

Introduction to Daniel and Daniel 1:1-8

The secret to Daniel's success - Part 1

Daniel 6:10 - Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, **as was his custom since early days.**

As we study his life and those of his friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, we see commitment, conviction, and courage in standing up against the world system and standing for the Lord. This book is an inspirational example to us and has tremendous lessons for us about how we are to walk in the world in which we live. Again, this is all based on His close and continuous walk with God.

I want to encourage you all to see the difference that a disciplined life makes — how much God can use someone who has purposed in their heart to serve God completely with no compromise, and how this purity comes only from taking time out to abide in the presence of God daily.

It's not, "look at me! I'm Mr Super Christian because I've logged so many hours with God." No, it's simply being available to be used.

Someone said that they are too busy to pray. What are the consequences? A life that is self-directed and that is spent mopping up the messes that are made by bad decisions. I would instead recommend that we be too busy not to pray. Give God time in the morning and see how much time you will save during the day. The same goes for reading the Bible, the word of God. Think of the time you spend arguing and fighting, wasting time on the internet or reading books or seeking pleasure in whatever way you do. This is time you can't get back. Godly prayer is submitting ourselves to God and seeking His will at the expense of our own. When we choose to obey God, we are also empowered by God. For me, I've come to the conclusion that being too busy to take the time to spend with the Lord is really me being too stupid to spend time with the Lord. The wise thing to do is to spend time with the Lord each day because Jesus said that, "without Me you can do nothing."

John 15:5

I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Thinking that I can be a good husband and father and worker and pastor and be able to discern God's will throughout the day without God's guidance, leading, and empowerment is pure insanity — yet sometimes I still find myself trying to do things on my own strength.

Daniel is not the only saint to be committed to God. Think of George Mueller, Jim Elliot, John Bunyan, D.L. Moody and many famous missionaries like Amy Carmichael just to name a few. Read Hebrews 11, the hall of faith. There is a massive cloud of witnesses who have gone before us. There is one thing that all these people have in common — they all abided in Christ, they all spent lots of time with God alone, they all put their relationship with God above everything else, especially their own comfort.

Daniel as a picture of Christ.

We will get into this as we go through the book.

Daniel the Prophet

Because Daniel was also a prophet, the book is very prophetic. In fact, it is perhaps the most prophetic book in the entire Bible, for the Book of Daniel is the key that unlocks the Book of Revelation. Without understanding Daniel, the Book of Revelation would be an enigma and a mystery.

Fulfilled prophecy

Because so many of Daniel's prophecies have already been fulfilled, his book confounds the critics. Around the year a.d. 300, a theory was introduced that the reason Daniel was so accurate was because, although he declares he wrote his book in 600 b.c., it wasn't actually written until a.d. 50. In other words, it's a fake. This heresy is often repeated by "higher" critics still today. Thus, in his own day, Daniel was placed in the lion's den—but today he's in the liar's den.

Either these men are incredibly ignorant or downright fraudulent, for all one has to do is look at the Septuagint. The Septuagint, written in 285 b.c. was the Greek translation of the Old Testament. What book is right there in the Septuagint? Daniel. So how could it have been written in a.d. 50 when it was in the Septuagint in 285 b.c.?

As Alexander conquered his way to the Middle East, Josephus wrote that, when he came to the city of Jerusalem, the high priest met with him. "Alexander," he said, "you're mentioned in the Bible." Then he proceeded to open the Book of Daniel and show him where he fit in to the prophetic picture, how three hundred years earlier he was prophesied to come. Alexander the Great was so moved that he spared the city of Jerusalem. Secular history records this event—so I don't know how critics can claim Daniel was written in a.d. 50 when Alexander was touched by it in 322 b.c.

What about the historicity of the events, the three invasions?

There are also many secular histories, e.g. the Babylonian Chronicles, which accurately describe what happened with much detail, especially the first 10 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. There are no contradictions. Archaeology has also confirmed the various battles, especially the one between the Babylonians and the Egyptians at Carchemish in May or June of 605BC.

The best way to win any argument - bring it back to Jesus.

But the most convincing argument of all is simply that Jesus Himself called Daniel the beloved prophet and quoted extensively from Daniel (Matthew 24; Luke 21). Whether concerning evolution, prophecy, divine inspiration of Scripture, or any other topic of debate, always take the argument back to the person of Jesus Christ. When people say they can't really believe there was a literal man named Adam and a woman named Eve, don't argue evolution. Bring the argument back to Jesus. Say, "The issue is not so much what you or I think about evolution. The issue is that Jesus spoke about Adam and Eve specifically and centred a teaching about marriage on them. So either Jesus is ignorant, a deceiver, or He is right."

"We know a man couldn't be swallowed by a fish. There's something 'fishy' about that kind of 'tail,' " the cynic scoffs. Yet Jesus used Jonah's three-day stay in the belly of the whale as a picture of His own death, burial, and resurrection (Matthew 12:40).

Jesus used some of the most controversial accounts in the Old Testament—Adam and Eve, Jonah and the whale, Daniel—as foundations for His teaching. And because His Resurrection verifies everything He said, all of His references are equally true. Whenever you're involved in controversies, always steer the discussion back to Jesus. You'll find all of the illustrations and answers you need in Him.

The Book of Daniel confounds the critics—but it comforts the Christian because it confirms our faith. When people ask how we know the prophecies in the Bible will come to pass, we can turn them to the Book of Daniel and say, "Daniel made predictions concerning the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires centuries before the events came to pass." Therefore, we know that what he speaks of yet to come will also come to pass.

The reason we talk about prophecy is because one-fourth of the Bible deals with it. And it's the only holy book that dares to do so. Prophecy has a tremendous purifying effect on our faith and on our walk. After speaking about the coming of Jesus, John said, "Whoever has this hope purifies himself" (1 John 3:3). Truly believing that Jesus could come tonight should affect what we do today.

Another reason we talk about prophecy is found in chapter 12...

Daniel 12:4 - "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

According to this prophecy, in the end times, there will be an explosion of knowledge not only intellectually, but also concerning end-time understanding. "Seal this book, Daniel," the Lord says. "You're not going to understand it, but it will make sense to those who are living in the last days." There's a great amount of teaching on prophecy today because we are living in the last days and, suddenly, so much of these prophetic mysteries are making sense to us.

Not only is the Book of Daniel important in light of prophecy, but what a blessing it is to study the life of Daniel personally. Even in his own day, Daniel was a legend. His contemporary, Ezekiel, puts him in the same category as Job and Noah (14:14). In fact, he's one of only a couple of Old Testament characters of whom no sin is mentioned. This doesn't mean he didn't sin. But it does mean his life was not given to sin.

What was Daniel like?

I think there are three words that characterise Daniel's life. The first is purpose. He was a man who purposed in his heart that he would walk with God. Second, he was a man of prayer. Third, he was a man of prophecy. He was interested in prophecy and was used as a vehicle for prophecy. These three points cause me to say, "Lord, make me a man who purposes in my heart. Make me a man who prays. Make me a man of prophetic understanding that I might know the urgency of the times in which I live."

The historical setting

The three phases of captivity - a summary of 2 Kings 23.

- Godly king Josiah dies fighting Pharaoh Necho who is on the way to Carchemish to fight the Babylonians.

- Jehoahaz son of Josiah Reigned for 3 months, taken captive to Egypt by Pharaoh Necho where he dies
- Eliakim son of Josiah, name changed to Jehoiakim by Pharaoh Necho. He reigned for 11 years in Jerusalem and dies there. It was during his reign in 605 BC that the first wave of deportation happens after Nebuchadnezzar invades Judah - includes Daniel and his three friends. He remained king but rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon after three years.
- Jehoiachin (Jeconiah or Coniah) son of Jehoiakim reigns for three months, 18 yrs old, taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in the 8th year of his reign (597 BC - second wave of deportation - a further 10,000 of the best taken including Ezekiel)
- Mattaniah Son of Josiah made king by Nebuchadnezzar and name changed to Zedekiah. He reigns for 11 years till third and final deportation and complete destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's temple. 586 BC

Why did God do it this way, this staged decline of the kingdom?

Jeremiah 24:1-10 NLT *Good and Bad Figs*

¹ After King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon exiled Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to Babylon along with the officials of Judah and all the craftsmen and artisans, the Lord gave me this vision. I saw two baskets of figs placed in front of the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem. ² One basket was filled with fresh, ripe figs, while the other was filled with bad figs that were too rotten to eat. ³ Then the Lord said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I replied, "Figs, some very good and some very bad, too rotten to eat." ⁴ Then the Lord gave me this message: ⁵ "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: The good figs represent the exiles I sent from Judah to the land of the Babylonians. ⁶ I will watch over and care for them, and I will bring them back here again. I will build them up and not tear them down. I will plant them and not uproot them. ⁷ I will give them hearts that recognize me as the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me wholeheartedly. (the people from the first two deportations)

⁸ "But the bad figs," the Lord said, "represent King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, all the people left in Jerusalem, and those who live in Egypt. I will treat them like bad figs, too rotten to eat. ⁹ I will make them an object of horror and a symbol of evil to every nation on earth. They will be disgraced and mocked, taunted and cursed, wherever I scatter them. ¹⁰ And I will send war, famine, and disease until they have vanished from the land of Israel, which I gave to them and their ancestors."

So what was God doing? Judging the wicked but sparing the righteous. God does this over and over again in the scriptures, for example — Lot removed from Sodom and Gomorrah. God does not judge the righteous with the wicked.

Genesis 18:23-25 NLT

²³ Abraham approached him and said, "Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked? ²⁴ Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? ²⁵ Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"

In the end, there weren't even 10 righteous people, so God destroyed the cities, but still rescued Lot and his family, even though they weren't the most godly family.

Also, we can learn from this that bad circumstances aren't always bad. The people would have thought that being left behind was a good thing, and would have felt sorry for those taken. But the opposite was true.

What did the nation of Judah, the southern kingdom, do to deserve being taken captive and wiped out for 70 years?

Jeremiah 25:1-14 NLT *Seventy Years of Captivity*

¹ This message for all the people of Judah came to Jeremiah from the Lord during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign over Judah. This was the year when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon began his reign. (and the year when he invaded Judah)

² Jeremiah the prophet said to all the people in Judah and Jerusalem, ³ "For the past twenty-three years—from the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah, until now—the Lord has been giving me his messages. I have faithfully passed them on to you, but you have not listened.

⁴ "Again and again the Lord has sent you his servants, the prophets, but you have not listened or even paid attention. ⁵ Each time the message was this: 'Turn from the evil road you are traveling and from the evil things you are doing. Only then will I let you live in this land that the Lord gave to you and your ancestors forever. ⁶ Do not provoke my anger by worshiping idols you made with your own hands. Then I will not harm you.'

⁷ "But you would not listen to me," says the Lord. "You made me furious by worshiping idols you made with your own hands, bringing on yourselves all the disasters you now suffer.

⁸ And now the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Because you have not listened to me, ⁹ I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy you and make you an object of horror and contempt and a ruin forever. ¹⁰ I will take away your happy singing and laughter. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard. Your millstones will fall silent, and the lights in your homes will go out. ¹¹ This entire land will become a desolate wasteland. Israel and her neighbouring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

¹² "Then, after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins," says the Lord. "I will make the country of the Babylonians a wasteland forever. ¹³ I will bring upon them all the terrors I have promised in this book—all the penalties announced by Jeremiah against the nations. ¹⁴ Many nations and great kings will enslave the Babylonians, just as they enslaved my people. I will punish them in proportion to the suffering they cause my people."

So just like God judged the world in the time of Noah to cleanse it of its evil, so he is doing to the nation of Israel. He removes the righteous ones and destroys the rest. The instrument of judgement God chooses to use is the nation of Babylon, but afterward, God will judge that nation for its violence and pride.

(Timeline for reference only)

605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon

605 B.C. The Babylonians invade Judah

605 B.C. First wave of deportation of Jews to Babylon

605 B.C. Daniel is taken captive and begins to prophesy

601 B.C. Babylonians battle Egypt, both sides suffer losses

601 B.C. Judah decides to realign itself with Egypt, Jeremiah warns

597 B.C. Jehoachin becomes king of Judah
597 B.C. Babylonians capture Jerusalem
597 B.C. Second wave of deportation to Babylon from Judah.
597 B.C. Ezekiel is taken captive to Babylon
597 B.C. Zedekiah becomes king of Judah
593 B.C. Ezekiel begins to prophesy
586 B.C. The Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple (9th of Av)
586 B.C. Jerusalem's walls and gates are burned with fire
586 B.C. Third wave of Jews deported to Babylon (including King Zedekiah)
586 B.C. Babylonian Exile (Galut Bavel) begins
586 B.C. End of Biblical (First Temple) Period
586 B.C. The end of the monarchy in Judah
539 B.C. The Fall of Babylon
539 B.C. Beginning of the Persian Period to 332
539 B.C. The Decree of Cyrus II allowing Jews to return
516 B.C. The Jews rebuild their Temple

Let's get into Daniel chapter 1.

Daniel 1:1-21 NKJV

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.

³ Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, ⁴ young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. ⁵ And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. ⁶ Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷ To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.

⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. ⁹ Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. ¹⁰ And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."

¹¹ So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² “Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king’s delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants.” ¹⁴ So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.

¹⁵ And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies. ¹⁶ Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷ As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

¹⁸ Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. ²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. ²¹ Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

Daniel Chapter 1

Daniel 1:1 (a)

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah...

So carnal a king was Jehoiakim that when he received a scroll of prophecy from Jeremiah, he chopped it up and threw it in the fire—as if he could invalidate the Word of God. Jeremiah simply sought the Lord for another copy. This time, the Lord added a few things that were pointed directly at Jehoiakim because of his obstinacy. Jehoiakim was told that Judah, his kingdom, would be besieged by the Babylonians and that they would be carried away captive for seventy years because of their disobedience and tendency toward idolatry (Jeremiah 36).

In the third year of the reign: There is also no contradiction between Daniel (who said this happened in the **third year of Jehoiakim**) and Jeremiah 46:2 (which said it was *in the fourth year of Jehoiakim*). Daniel reckoned a king’s years after the Babylonian method: the first year of a king’s reign began at the start of the calendar year *after* he took the throne. Jeremiah used the Jewish method.

i. “It was customary for the Babylonians to consider the first year of a king’s reign as the year of accession and to call the next year the first year ... Having spent most of his life in Babylon, it is only natural that Daniel should use a Babylonian form of chronology.” (Walvoord)

Daniel 1:1 (b)

...Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

The third year of Jehoiakim would put us at 605 b.c.—the year Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonian empire, the most powerful potentate not only of that day but probably of all time, seeking to consolidate his power in the Middle East, besieges Jerusalem.

Daniel 1:2 (a)

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...

Nebuchadnezzar thought he was in control, but, in fact, he was just a puppet, for it was the Lord who gave Jehoiakim to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 1:2 (b)–4

... with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god. ³ Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, ⁴ young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.

In his first attack, Nebuchadnezzar didn't destroy Jerusalem. He simply took treasures from the temple as well as the cream of the crop of the young men of Jerusalem. He made them eunuchs in order that they might study without distraction. Then he educated them in the laws of science and knowledge in preparation to become administrators throughout his empire.

As seen here, sin always leads to two things. The first is blasphemy. The instruments used in the temple to worship the true and living God were now carried to Babylon and placed in the immoral, idolatrous temples of the Babylon.

David Guzik: The confiscation of these items and their deposit in a Babylonian temple was a dramatic declaration by Nebuchadnezzar saying, "my god is better than your God." Now the God of Israel had to vindicate Himself.

Later on, Beltashazzar would bring out these items from the temple and use them to worship the gods of gold and silver. Just like king David's sin concerning Bathsheeba and Uriah resulted in the surrounding nations blaspheming God, here to we see sin invariably causing people to feel blasphemous toward the Lord, or to blaspheme the Lord.

2 Samuel 12:14 NKJV

However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.

Second, sin always leads to bondage. The people of God were being carried in chains to Babylon because of their sin. That's what sin does. It has a way of ensnaring and trapping us.

Daniel 1:4 NKJV

...in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve

Ray Comfort: In Christ, God has made us without blemish in His sight. In His word He has given us everything we need—wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Soak your soul in the word of God, and pray that God gives you the boldness to speak what you know.

Daniel 1:5–8 NKJV

⁵ And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. ⁶ Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷ To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego. ⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

v 8 **That he would not defile himself:** The ancient Hebrew word **defile** carries the thought of *polluting* or *staining* (see also Isaiah 59:3, Zephaniah 3:1, and Malachi 1:7). That Daniel **requested** that he might not **defile himself** implies that he explained the *spiritual* basis for his request. He didn't make it seem that he wanted to avoid the king's food out of other reasons.

v 8 **Therefore he requested:** Daniel made a big deal over a little thing. The only way to go on with God is to be faithful in little things. We might ask, "Daniel, why bring religion into it?" But Daniel realised that his relationship with God touched every area of his life, including what he ate. Significantly, the root of sin goes back to eating forbidden food.

v 8 **That he might not defile himself:** Daniel and his friends considered the king's food defiled for at least three reasons. First, it undoubtedly was not kosher. Second, it was probably sacrificed to idols. Third, eating the king's food implied fellowship with Babylon's cultural system.

Daniel did not object to the name given to him, because he knew who he was and others could call him what they wanted. Daniel did not object to the Babylonian education, because he knew what he believed. Daniel *did* object to the food from the king's table because eating it was direct disobedience to God's word.

When offered the king's food and wine, Daniel didn't want to defile himself with meat that may have been offered to idols or with wine that would pervert his judgment (Proverbs 31:4).

v 8 **Nor with the wine which he drank:** God did not forbid drinking wine.

Paul would say concerning meat and other issues, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Corinthians 6:12). In other words, all things aren't wise. He went on to say, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Paul loved his freedom too much to be enslaved. So should we. There are many good things that can enslave us if they become more important than God, or even just a hinderance to our walk with God. E.g. I used to spend hours and hours reading great christian books instead of reading the bible...

v 5 **Three years of training...** Satan uses a similar strategy against believers today, wanting to indoctrinate us into the world system. Satan wants us to:

- Identify (rename) us in reference to the world — Daniel's name was changed from a godly name to an idolatrous one.
- Feed us what the world offers — feed the old man, the sinful nature.
- Educate us in the ways of the world.

We need to watch out for all these traps. Nothing has changed today. Think of what kids are being taught in school... Bill, you feel like you are female today, fine, you can run in the girls race today. Our identity is being challenged at every level of our being.

TV, music, movies, the internet, social media are all feeding us what the world offers. School and universities these days, more than ever are specifically tailored to mould people's minds into worldly thinking — both by omission of truth and specific lies.

Where did Daniel get such high standards? First, I believe they came from his parents. You see, Daniel's name literally means "God is judge." *Hananiah* means "The Lord is gracious." *Mishael* means "None is like God." *Azariah* means "The Lord is my help." These were all godly names given by godly parents. When Daniel was born, a revival was taking place in the land of Judah led by a king named Josiah. He was the one who remodelled the temple. When, during the remodelling process, the sole surviving copy of the Law was found, revival broke out. No doubt Daniel's parents were influenced by this, as were the parents of his friends.

"Train up your children in the way they should go and when they are old, they will not depart from it," Solomon declares (Proverbs 22:6). That's a principle. Train your kids in the Word and ways of God and they will continue to walk with God. Oh, they might take a detour, but usually, if you train up your kids, they'll walk with Him as time goes on. Think of the impact that Daniel's parents had on him. If your kids were forcibly removed from you right now, how would they fair? Do they have the example of a godly routine to follow? Have they been instructed in the things of God? Have they had an example of putting God first in all things? Have they witnessed God faithfully work and provide even in the hard times?

In addition to parents at home, Daniel had purpose in his heart. That is, he decided he wouldn't defile himself. Are you being defiled tonight in some area? Victory begins when you purpose in your heart. Make a decision. Say, "That's it. No more."

Think of Shammah, one of David's right-hand men. In 2 Samuel 23, we read that the Philistines were attacking and Shammah was given the job of guarding the beans. When the Philistines came, everyone else split and ran for their lives. Not Shammah. He said, "I'm not going anywhere. I'll stay on my post and do my job." Shammah had purpose of heart. The Spirit of God came upon him and he whipped the entire Philistine army single-handedly just because he was watching the beans faithfully. That's purpose of heart.

Maybe you might wonder why you're in the church nursery changing nappies Sunday after Sunday, or why you're visiting people in the nursing home week after week. But if the Lord has called you to do those things, be faithful. As He did with Shammah, He'll honour you and meet you there.

v 8 **Therefore he requested:** Daniel made a remarkably courageous decision, especially when we think of all the reasons why it was a hard decision to make.

- i. The *king* ordered the menu. Rejecting the menu was rejecting the king, and could result in severe punishment.
- ii. Refusing the food might have branded them as being *uncooperative*, and could have *spoiled all chances of advancement* (many other Hebrew youths *did* eat the food).
- iii. There was a *real threat of punishment*. Ancient kings were well known for the severe and often sadistic punishments against those who crossed them. Nebuchadnezzar was capable of great cruelty. He murdered the sons of one king of Judah before the king's

eyes then immediately gouged out the eyes of the king, so his last memory would always be the murder of his sons (Jeremiah 39:6–7). Other rulers of Judah were literally roasted to death over a fire (Jeremiah 29:22).

iv. The *food itself* was no doubt pretty attractive, and seemed a much better alternative than eating a vegetarian diet and water for three years.

v. Mere *distance* made this challenging. Separated from family and home, it was easy to compromise. He was also very young, most likely only 15, still a teenager by today's standards.

vi. It was easy to *think that God had let them down* by allowing them to be carried away into Babylon. These exiles, kidnapped from Jerusalem, might have said: "Why should we risk our neck for a God who let me down?" Yet they were committed to obedience even if God did not fulfill their expectations.

v 8 **Daniel purposed in his heart:** In this, Daniel illustrated how to conquer a difficult trial and glorify God before others in the midst of testing.

i. First, *the heart must be set*. Daniel **purposed in his heart**, making up his mind *beforehand* that he would not compromise. This shows the importance of preparing our hearts, of spending time with the Lord each day, so when the battle comes, we are ready.

ii. The *life or attitude must be positive*. Daniel found favour with his superiors.

iii. *Protest must be courteous*. Daniel **requested** to be excused from the king's table. He made a polite request, showing discretion. Making a stand for Jesus Christ does not mean we must be obnoxious.

iv. *Self-denial must be sought*. Daniel and his friends knew this would *cost* them something, yet they were willing. "Be ready for a bad name; be willing to be called a bigot; be prepared for the loss of friendships; be prepared for anything so long as you can stand fast by Him who bought you with His precious blood." (Spurgeon)

v. The *test must be boldly put*. "I think that a Christian man should be willing to be tried; he should be pleased to let his religion be put to the test. 'There,' says he, 'hammer away if you like.' Do you want to be carried to heaven on a feather bed? Do you want always to be protected from everybody's sneer and frown; and to go to heaven as if you were riding in the procession on Lord Mayor's day?" (Spurgeon)