other way when Jesus freely gives us more than Babylon could ever dream of offering?

V. Gospel

- A. MAINTAIN YOUR GOD-GIVEN IDENTITY IN A WORLD THAT TRIES TO STEAL IT
- 1. Because Jesus came saying, "You can find rest in Me. In My Kingdom. In My way of life." Jesus came to give you a new identity. He promises to love you in a way that no other person in your entire life ever has or ever will. And He always follows through on His promises.
 - 2. On top of that, He gives us some commands and some directions for how to live our lives so that we can have life and life abundantly through Him. We don't have to go looking for it in other places; it's all in Him. So don't cave to Babylon's way of doing things and its empty promises because all it does is give you a full calendar and an empty life.
 - 3. Jesus gives you a new identity and a way to live out that identity that this world could never offer, and when we live in that identity, we will feel like we are in exile because we won't look like this world anymore.
- B. We follow a Jesus who, when He comes face to face with a rich man, a man who has everything according to the world's standards, tells him to go and sell everything. And when we come to that passage, we might ask, "Why does Jesus want us to have nothing?" But that's not what's happening. Jesus doesn't want us to have nothing; He

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just doesn't want us to be owned by everything around us. He wants us to have an abundant life that's more than we could ever imagine, but only He can give it to us.

1. Look at how much freedom we have in Christ that we could sell everything we have, and our identity remains untouched. That the things we own don't own us.
2. Look at how much freedom we have in Christ that we can rest more and still be confident in our future because He holds our future. That our accolades don't define us.

VI. Conclusion

- A. With all of this being said, I know that all of us have all but given in to Babylon before. That we've all been buried under Babylon's crushing demands before. Maybe you're still there tonight. But there is freedom in Jesus for you in this very moment.
- B. What would happen if your generation refused to live according to Babylon's ways? What would it look like if you refused to conform and instead chose to be faithful to the way of life that God is calling you to? Maintain your God-given identity. Don't let the world steal it.
- C. Let's pray.

Babylon Sermon Series | Session 1 Discussion Questions: Maintain Your Identity

Babylon Series Overview | Have you ever gotten that feeling that you're out of place or that you don't quite belong? As we try to live lives that honor and glorify Jesus, we often run into roadblock after roadblock, and we can sometimes even feel like we're exiles living in a foreign land, similar to the Israelites in Babylon. The truth is, our world operates under completely different motives than we do, and whether we like it or not, a part of being a follower of Jesus is learning to be an exile in a strange land. In a world that has totally opposite rules and expectations, we have to learn what it means to live according to God's Word and stand strong in our faith even when the world says it doesn't make sense.

Large Group Teaching Summary | We all have a God-given identity, but when we're exiles in a foreign land, will we choose to keep it or give it away? We're all faced with the decision to conform to the world or stand strong in our faith, but sometimes we don't really know how to do that. Thankfully, God has given us all that we need in Jesus so that we can maintain our identity in Him.

Key Takeaway | In Jesus, we can maintain our God-given identity.

Scripture Focus | Daniel 1:1-21

Babylon | Session 1 Discussion Questions

You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

Get Them Talking | An Optional Opening Question To Get Students Talking

1. What's your favorite vegetable? What about your least? Do you think you could eat just vegetables and water for 10 days straight?

Discussion Questions

1. Read Daniel 1:1-21. What does this teach you about God? What does it teach you about yourself?
2. How does the world define success? How would the Bible define it? What about you? What are the biggest differences you see in those definitions?
3. Do you ever feel like an exile or like you don't belong somewhere? What makes you feel that way?
4. What are some things you struggle with when it comes to standing strong in your faith? What are some of the things that the world uses against you (ex. popularity, school, sports, etc.)? Which of these do you struggle with the most? Why do you think that is?
5. Do you ever feel like staying faithful to God is just too hard? Or like it's reserved for a special type of Christian? What makes you feel that way? What would it take for you to believe otherwise?
6. Do you really believe that you have everything you'll ever need or want in Jesus? Why or why not? What makes it easy or hard to believe this?
7. How are you supposed to stand strong in your faith and maintain your identity in God? What are some ways that you can refuse to live like the world and instead maintain your God-given identity in your life this week?