

# Watching Our Consumption

Dan 1:8-17; 1 Tim 4:7-8

SS Lesson for 03/08/2026

**Devotional Scriptures:** Matt 15:17-20

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: 1 Tim 4:7-8*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### CONVICTIONS ABOUT FAITHFULNESS TO GOD (DAN 1:8-13)

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

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

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)

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

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

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

Testing to bring out humility (Deut 8:2)

Testing to determine love (Deut 13:3)

Testing of the heart (Prov 17:3)

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

Testing refines (Ps 66:10)

Testing proves faith genuine (1 Peter 1:7)

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

#### CONVICTIONS ABOUT FAITHFULNESS OF GOD (DAN 1:14-17)

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

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

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

God provides endurance through strength (Col 1:11)

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

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

Endurance of hardships (2 Tim 2:3)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wisdom is in Jesus (1 Cor 1:30)

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

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

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

Wisdom through prayer (James 1:5)

## CONVICTIONS ABOUT GODLINESS (1 TIM 4:7-8)

### *Training in godliness (7-8)*

- Training through pursuit of godliness (1 Tim 6:11)
- Training through knowledge of the truth (Titus 1:1)
- Training through God's Divine power (2 Peter 1:3)
- Training through maturing faith (2 Peter 1:5-8)

## CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

### COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

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

- Receiving a Babylonian Name
- Attending a Babylonian School
- Becoming Part of the Government of Babylon
- Eating Food From the King's Table

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

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The book of Daniel is divided into two parts: chapters 1-6 consist of narratives about Daniel and his companions in service to various kings, while chapters 7-12 consist of Daniel's visions. Because of these visions, the book is found in the "prophecy" section of the Bible. Today's lesson comes from the first half of the book. The epistle of 1 Timothy was written more than 500 years after Daniel's time. Timothy was a traveling companion and coworker of Paul's. In this letter, Paul gives Timothy instructions regarding the situation in the church at Ephesus, particularly in countering false teachings that threaten to muddy the good news of the gospel and cause distress within the church.

### Key Verse: 1 Tim 4:7-8

*7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.*

## Major Theme Analysis

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

### **Convictions about 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.

*We 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.

### **Convictions about Faithfulness of God (Dan 1:14-17)**

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.

### **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 us 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.

## **Convictions about Godliness (1 Tim 4:7-8)**

7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.

8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

### **Training in godliness (7-8)**

#### *Training through pursuit of godliness (1 Tim 6:11)*

11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

#### *Training through knowledge of the truth (Titus 1:1)*

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness-

#### *Training through God's Divine power (2 Peter 1:3)*

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

#### *Training through maturing faith (2 Peter 1:5-8)*

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### **Commentary 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,<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.

*(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/between-rock-and-hard-place-daniel-13-21>)*

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

Both texts for this lesson deal with the connection between bodies and honoring God. In Daniel 1:8-17, Daniel and his companions resisted total assimilation into Babylonian culture and religion. This resistance took the form of tactfully refusing to eat the food and drink the wine given to them. Instead, Daniel requested water and food that was more in line with God's desires. Through God's intervention, his request was granted, and the resulting trial period was successful. Daniel and his companions resisted being fully assimilated, maintaining their connection to their people and God. Strong connections can be formed through food and other kinds of consumption. These connections may be relational. They may be philosophical or societal. Being mindful of what you consume and its effects on both your body and soul will be noticed by others. Daniel and his friends used their bodies to honor God. For us, this can take the physical forms of eating healthy foods, drinking water, exercising, getting enough rest, and being proactive about preventative care. The text of 1 Timothy 4:7-8 puts this into a spiritual perspective. While celebrating the goodness of God's creation, Paul instructed Timothy to make the pursuit of godliness his highest priority. The language he used alluded to athletes' training (compare 1 Corinthians 9:24-27). This reminded Timothy that pursuing God gains a believer far more than focusing primarily on the body ever could. Living within misaligned cultures, it can be easy to allow the pursuit of bodily health to rise above its proper place in our priorities. Paul's words remind believers that faithfulness to God matters more. Read together, Daniel 1 and 1 Timothy 4 encourage us to honor our bodies so that we might honor God.