

# A Sincere Faith

Daniel 1:8-21  
SS Lesson for 01/07/2018

**Devotional Scripture:** 1 Tim 1:3-8

## OUTLINE

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OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

*Key Verse: Dan 1:8*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

*Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

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Be resolved to God because He is the King, everything he does is right and all His ways are just (Dan 4:31-37)

Be resolved to God because it should be desirable and the right choice (Josh 24:15)

Be resolved to God because He is the only one who has eternal life (John 6:66-69)

Be resolved to God because He has delivered and will continue to deliver from deadly peril (2 Cor 1:8-10)

Be resolved to God because those who endure will reign with Him (2 Tim 2:12)

Be resolved to God because to stay steadfast brings rewards from God (Rev 3:9-13)

*Faithful to God in spite of resistance (9-10)*

Resistance where God helps the powerless against the mighty (2 Chron 14:9-12)

Resistance that cannot be overcome by strength and size (Ps 33:16-19)

Resistance that may seem to be overbearing, but reliance on God will always bring deliverance (2 Cor 1:8-10)

Resistance by people who have been captivated by Satan (2 Tim 2:24-26)

I should expect frustrations and resistance and therefore test all things by the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:1-3)

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# Introduction

## Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson guides us into an understanding of the culture and politics of Daniels's time and recognize the influence that culture had on young Daniel as he tried to live **A Sincere Faith**. The **study's aim** is to appreciate the resolve of a young man caught up in a world of idolatry and mysticism. The **study's application** is to confirm that God is in control regardless of our feelings or circumstance and to encourage believers to stand up for their faith, trusting God for the outcome.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

## Key Verse: Dan 1:8

*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.*

## Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

**1:8.** Nebuchadnezzar had made abundant provision for the captives. Theirs was a life of luxury, not deprivation, for they were given a portion of **food and wine** daily from the king's own table. However, this food did not conform to the requirements of the Mosaic Law. The fact that it was prepared by Gentiles rendered it unclean. Also no doubt many things forbidden by the Law were served on the king's table, so to partake of such food would defile the Jewish youths. Further, without doubt this royal food had been sacrificed and offered to pagan gods before it was offered to the king. To partake of such food would be contrary to Exodus 34:15, where the Jews were forbidden to eat flesh sacrificed to pagan gods. Similar problems would arise in drinking the wine. To abstain from the Old Testament prohibition against "strong drink" (e.g., Prov. 20:1, KJV; Isa. 5:11, "drinks"), Jews customarily diluted wine with water. Some added 3 parts of water to wine, others 6 parts, and some as much as 10 parts of water to 1 part of wine. The Babylonians did not dilute their wine. So both the food and the drink would have defiled these Jewish young men. **Daniel** knew the requirements of the Law governing what he should and should not eat and drink. Daniel's desire was to please God in all he did. So he **resolved** that even though he was not in his own land but in a culture that did not follow God's laws, he would consider himself under the Law. **He** therefore **asked the chief court official** to be excused from eating and drinking the food and wine generously supplied by the king. Daniel was courageous, determined, and obedient to God.

**1:9-10.** The chief official's reticence to grant Daniel's request is understandable. He was responsible to oversee the young captives' physical and mental development so they would become prepared for the roles **the king** had in mind for them. Evidently these youths held a strategic place in the king's plans, so he wanted them well trained. If the men had been of little consequence to **the king**, their physical conditions would not have mattered and Ashpenaz would not have risked the loss of his life. **Daniel** had trusted his situation to God who intervened on Daniel's behalf to move the official's heart **to show favor** (*hesed*, "loyal love") **and sympathy** (*rahāmm*, "compassion") **to Daniel**.

**1:11-14.** When Daniel's request seemed to have been denied by **the chief official... Daniel** approached **the guard whom** Ashpenaz placed over the four youths and requested a **10-day** trial period in which **Daniel** and his companions would be given only **vegetables... and water**. (The Heb. word for vegetables, meaning "sown things," may also include grains.) Since the Mosaic Law designated no vegetables as unclean, Daniel could eat any vegetables put before him without defiling himself. In so short a time (**10 days**) there could have been no marked deterioration that would jeopardize the life of anyone in authority. In fact Daniel hinted that their **appearance** would be better than that of the others who were on the king's diet. Since the guard was under the chief official's authority he must have acted not on his own but with permission from Ashpenaz. This indicates that God intervenes on behalf of those who trust Him, and protects and preserves those who obey Him, even under pagan rule.

**1:15-16.** **At the conclusion of the 10 days**, the four who had lived on vegetables appeared **healthier** than those who had dined on the king's **food**. Since the four looked better—and not worse than the others, as Ashpenaz had feared (v. 10)—he did not object to the diet Daniel had requested for himself and his friends. So they were allowed to continue on a diet of **vegetables**. Though God did not prohibit eating meat altogether (cf. Gen. 9:3; Rom. 14:14; 1 Cor. 10:25-26), the vegetable diet was superior to the king's food.

Also this shows that God blesses those who obey His commands and prospers those who trust Him. This incident would have been a lesson for the nation Israel. God had demanded obedience to the Law. Punishment came because of disobedience but even during a time of discipline, God protects and sustains those who obey Him and trust Him for their sustenance.

**1:17. These four... men** being prepared by Nebuchadnezzar for positions of responsibility in the royal court were actually being prepared by God. For **God gave them knowledge and understanding** in many realms. “Knowledge” has to do with reasoning skills and thought processes. They were able to think clearly and logically. “Understanding” has to do with insight. This points up their ability to discern the nature of things clearly and to interpret them in their true light. The **literature and learning** in which God gave them ability was broad (cf. on v. 4). By divine enablement and through his years of instruction under able teachers, **Daniel** gained a wide knowledge of arts and sciences. Though the knowledge of others in Babylon in those subjects may have equaled that of Daniel, he was superior to them all in one area: he had the God-given ability to **understand visions and dreams**. People have always been curious about the future and have sought to predict coming events. For example, after Israel entered the land of Canaan, they encountered many who attempted to prognosticate the future by various means. But Israel was forbidden to follow any of these practices (Deut. 18:9-13), which were also prevalent in Babylon.

**1:18-21. At the end of the time set by the king** (i.e., at the end of the three years’ training; cf. v. 5), **the king** examined **Daniel** and his three companions and **found** that **none** equaled them. In fact they were **10 times better than all** who practiced the arts of divination. (On **magicians** and **enchanters**, see v. 17.) “Ten times” is an idiom meaning “many times” (cf. Gen. 31:7, 41; Num. 14:22; Job 19:3). The king consulted magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers, wise men, and diviners. “Magicians” (*ḥartūmm*, Dan. 1:20; 2:2) was a general word referring to men who practiced the occult. (This word is also used in Gen. 41:8, 24; Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18-19; 9:11.) “Enchanters” (*’aššāpm*, used only twice in the OT, Dan. 1:20; 2:21) may refer to those who used incantations in exorcisms. The word “sorcerers” (*meḳaššepm*, 2:2) probably is from the Akkadian verb *kašāpu*, “to bewitch, to cast a spell.” (This participial noun, rendered “sorcerers,” used only here in Dan., occurs only four other times in the OT: Ex. 7:11; 22:18; Deut. 18:10; Mal. 3:5.) “Astrologers” (Heb., *kašdm*, Dan. 2:2, 4; Aram., *ka’dīn*, 2:5, 10 [twice]; 3:8; 5:7, 11) seems to refer to a priestly class in the Babylonian religion (misleadingly rendered “Chaldeans” in the KJV) who depended on revelation through the stars, which were objects of worship. “Diviners” (*gāzern*, 2:27; 4:7; 5:7, 11) may be those who sought to ascertain or decree the fate of others. The practices of these five groups may have overlapped extensively. Several times Daniel referred to these men under the general rubric of “wise men” (2:12-14, 18, 24 [twice], 48; 4:6, 18; 5:7-8, 15). Daniel’s ministry in the royal court of Babylon continued until the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire by **Cyrus** in 539 B.C. God had said, “Those who honor Me, I will honor” (1 Sam. 2:30). **Daniel** determined to honor God even though he was living where people did not have the high standards God demanded. And God honored Daniel’s obedience to the Law and promoted him in the king’s court. This incident would have reminded Israel that obedience brings blessing and that righteousness is a prerequisite for enjoying the covenanted blessings. The fact that God gave Daniel the ability to understand and interpret visions and dreams (Dan. 1:17) meant that throughout Nebuchadnezzar’s long reign he depended on Daniel for understanding future events, revealed through dreams and visions. This anticipated the ministry Israel will one day fulfill. God had set Israel apart to be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6). As such they were God’s light to the world (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). They were to receive God’s revelation and communicate it to nations that were ignorant of God. They were continually reminded of their role by the lampstand erected in the tabernacle. Daniel, during his tenure in the royal court in Babylon, fulfilled that function as God’s spokesman to the Gentiles. When Israel will enter her millennial blessing under the reign of the Messiah, she will fulfill the role for which she was set apart by God and will then communicate God’s truth to the Gentiles (Zech. 8:21-23).

### Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

"Culture Christians"—have you heard this phrase? It is becoming familiar to some of us. It gets mentioned in our conversations. We see examples of it daily. We even question whether we have joined this group. What is a culture Christian? One popular definition is that it refers to someone whose faith is politically correct. By this definition, this is a person who tries to make his religion completely inoffensive. He is a chameleon believer, one so assimilated into the culture that it is hard to recognize his faith. Now I am not saying that believers should eschew modern life and live in extreme austerity. There is nothing wrong with having modern conveniences. That is not the problem. The problem is summed up in this word: "compromise." Culture Christians allow compromise into their faith. They know what God's Word says

about something and that it differs from what society says. However, they choose to follow society rather than risk taking a stand for God's Word and offending anyone. Daniel was faced with a difficult choice. Should he eat the king's food, or should he follow God's Word? It would have been easy to say, "God will understand. He knows my circumstances, so He will excuse it." Daniel was facing extreme pressure. Giving in to the plan of man would have been the easy and comfortable path. Therein lay the danger. Living in faith is never easy. We are constantly weighing our convictions against the press of society. We are often pressured to live counter to God's Word. God's Word has something to say about culture Christians, and it is not good. In Revelation, God tells us that He is not interested in followers that are only halfway believers (3:15-17). We cannot pick and choose which parts of His Word to follow, for every part is relevant (2 Tim. 3:16). We either follow all or we really are not following it at all. You might be thinking, "That is easy for you to say. You do not know what I face every day." Maybe I do not, but God does. He understands because He lived as a man. The bottom line is that God calls us to faith that is real, active, and practiced every moment of our lives. We have to be willing to follow Him even when it is difficult. A faith that changes with every current societal fad is not sincere. It is faith without integrity. Is your faith sincere? Are you real in your belief the way Daniel was? Are there areas of compromise in your walk? Is your faith a show? If you see that your walk is faltering, there is still hope. When David had fallen short, he repented and asked God to renew him (Ps. 51:1-12). As believers, we are called to "walk worthy of the vocation" (Eph. 4:1) to which we are called. While we live in this world, we will always face the temptation to compromise and water down our faith. We need to remember, though, that we are not of this world (cf. John 15:19). We do not lean on the world's wisdom, which is foolishness to God (1 Cor. 3:19). We walk a delicate balance each day, leaning on Him for direction. When we have sincere faith, God will bless us.

## **Lesson Introduction and Background**

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

In 1999, Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht authored *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook*, a guide to surviving the worst of all imaginable catastrophes. The book has sold over 10 million copies and inspired a series of related books, games, and even a television show. While strategic planners regularly discuss how to react in extreme circumstances, they usually do not consider situations as extreme as those Piven and Borgenicht describe. Their book provides instructions for situations such as landing a plane when the pilot is incapacitated, defusing a bomb, escaping from quicksand, and surviving a shark attack. Bad things do happen to good people. True, we may not have had to survive a shark attack or defuse a bomb, but we have all experienced crisis: the loss of a job, conflict with a family member, etc. There is much to learn from how an Old Testament prophet dealt with a crisis in his life.

Daniel and his three friends lived in perilous times for Judah and its capital of Jerusalem. The "third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah," mentioned in Daniel 1:1, was 605 BC. This was also the year when King Nebuchadnezzar came to power in Babylon. He ruled for 43 years. The siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar noted in Daniel 1:1 was the first of a series of excursions by Babylon into Judah, climaxed by the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC. (Note that the land of Babylon or Babylonia is also referred to as Chaldea, and the residents are called Chaldeans.) Of course, it is vital to read what follows the account in Daniel 1:1: "And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God" (1:2). This makes clear what all of Scripture proclaims: kings such as Nebuchadnezzar, as great as they may be or consider themselves to be, are ultimately under the reign of the truly "great King," the Lord (Psalm 48:2). Part of the Babylonians' strategy in conquering territories such as Judah was to select individuals from those territories who showed significant potential for being schooled in the culture of the Babylonians. In the words of Daniel 1:4, they were looking for *young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians*. This practice was intended to replace the captives' cultural identity with that of the Babylonians. Among those taken from Jerusalem for this purpose were Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Daniel 1:6). Daniel 1:3 notes that these young men were drawn from the royal family and nobility of Judah. One component of the reeducation of captives was that of changing their given names. In a culture where names were of great significance, such an action was intended to show the captives that their very identity had been changed. Thus Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah became Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, respectively (Daniel 1:7). The new names included references to fictitious Babylonian gods (compare 4:8); they no longer reflect the name of the God of Judah.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Sincere Faith through Faithfulness to God (Dan 1:8-13)**

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."

### **Faithful to God through being resolved (8)**

*Be resolved to God because He is holy and good (Josh 24:19-22)*

19 Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you." 21 But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the Lord." 22 Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord." "Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

*Be resolved to God because He is the King, everything he does is right and all His ways are just (Dan 4:31-37)*

31 The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. 32 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." 33 Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. 34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. 35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" 36 At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

*Be resolved to God because it should be desirable and the right choice (Josh 24:15)*

15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

*Be resolved to God because He is the only one who has eternal life (John 6:66-69)*

66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

*Be resolved to God because He has delivered and will continue to deliver from deadly peril (2 Cor 1:8-10)*

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

*Be resolved to God because those who endure will reign with Him (2 Tim 2:12)*

12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;

*Be resolved to God because to stay steadfast brings rewards from God (Rev 3:9-13)*

9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars — I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. 10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. 11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

### **Faithful to God in spite of resistance (9-10)**

*Resistance where God helps the powerless against the mighty (2 Chron 14:9-12)*

9 Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with a vast army and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. 10 Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah. 11 Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you." 12 The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled,

*Resistance that cannot be overcome by strength and size (Ps 33:16-19)*

16 No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. 17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. 18 But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, 19 to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

*Resistance that may seem to be overbearing, but reliance on God will always bring deliverance (2 Cor 1:8-10)*

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,

*Resistance by people who have been captivated by Satan (2 Tim 2:24-26)*

24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

*I should expect frustrations and resistance and therefore test all things by the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:1-3)*

1 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

*Always be prepared to face resistance (Luke 10:3)*

3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

### **Faithful to God through testing (11-13)**

*Testing to bring out humility (Deut 8:2)*

2 Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

*Testing to determine love (Deut 13:3)*

3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

*Testing of the heart (Prov 17:3)*

3 The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart.

*Testing so that God will lead into righteousness (Ps 139:23-24)*

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

*Testing refines (Ps 66:10)*

10 For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

*Testing proves faith genuine (1 Peter 1:7)*

7 These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

*Testing aids in receiving God's inheritance (Heb 11:8)*

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

### **Sincere Faith through Faithfulness from God (Dan 1:14-21)**

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.

### **God grants endurance (14-16)**

*God provides endurance through grace (2 Cor 12:9)*

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.



*God provides endurance through His presence (1 Cor 5:4)*

4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present,

*God provides endurance through strength (Col 1:11)*

11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully

*God provides endurance to me from within (Eph 3:20)*

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

*Endurance that displays that one is living worthy of the kingdom of God (2 Thess 1:3-5)*

3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. 4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. 5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.

*Endurance of hardships (2 Tim 2:3)*

3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

*Endurance that is rewarded by reigning with Jesus (2 Tim 2:12)*

12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;

*Endurance that proves one is a child of God (Heb 12:7-9)*

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!

*Endurance that is counted as being blessed (James 5:11)*

11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

## **God grants wisdom (17)**

*God provides wisdom because His word contains it and through obedience it will provide wisdom (Deut 4:5-6)*

5 See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. 6 Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

*God provides wisdom because God can fill with all knowledge, wisdom and understanding (Col 1:9)*

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

*God provides wisdom because His wisdom is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17)*

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

*God provides wisdom because He teaches it to those who seek it (Ps 90:12)*

12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

*Wisdom comes through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:8)*

8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

*Wisdom is in Jesus (1 Cor 1:30)*

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

*Wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord (Prov 3:7-8)*

7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. 8 This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

*Wisdom that comes from God (Prov 2:6-7)*

6 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

*Wisdom that keeps and preserves (Prov 4:5-7)*

5 Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. 6 Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. 7 Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

*Wisdom through prayer (James 1:5)*

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

## **God grants success (18-21)**

*God grants success through our commitment to Him (Ps 37:3-7)*

3 Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. 4 Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: 6 He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. 7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

*God grants success by God working out everything for His own ends (Prov 16:2-4)*

2 All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord. 3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. 4 The Lord works out everything for his own ends — even the wicked for a day of disaster.

*God grants success through us walking the way of God (Deut 5:33)*

33 Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

*God grants success through us working as for the Lord (Col 3:23-24)*

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

*God grants success through us being obedient to God's Word (James 1:25)*

25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

*God grants success through us trusting in God (Prov 28:25)*

25 A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.

*God grants success through us abiding in God (John 15:7)*

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### **Concluding Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

#### **Avoiding Defilement Without Offense (1:8-16)**

Any of the following four points in Nebuchadnezzar's program for the Hebrew captives could have posed a problem for Daniel and his friends:

- (1) Exchanging their Hebrew names for Gentile names.
- (2) Attending a Babylonian school.
- (3) Participating in the government of a Gentile nation which had no fear of God, which worshipped heathen gods, and which had overcome the southern kingdom of Judah.
- (4) Eating food which was served at the king's table.

From our text, we find three of these associations with Babylon posed no problem for Daniel and his friends. Only one of these four areas—that of eating the food served at the king's table—was considered defiling. Why was eating the king's food defiling, while the other associations were not? What distinguished this one area from the other three? Let us briefly consider each of these four areas and seek to learn why Daniel and his friends distinguished the one area from the other three.

#### *Receiving a Babylonian Name*

No doubt the Hebrew names of Daniel and his friends may have been offensive to the king and other Babylonians. While all their Hebrew names point to the God of Israel, their Babylonian names appear to refer to the heathen gods of Babylon. Why, then, would the giving of a Babylonian name not be considered defiling?

**(1) In the first place, the Babylonian names were not a matter of choice for either Daniel or his three friends.** We know that the names we are called are not a matter of our choice, or even our preference. The king (not to mention anyone else) could call Daniel whatever he wanted.

**(2) Likely Daniel was aware of an Old Testament precedent for a heathen king giving a new (foreign) name to a Hebrew in his service.** Pharaoh gave Joseph the name "Zaphenath-paneah" (Genesis 41:45). Joseph did not reject this name, nor is there even so much as a hint that God considered the name defiling to Joseph.

**(3) In the Old Testament Scriptures, name-giving was most significant when God gave the name.** In some cases, God gave a person's name before or at the time of birth. This was the case with the Lord Jesus (Luke 1:31). Also God changed the names of some individuals. He changed Abram's name to Abraham, and that of Sarai, his wife, to Sarah (see Genesis 17:4-5, 15). The change of a person's name had to do with a change God was bringing about in their destiny. Since only God can change a person's destiny, it is only His name-giving that is of the greatest significance.

Think about this in the context of the Book of Daniel. To name someone or something, or to change one's name, is to claim authority over the one named. Adam, who was placed in authority over all the creatures in the garden, including his wife, gave each of them names (Genesis 2:20, 23). When the commander who was placed over Daniel and the other Hebrews changed their names, he was expressing his authority (and thus that of Babylon) over them. As later events in the Book of Daniel will reveal, the king himself will fall before Daniel and acknowledge the power of his God. The "claim" implied in the new name is a claim which the Babylonian potentate will later renounce. The renaming of the four Hebrews is therefore shown to be inconsequential, because these men belonged to God and were under His authority and control.

#### *Attending a Babylonian School*

We know that the Babylonians were heathens. They did not worship the God of Israel; they worshipped pagan gods. It is unlikely that the Hebrews would attend a Babylonian school for three years without hearing some things contrary to the scriptures and to the faith of these young men. Was attending a pagan school not a

defilement for Daniel? According to our text, neither he nor his friends thought so. Why? Let me suggest several possibilities.

In the first place, the purpose of the Babylonian education was not to brainwash the Hebrew captives, in my opinion, but to teach them to speak, read and write Aramaic, the language of the land. As polytheists, the Babylonians were not threatened by differing religions or other gods.

Second, education, even a secular education, is not intrinsically evil. Education is not to brainwash but communicate ideas. The student is not compelled to agree, or to believe what he is taught.

Third, these young men were not highly impressionable children who would unquestioningly accept anything they had been taught. These were well-taught men grounded in the Old Testament scriptures. Daniel is certainly familiar with the prophecy of Jeremiah at least, and probably much more (see Daniel 9:1-19). They had the Old Testament scriptures as the standard by which to judge all they were being taught, and they evidenced the courage to stand on their own.

Had these four Hebrew youths been required to attend a Babylonian preschool, it might have been a different matter. In his early years, without training in the scriptures, a very young child would tend to believe what his teachers told him. Daniel and his friends were attending a school that was much more like college than kindergarten.

The clearest guidance comes from a precedent set in the Old Testament scriptures. The Law of Moses provided Daniel and his friends with the example of two Hebrew youths, both of whom were raised in a foreign land and well-educated in the ways of those who did not believe in the God of Israel—Joseph and Moses. Joseph’s schooling was not a formal education, but he surely learned the ways of Egypt. Moses received a more formal education, about which Stephen reminded his Jewish brethren:

“And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22).

I believe Daniel, gaining from the example of these two godly men, did not consider attending a Babylonian school defiling but rather an act of obedience to the God of Israel.

#### *Becoming Part of the Government of Babylon*

By becoming a part of Babylon’s government, Daniel and his friends could have felt unpatriotic, even to the point of being traitors to their nation. The term “collaborator” or perhaps even something worse might have been used of Hebrews who were officials in the Babylonian government. In New Testament times, the Herodians or tax collectors were the object of great disdain by their Jewish peers.

Why did Daniel have no difficulty with becoming a part of the government which defeated his own nation and destroyed the temple? Two reasons are immediately evident. First, the Jews had sinned, the judgment of Judah had been prophesied, and the defeat of Jehoiakim by Nebuchadnezzar was at the hand of God (1:2). The sovereign God who raises up kings and puts them down (see Daniel 2:21) is the one who gave Judah into the hands of the Babylonians.

Second, to seek Babylon’s well-being was to be obedient to God’s instructions, as given by the prophet Jeremiah:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, ‘Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens, and eat their produce. Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. And seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare’” (Jeremiah 29:4-7).

False prophets had been assuring the people of Judah that divine judgment would not come on Jerusalem and its temple. Later they would assure the captives in Babylon that their stay in this foreign land would be brief. Jeremiah told his fellow Jews that their stay would be 70 years, so they should settle down in Babylon.

Neither Jeremiah nor the Jews of Judah were to pray for the people of Judah because the time for their judgment had come (Jeremiah 7:16-20). They were, however, to pray for the well-being of the Babylonians. They were also instructed to work for the welfare of that place (Jeremiah 29:7). In seeking the good of Babylon, they were seeking their own welfare. Daniel’s years of service to Babylon greatly benefited the king and his captors. It

also benefited the Jews. Daniel was not defiling himself by his involvement with Nebuchadnezzar or his government. Instead he was obeying God's commands as given through Jeremiah.

### *Eating Food From the King's Table*

Only one thing is understood as defiling in Daniel 1—the eating of the food from the king's table. We are not told exactly why Daniel considered this food defiling only that he did consider it defiling, with no doubt in his mind. If a Babylonian job, a Babylonian name, and a Babylonian education were not defiling, a Babylonian beefsteak was.

Two reasons seem most likely for Daniel's sensitivity to defilement. First, this king would not hesitate to serve foods identified as "unclean" by the Law of Moses (see Leviticus 11). Secondly, the food and wine served at Nebuchadnezzar's table may have been associated with the worship of heathen gods, similar to the problem described in 1 Corinthians 8-10. In either instance, or perhaps in both, Daniel saw defilement as a danger to be actively avoided.

A less sensitive Hebrew might have acknowledged the defilement of the food from the king's table but excused its consumption as inevitable. Indeed, he might have cited scripture to prove that defilement was a part of God's plan. Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, spoke of the defilement which the Jews would experience in Babylon due to eating unclean foods:

"And your food which you eat shall be twenty shekels a day by weight; you shall eat it from time to time ... And you shall eat it as a barley cake, having baked it in their sight over human dung." Then the Lord said, "Thus shall the sons of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I shall banish them." But I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth." Then He said to me, "See, I shall give you cow's dung in place of human dung over which you will prepare your bread" (Ezekiel 4:10, 12-15).

No doubt Daniel understood that eating unclean food was a part of the divine judgment of Judah. Nevertheless, he purposed in his heart that, if at all possible, he would not defile himself by eating such food.

### **Submissive Separation (1:8-16)**

8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, 10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king." 11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence, and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see." 14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. 16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

The challenge for these men was to avoid the defilement of the king's food while at the same time avoiding a confrontation with the Babylonian authorities. Daniel must strive to please God and men. Later on in the book, Daniel's three friends (chapter 3) and then Daniel (chapter 6) must disobey the king and face his wrath. But in chapter 1, there is no civil disobedience. Daniel finds a way to be obedient to God without being disobedient to civil authority.

How Daniel accomplishes this is a fascinating story! Daniel's actions, with reference to God and men, are motivated and governed by the biblical principle of submission. Let us trace the events of these verses with the concept of submission in view and learn about the nature and manifestation of biblical submission.

Daniel purposed to obey God by keeping himself free from defilement. Having determined that eating the king's food and drinking his wine would be defiling to him, Daniel set out to abstain from them, but in a submissive way. He sought out Ashpenaz, the commander of the king's officials, asking permission to abstain from the king's food.

The text tells us that God intervened causing Ashpenaz to look upon Daniel with favor and compassion (verse 9). You might expect this to result in Daniel's request being granted, but it did not. How easy it would have

been for this Babylonian official to demand obedience without explanation. Instead Ashpenaz openly disclosed why permission could not be granted.

Ashpenaz greatly feared the king. From what we read in the following chapters, his fear was well-founded. Nebuchadnezzar was a harsh man whose wrath was to be avoided at all costs. If Ashpenaz granted Daniel's request and it resulted in Daniel's appearance being unsatisfactory, the king would have his head. Ashpenaz would not allow Daniel's request for fear that doing so would adversely affect Daniel and himself.

The information the commander gave Daniel was of great value. Daniel understood that his actions would affect his superiors as well as himself. He needed to act in a way to please God and to protect and prosper his superiors.

Daniel's wisdom is evident as he acts on his convictions and the information which the commander gave him. The goal of Daniel's Babylonian superiors was to obtain the optimum physical and mental performance of those in training. No one really cared what Daniel ate as long as he prospered, physically and mentally.

Daniel sought out his immediate superior, referred to as the "overseer" in verse 11, whom Ashpenaz had put in charge. Since he was directly involved with Daniel, Daniel sought him out, not in an effort to circumvent Ashpenaz, but because he was in a position to execute and evaluate Daniel's proposed plan of action.

The goal was peak performance, physically and mentally. The "control group," against whom Daniel and his friends could be compared, was the rest of the Hebrew trainees. Daniel proposed that he and his friends be allowed to eat vegetables for ten days and then their condition compared with the rest. If Daniel's group could match or surpass the others, then the goal of the Babylonian officials was obtained, yet in a way that did not defile the Hebrew youths. Daniel's proposal is submissive because it seeks the permission of the one directly in charge; it seeks to fulfill the purposes of Daniel's superiors.

The proposal was accepted. It would seem God divinely intervened not only making the condition of Daniel and his friends markedly superior, but in a very short period of time. Daniel's proposal not only preserved the purity of these four Jews, but it did so in a way that benefitted their superiors. After all, if Daniel and his friends were so obviously superior to the rest, the king would give some of the credit to those in charge of them.

### **In Favor With God and Men (1:17-21)**

17 And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams. 18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. 20 And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm. 21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

Verses 17-21 are the kind of ending we all enjoy. If this account were a fairy tale, we would now be reading, "And they all lived happily ever after." It is not a fairy tale, however; it is a divinely inspired historical account. Chapter 1 ends well, but we know from other texts of scripture that faithfulness to God does not always result in immediate blessing. Faithfulness always leads to blessing but very often God's blessing comes later. Here is one of those instances when faithfulness is immediately rewarded. Let us savor the sweet success of Daniel and his three friends as they find favor with God and with men.

It seems each of the Hebrew captives who completed the king's three-year course of instruction had some kind of oral examination by the king personally. The personal involvement of Nebuchadnezzar suggests that the tasks he had for those selected included very high level positions in his administration.

The assessment that Daniel and his three friends were "ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm" may have come directly from the lips of Nebuchadnezzar. They do inform us of this fact: Daniel and his friends were clearly and decidedly superior to all the rest. They were not just at the "top of their graduating class," outranking their fellow-Hebrew classmates; they were vastly superior to those already serving the king as magicians or conjurers. These four were the best there were, the intellectual "top guns" of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

Seeking to preserve their purity not only brought Daniel and his friends the commendation of God; it also resulted in the commendation of a heathen potentate, who at this moment in time had no regard for the God of Israel. Here favor with God led to favor with men.

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

A change of setting became very real and intense for Daniel and friends. Their status changed from being part of a majority in Judah to being a clear minority in Babylon. These four young men could have viewed their new status from a primarily negative perspective in never again being able to serve God as they once did. But they chose instead to see their circumstances more in terms of an open door to honor God before pagans. That more positive perspective produced within Daniel and his companions a strategy that we as exiles who serve Jesus in alien territory (compare 1 Peter 2:11) can apply. Daniel, while expressing his dislike for the foods offered by the king, used the proper channels to present his objections. Daniel was not disrespectful toward those in authority, and neither should we be (Romans 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:12-19). Our intention to “obey God rather than human beings” (Acts 5:29) does not mean that we must set out to create hostility. Taking a strong stand need not mean being belligerent.

### ***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary***

1. When you commit to obey God, expect that commitment to be tested (Dan. 1:8)
2. Stand for God and watch Him intervene on your behalf (vss. 9-10)
3. When possible, believers cooperate in a hostile world, but we cannot compromise the truth of God's Word (vss. 11-14)
4. God calls us to obey Him and shine for Him in the world (vss. 15-16)
5. God uses our skills and knowledge for His glory as we yield our hearts to Him (vs. 17)
6. The wisdom of God is superior to the practices of the world (vss. 18-20)
7. God has placed you where you are for a reason, so trust in Him {vs. 21}