

DANIEL

DETERMINING TO GO GOD'S WAY – SPIRITUAL LIVING IN A SECULAR WORLD

Session 1 – Chapter 1

Have you got what it takes?

4. What aspect of Daniel's character or conduct in this chapter impresses you the most?
 - a. How can you cultivate that same quality in your own life?

Read this excerpt and answer question 5

Even a cursory reading of the Old Testament reveals that the majority of God's people have not always followed the Lord and kept His commandments. It has always been the "faithful remnant" within the Jewish nation that has come through the trials and judgments to maintain the divine covenant and make a new beginning. The prophet Isaiah named one of his sons "Shear-jashub," which means "a remnant shall return" (Isa 7:3). The same principle applies to the church today, for not everybody who professes faith in Jesus Christ is truly a child of God (Matt. 7:21 – 23). In His messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor, our Lord always had a special word for "the overcomers," the faithful remnant in each congregation who sought to obey the Lord (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 24 – 28; 3:4 – 5, 12, 21). Daniel and his three friends were a part of the faithful Jewish remnant in Babylon, placed there by the Lord to accomplish His purposes.

~ Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Resolute (second edition, David C. Cook, 2008), pages 19 – 20

5. How can you tell that Daniel and his friends were part of the "faithful remnant" Wiersbe refers to in the previous excerpt?
 - a. What role does confidence in God play in those who are faithful?
 - b. What role does confidence play in Daniel's story?
 - c. What role does confidence play in stories of other faithful followers?

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6. What does divine help look like in Daniel's story?
 - a. If God works according to His own plan, that means He doesn't always "show up" when we expect. How did Daniel overcome this fear of God not showing up? How do Christians today overcome this same fear?
 - b. How does this fear incapacitate Christians' ability to do God's will?

7. How did God use Daniel's health to witness to the king?
 - a. What does this story teach us about the unique ways in which believers can witness to others?
 - b. What are some stories from your experience that point to the creative ways God uses people's stories to speak to nonbelievers?

8. What are some of the trials Daniel endures in Daniel 1?
 - a. What specific clues does he give to suggest he is not a conformer?

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9. Daniel took a diplomatic approach to denying the king's request. Do you tend to respond to things you don't agree with out of anger? Frustration? Or do you act more diplomatically?
- What is the value of Daniel's approach?
10. In what ways do you find Daniel's decision to avoid conforming inspirational?
- In what ways do you find it difficult to read?
 - What are some areas of conforming to the world that you find it hard to refuse?
 - Why is that?

REFLECTION – GOING FORWARD

- Think of **ONE or TWO** things that you have learned that you'd like to work on in the coming week.
 - *You can list these things on page one of your study binder titled Going Forward.*

Remember that this is all about QUALITY, not QUANTITY. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly (or to be so overwhelmed that you simply don't try).
- Daniel's first trial was being asked to eat food that would have defiled him according to God's law. Take stock of the things in your life that have the potential to "defile" according to what it means to live a life pleasing to God. This could be anything from bad habits to attitudes. After making your list, spend time in prayer asking God to give you the strength and wisdom to overcome these things.
 - *You can list these things on page two of your study binder titled Application under Session One.*
- Invite God to work on your mind and heart in those areas you've previously noted. Be honest about your desires and fears, consider writing them down.

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WHEN TO TAKE A STAND – GROUP DISCUSSION

Look for ways to put into practice the things you wrote down on page 1. Talk with other group members about your ideas and commit to being accountable to one another.

During the coming week, ask the Holy Spirit to continue to reveal truth to you from what you've read and studied.

Disclaimer: There could be years of teachings and lessons we could pull from this book, our main focus is to examine character in this specific study. If there is a subject, historical detail, or any other question unrelated to character you may have it is not "off the table". I encourage you after we conclude our session to raise the question to myself or any member of the leadership team. Additionally, I would encourage you to "team up" with someone that you can bounce thoughts off of, ask questions, and grow from as you participate in this study. As we begin today, we will explore a few details about the Book of Daniel to gain some context and understanding about the book before we dive into character. Again, I would highly encourage you to keep record of your questions and share them.

The Book of Daniel was written by Daniel

- Daniel's authorship is criticized especially because of the amazing prophecies but also because of the 3rd person accounts. Our defense:
- 1. Customary to speak in 3rd person
- 2. Even God switches... **Ex. 20:2 I am the LORD your God, Ex. 20:7 for the LORD will not hold him *guiltless***
- 3. The best defense of all... Jesus says, **Mat 24:15 Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet.**

The Book of Daniel speaks of events of the second century before Jesus with amazing precision.

The Book of Daniel is not chronological, but its order is divine. If we were to look at the events of Daniel chronologically it would like this:

1-4 Captivity and interpretations 605 – 562 BC

7 Vision of the 4 beasts – 1st year of Belshazzar 549BC

8 Vision of the ram and he-goat – 3rd year of Belshazzar 547 BC

5 Belshazzars feast – conquest of Babylon – 539 BC

9 seventy weeks – 538 BC

6 – Daniel in the lions' den

10-12 Daniels prayers and visions

2:4 – 7:28 Aramaic because focus is on the gentile nations

1:1 – 2:3, 8:1 – 12:13 Hebrew

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1:1-2

- Our story begins in 605 BC 1st of 3 entries into Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and his friends are taken on this siege.
- Jehoiakim is King of Judah 608 - 597, in his 11th year of reign, approximately 597 BC he is deported in the 2nd of 3 entries into Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (**2 Ki 24:14-16**)
- His son, Jehoiachin reigns for 3 months and 10 days, also is captured and taken to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar appoints Zedekiah as the final King.
- He reigns for 11 years until Nebuchadnezzar's 3rd and final entry, he captures and destroys Jerusalem and the temple in 587-6 BC. Zedekiah tries to escape, but is captured outside Jericho. He is sentenced to watching his sons be killed before him and then his own eyes put out. (**2 Ki 25**)
- As a side note: If you want a picture of Jerusalem during this time read Lamentations.
- All three of these kings did evil in sight of the Lord.
- Jehoiachin was released by Nebuchadnezzar's successor Amel-Marduk "Evil-Marduk" and given a throne in Babylon in 560 BC. Interesting that he also would have seen all that Daniel and his friends did, but chooses evil over good, continuing to do evil in sight of the Lord.

1:3-5

- Nebuchadnezzar keeps for himself the brightest and best looking sons of Israel, king's descendants, and nobles to be educated in their ways for 3 years to eventually serve the king.

1:6-7

- 4 of these men are named and receive new Babylonian appropriate names. (14-17 years of age)

1:8-17

- Daniel and his friends take a graceful stand in the matter of food, stick to a vegetarian diet, and they were honored and blessed by the one true God.
- Not because God loves vegetarians more, but because they kept His commandments as we will see.

1:18-21

- Nebuchadnezzar sits down with the four young men after the 10 days and Nebuchadnezzar was blown away by them, therefore they served before the king. In a short time, they were already 10x better than all the magicians and astrologers.

So now as we enter our study, **PRAY PRAY PRAY**

- Who are we working on to instill biblical morals and principles? Children, siblings, friends, family members.
- For those of us with children we are diligently raising them in a Christian home and involving them in church life.
- For some of us we were raised in a home similar to this, for others such as myself we were not raised in a home like this.

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- I was taught that God did exist and I should always be a good person, I was raised on Thumper philosophy, “If I didn’t have anything nice to say, then say nothing at all.” Another one, “treat others the way I would like to be treated,” kind of like Luke 6:31, but I never knew that.
- By the grace of God, church group that persisted for over a year.
- Shortly after receiving Him into my life I would go out into the real world and have to stand on my own two feet. I shifted and swayed, I was pulled further from a relationship from Him, because I had no foundation of how to have a relationship with Him in the first place, again I thank the Lord I found my way.
- Now, unlike myself, all of Daniel’s responses throughout this book and in this first chapter indicate a young man raised in a Godly home. Daniel’s transition from a godly and spiritual home into a secular and challenging world, at the age of about fifteen, was sudden.
- Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army swooped into Judah, one of many conquests.
 - Their approach to conquest: A puppet king and army to keep the peace so that a flow of money continued down the pipeline into Babylon.
 - As we know from our teaching and reading Nebuchadnezzar also kept for himself some of the brightest young men for his court, this was the case for Daniel. At a young age he would be pulled from his godly home, from his parents and his life in a rural area and be cast into the center of a sophisticated and powerful empire. All the pressure was on Daniel to conform to the culture and belief, but he did not, he continued to be transformed by God. We are either “conformers or transformers”

This is the same pressure Christians face every day, as the title of this study suggests, spiritual living in a secular world. We are told that our faith is a fairytale, child’s play and that we ought to abandon it for a broader view of the world.

- Have we got what it takes to take a stand, to stand apart from the world, and be transformers, being transformed by God as opposed to being conformed to the world?

Daniel knew when to draw a line in the sand and take a stand. He had what it takes to be transformed by the Lord and not conformed into the world. Let’s look at a few things that point to this attitude Daniel displayed in this passage which will continue throughout the Book of Daniel.

- ***(Q8a) What specific clues does he give to suggest he is not a conformer?***

So as we look at the...

The King’s food: we will see Daniel (Commit to obedience in advance)

- No fight recorded as he was taken from his family (vv. 3-6)
- No creative counterplan as his godly name was replaced with an ungodly one (vv. 7-8)
 - Daniel = God is my judge : Belteshazzar = Bel protect his life, Bel is a general term for god, probably same as Marduk the patron deity of Babylon.
 - Hannaniah = the LORD shows grace : Shadrach = command of Aku (the moon-god)
 - Mishael = who is like God? : Meshach = who is as Aku is?

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- Azariah-The Lord is my help : Abednego = Servant of Nebo (Nego) God of wisdom and writing; Assyrian Hermes **IS 46:1 Jer 48:1**
- Would we expect unbelievers to do anything different?
- Where did Daniel choose to take his stand? *Daniel took a stand on the issue of food. (vv. 8)*
 - Pre-established convictions (**purposed:** establish, transform into, fix) (**in his heart:** inner man) (vv. 8)
 - *It was pre-planned.*
 - The law of Moses did not forbid enrollment in a Babylonian training course or taking a name with a false god embedded into it.
 - It was however specific on what to eat and not to eat Deuteronomy 14:8-20
 - So instead, a diet of pulse (vegetarian)
 - ✓ THE TIME TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO OBEDIENCE IS BEFORE THE HOUR HAS COME TO MAKE A DECISION. BEFORE YOU GET TO WORK, WHERE YOU KNOW YOU MAY BE TEMPTED, OR BEFORE YOU LOG ONTO THE INTERNET WHERE MANY TEMPTATIONS LIE, MAKE THE COMMITMENT TO BE OBEDIENT TO THE LORD.
 - ✓ LET'S PURPOSE IN OUR HEARTS TO TAKE A STAND FOR THOSE THINGS THAT ARE BIBLICAL TRUTHS, FOR THOSE THINGS THAT ARE PLEASING TO THE LORD.

Good manners: we will see Daniel (Stand for the truth of God with grace)

- Daniel took a stand when it counted with wisdom, tact, and politeness. **(vv. 9)**
- When he was faced with a situation that would have required him to disobey God's Word, he didn't become violent, rude, or start a riot. **(vv. 8, 12)**
- Instead, he wisely devised a plan and then graciously presented it to his overseer. Daniel learned to stand for the truth of God with grace. **(vv. 12-13)**
 - **(Q1a) How does God use Daniel's polite defiance to glorify Himself?**
 - **(Q9) So Daniel took a diplomatic approach to denying the king's request. Do you tend to respond to things you don't agree with out of anger? Frustration? Or do you act more diplomatically?**
 - ✓ WE NEED SOME OF THAT SAME SPIRIT TO STAND FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD WITH GRACE. WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES IN A SITUATION THAT IS OPPOSED TO OUR BELIEFS WE SHOULD OPERATE WITH WISDOM, TACT, AND POLITENESS, EXTENDING AND EXHIBITING THAT SAME GRACE WE HAVE RECEIVED. OUR LORD IS LONGERSUFFERING, MERCIFUL, AND GRACIOUS ABOUNDING IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH.

A few good friends: (Daniel spends his time with Godly friends)

- Daniel associated with other godly friends, he stuck close to other committed believers.
- The pressure to conform will never cease... **We face it in the Lord's strength or we fall without Him.** Daniel made a choice ahead of time and he had friends that stood with him in those decisions.
- *C.S. Lewis once said, "Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art... It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things that give value to survival."*

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- **(Q5) How can you tell that Daniel and his friends were part of the “faithful remnant”? What role does this confidence in God play in those who are faithful?**
 - ✓ WHO DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME WITH OUTSIDE OF FAMILY AND EXTENDED CHURCH FAMILY? ARE YOU THE ONLY ONE THAT IS COMMITTED TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN THAT GROUP? ARE YOU THE ONLY ONE THAT GUIDES HIS LIFE BY BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES, SEEKING THE LORD'S WILL IN YOUR LIFE? WE SHOULD REACH THE OUTSIDE BUT THOSE WE SPEND A LARGE PART OF OUR TIME WITH COULD LEAD TO A STUNT IN OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH, AN UNHEALTHY RUT IF THEY AREN'T GUIDED BY THE SAME PRINCIPLES.

Taking it home: (Be a Godly example)

- Godly influence in Daniel's home
- Set him on a lifetime course of obedience and faithfulness to God. ***PS 128:3, PRO 22:6, COL 3:21***
“FATHER'S, DO NOT PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN LEST THEY BECOME DISCOURAGED.”
- (4a) What aspect of Daniel's character or conduct in this chapter impresses you the most? (PAUSE for first answer) How can you cultivate that same quality in your own life?***
 - ✓ CAREERS ASIDE, EDUCATIONS ASIDE, NOTHING CAN ERASE A GODLY EXAMPLE CONSISTENTLY IN PLACE IN THE HOME. A CHILD MAY REJECT THAT EXAMPLE AND GO THEIR OWN WAY BUT THE INFLUENCE NEVER DISAPPEARS. ARE WE GUIDING BY A GODLY EXAMPLE IN OUR HOMES? ARE OUR REACTIONS, OUR PRACTICES CONSISTENT WITH WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES? ARE WE MINISTERING TO OUR FAMILY, GUIDING OUR HOUSEHOLD BY THE SPIRIT?

FOUR POINTS:

- COMMIT TO OBEDIENCE IN ADVANCE – EX 19:5, 2 COR 10:5, JOHN 15:14, REV 14:12, LUKE 11:28
- STAND FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD WITH GRACE – EPH 6:14-18, EX 34:6
- ASSOCIATE WITH GODLY FRIENDS – JOHN 15:14, PRO 13:20, 1 COR 15:33,
- BE A GODLY EXAMPLE OUTSIDE AND INSIDE THE HOME – PS 101, PS 128:3, EPH 4:31-32

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GROUP DISCUSSION

Reflect, write, and answer as you feel comfortable

1. Where might God want you to take a stand for what is right? E.g. family, relationship, habits, work, priorities, openness of faith, etc.?
How can you begin?
2. Is it harder for you to be faithful to the Lord in times of difficulty or times of success? Why?
3. What direction or guidelines can Christians use to determine which activities we will engage in and which we won't?
4. What creative ways have you observed or heard about of Christians responding to challenges from the secular culture?
5. Is there an issue that you are being challenged by at work, in your family or in society at large that is pushing you to adopt an unbiblical attitude or action?