

Daniel / Week 1
Courage in the Face of Adversity

God is good, Amen! God is good, Amen!

How many of you have things in your life that you can only praise God for?

Thank you so much for being here today. Your presence matters to us. We want to connect with you. Life is always better when we have people in our corner, and we would love to be that for you.

I'm super excited about today...we are starting a brand-new series of sermons from the book of Daniel. We are going to go through the first several chapters and see what God wants to teach us.

The book of Daniel has so much to say about living in turbulent times. The Lord led us to preaching through this book because there are so many relevant messages for the world we love in today. Tons of wisdom.

Let me give you a little context for today...

There are several different people groups in play when Daniel is introduced. Assyrians, Babylonians, Jews, Egyptians, Ninevites, etc...

Sidenote: Different countries have different cultural norms, and what is appropriate in one culture may be offensive in another culture. For example, you should never touch a person's head in Thailand; the head is considered sacred. In Portugal you should never write anything in red ink; it is very offensive. Chewing gum is illegal in Singapore and can result in a large fine.

Daniel is giving us a first-hand account of what occurred when the Jews were overtaken by the Babylonians. They were taken to Babylon, and this is known as the Babylonian captivity for the Israelites.

This is what uncompromising faith looks like.

Let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. We stand so that you don't fall asleep!

Daniel 1.1-16 | In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it. ² The Lord handed King Jehoiakim of Judah over to him, along with some of the vessels from the house of God. Nebuchadnezzar carried them to the land of Babylon, to the house of his god, and put the vessels in the treasury of his god.³ The king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the Israelites from the royal family and from the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, good-looking, suitable for instruction in all wisdom,

knowledgeable, perceptive, and capable of serving in the king's palace. He was to teach them the Chaldean language and literature. ⁵ The king assigned them daily provisions from the royal food and from the wine that he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end of that time they were to attend the king. ⁶ Among them, from the Judahites, were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷ The chief eunuch gave them names; he gave the name Belteshazzar to Daniel, Shadrach to Hananiah, Meshach to Mishael, and Abednego to Azariah. **Faithfulness in Babylon** ⁸ Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief eunuch not to defile himself. ⁹ God had granted Daniel kindness and compassion from the chief eunuch, ¹⁰ yet he said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and drink. What if he sees your faces looking thinner than the other young men your age? You would endanger my life with the king." ¹¹ So Daniel said to the guard whom the chief eunuch had assigned to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then examine our appearance and the appearance of the young men who are eating the king's food, and deal with your servants based on what you see." ¹⁴ He agreed with them about this and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days they looked better and healthier than all the young men who were eating the king's food. ¹⁶ So the guard continued to remove their food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables.

Pray

Daniel stood strong. A major candidate for one of the most courageous people in all of the Bible. You want to know what to do in the face of adversity...read about Daniels life and replicate those things.

Sometimes we read things in the Bible and say, I can't do that. That's not really a threat today. So how do we grow? How do I take this story and apply it to my life in 2024?

I want to look at **4 tactics of the enemy**

1. Isolation

In the first 6 verses here, we see Daniel and his friends were taken away from everything they had ever known.

They took him away from his country, family, language, his worship of God...everything.

All of his support structure was gone with the hopes that eventually he would abandon all that and becomes one of them.

Isolation became their tactic, because they knew if they separated you from your norm, they could get you.

Babylon, Culture...is not interested in helping you grow in your walk with Jesus.

They want separation between you and the Lord.

Satan's only goal is to separate us from our Savior, and he will do whatever it takes.

Although nothing can remove us from the love of God, we are in a perpetual battle to guard our hearts and minds against his schemes. He wants to derail our faith and sidetrack our journey using strategies and plans that are sometimes hard to recognize.

I see this a lot... One way Satan isolates us is by convincing us that the counsel and correction we need is burdensome. (They'll think I'm dumb, they don't have time, I don't want to bother, I'm embarrassed.)

Stop it! The enemy revels in getting you isolated. You're so much easier to defeat.

Illustration: Basketball "ICE"

Our deterrence against isolation is being involved with a body of believers. God even speaks to this.

Hebrews 10.24-25 | And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

Isolation dies in church families that know they need, *and want*, to gather.

For them, Sunday mornings aren't just a neat addition to a full and happy life; they are the foundation of a full and happy life.

God means for us to know him, serve him, enjoy him, and become like him as a part of Christ's body. The more isolated we become, the more we cut ourselves off from the fountains of his grace, mercy, and guidance.

Investing into your spiritual life is a really really big deal...We've seen it time after time. When we stop investing, isolation is soon to follow.

Lay the foundation and repeat it often.

The second tactic the enemy uses is...

2. Indoctrination

Vs. 4-6 | ...He was to teach them the Chaldean language and literature. ⁵ The king assigned them daily provisions from the royal food and from the wine that he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end of that time they were to attend the king.

They wanted to teach them the language and literature. Teaching a Babylonian worldview.

They thought...we get their minds, and they are ours.

The world is trying to mold you and seduce you into the world. We must be unpersuaded.

Your social media is manipulated so that you see and don't see what they want.

Examples...Evolution, The transgender movement, white guilt movement,

One famous individual of history said... **“By the skillful and sustained use of propaganda, one can make a people see even heaven as hell or an extremely wretched life as paradise.” -Hitler**

Parents especially...Understand the difference in education and indoctrination. We must have a firm foundation so that we can know where and why we stand for Jesus.

Lay the foundation and repeat it often.

The 3rd tactic we see the enemy using...

3. Compromise

Vs. 5 | ⁵The king assigned them daily provisions from the royal food and from the wine that he drank.

This honestly doesn't sound that bad, right? Eat like a King! Let's feast. Not a big deal.

Here is the issue...Daniel was living under a Kosher diet as a Jew.

The Babylonians were different in the way they would get you on their team. Others like the Assyrians would kill and take slaves and make people bow down.

Babylonian would bring you into their place and say...look at how beautiful. Here is some amazing food. This is a great place. The river and the palm trees.

Hmm this isn't so bad. They would seduce you with the beauty and the culture. Their goal was to get you to conform to their way of thinking and life. And here is what happens...the lines you once had, the convictions you know are from God... begin to get blurry.

Blurry lines lead to crumbling convictions.

Our culture does this to us today...Here are some of the parallels we see today...

- A. **Money** and stuff – Major debt, materialistic, buying things we can't afford to impress people we don't know. Can't tithe because I owe too much.
- B. **Social media** – Doom scroll. Driving and scrolling. Every “dead” second we have we pick up the phone. (1 **Corinthians 6.12** | **“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything” –but I will not be mastered by anything.**)
- C. **Drinking/Sex** – I believe the Bible is clear here...Getting drunk is a sin. Sex outside of marriage sin.
- D. **Parenting** – Kids are now making the choices. Parents want to be friends instead of parents.
- E. **Church** – There is a question that is being asked in the homes of Christians today more than ever before...Are we going to church this week?

Culture will always try to tame us into compromise and compliance.

Culture grinds against our values until we crumble or counter.

Let's remember what God tells us...**Romans 12.2** | **2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.**

You can always find an excuse when you don't want to do right. But Daniel didn't need an excuse. He had already decided to do right no matter what happened

Daniel stood so strong in the midst of all of this. **Vs. 8** | **Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank**

Honoring God was more important than indulging in all the delicacies of the world.

Finally, the last scheme of the enemy we see here in Daniel 1.

4. Confusion

Vs. 6-7 | **6 Among them, from the Judahites, were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 7 The chief eunuch gave them names; he gave the name Belteshazzar to Daniel, Shadrach to Hananiah, Meshach to Mishael, and Abednego to Azariah.**
Faithfulness in Babylon

They gave them new names. They attacked their identity. I think this is such a big deal. I think so much in our lives come from who we believe we are. We are seeing the enemy attack identity in unparalleled ways today.

If he can confuse you about who you truly are, he can defeat you.

But look at this a little deeper:

In those days, when victors integrated slaves into their own culture, it was customary for them to change their names. It was a sign of ownership. The Israelites belong to their captors now.

These new names weren't just different names. They weren't meant to totally obliterate their identity.

Daniel – “God is my judge” to Belteshazzar – “Lady, protect the King”

Shift – Male to female, Focus on God to man, Powerful God to king who needs protecting.

Hananiah – “Yahweh has been gracious” to Shadrach – “I am fearful of God”

Shift – Gracious God to tyrannical God to be feared, Focus on God to focus on self.

Mishael – “Who can compare to my God? No one!” to Meshach – “I am despised, contemptible, and humiliated”

Shift – Focus on God to focus on self, confidence to cowardice

Azariah – “Yahweh has heled” to Abednego – “The servant of Nebo”

Shift – Son of God to slave of man

They were trying to steal who they were. We still see the enemy looking for opportunities to cast confusion on Gods goodness today.

There is purpose in how God makes us, and we must clearly know who we are in Christ to stand firm instead of being who culture tells us we should be.

The Bible says that God is not the author of confusion. Confusion and disorder come only from man.

If you are confused today...It's not on God. He actually makes things very clear to us if we will take time to listen.

No matter what the world may tell you, I want you to hear this today. A message from God...

You are loved

You have purpose

You are chosen

Its only when we embrace our true identity that purpose and meaning come.

Don't allow the enemy to steal one more day from you battling with who you are in Christ.

Conclusion:

Culture is not our enemy. There has to be a balance here. Love people in and of the world, but do not conform to the patterns of the world. There are enemies within culture, but not everyone who doesn't know Christ has to be put on your do not call list.

Here is a question I want you to consider.

In the area of _____ am I conforming to culture or am I convicted by God?

Get some core convictions in your life and it will be easier to stand when the enemy starts using his tactics.

Daniel was going to be loyal! Make up your mind to be loyal to God at all costs.

Godly convictions yield God-given rewards.

When your roots run deep in Gods truth, it's much easier to withstand the winds.