

Staying Faithful in a Faithless World

Daniel 1

Question: How do I stay faithful in a faithless world?

INTRO//

- What's up Faith Students? Welcome to the best night of the week!
- Tonight we're starting a new series in Daniel! Daniel is an Old Testament book with some stories and prophetic dreams that point to Jesus!
- Likely written by Daniel himself
 - Written in a time where he was "out of place", completely new surroundings

CONNECTION + ILLUSTRATION//

- Tell a story/time where you felt out of place
 - New school
 - New team/sport
 - New job or moving

TRANSITION//

We've all experienced what it's like to feel "out of place" in a new situation and surroundings. Maybe you've even felt isolated because of your faith.

Especially today, following Jesus is becoming more and more rare. And we can struggle with keeping our faith in a faithless world.

CONTEXT//

- But I want to encourage you that Daniel experienced this very thing:
 - His home Judah was taken captive by Babylon
 - Some of the young men from the royal family (David's lineage) to be trained in Babylonian culture + language
 - Daniel was one of those young men, this book is his story in a foreign land/situation and later his prophetic dreams
 - Daniel was in a new and faithless world
 - In captivity, the God of Israel was not recognized or worshiped

We see this in Daniel 1:1-7

SCRIPTURE//

During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia^[b] and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. **4** "Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon." **5** The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

6 Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. **7** The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach.

Mishael was called Meshach.

Azariah was called Abednego.

-Daniel + His friends were in a scary situation, probably very anxious

- New place, new power over them, many of us likely would've done whatever was asked of us
- The problem was some of the things they were being asked to do didn't align with God's way/law
 - They wanted these men to conform to Babylonian culture
- We ourselves often feel the pressure to conform to culture
 - We can learn from the example of Daniel and his friends on how to stay Faithful in a faithless world

1//Trust God when you can't see (v.1-7)

•This was a low time for Judah and God's people. It seemed like God of Israel lost out to the gods of Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon. His people were destroyed and taken captive.

But we see in verse 2 God allowed this to happen

This probably made Daniel + his friends question God

- They couldn't see God's goodness or faithfulness
- They couldn't see God's purpose in this situation
- They could've easily gone their own way and forgotten God

-Many of us have been in situations when we couldn't see how God was working so we believed the lie he wasn't working at all. So we took things into our own hands.

-It's hard to trust when we can't see! Or when what we see seems bad

ILLUSTRATION//

-I had 2 ideas:

1. Trust Fall
2. Bring a student up to eat something gross, hype it up but really give them something good

-Even when we can't see what God is doing, even when it seems like God is doing nothing, we have to be faithful and trust He is!

-That's exactly what Daniel + his friends did:

SCRIPTURE// (DANIEL 1:7-14)

Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. **9** Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. **10** But he responded, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded."

11 Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. **12** "Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said. **13** "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see." **14** The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

-Daniel + his friends decided to honor God

- Extremely risky + bold!
- Choosing to go against what the Babylonians wanted, claiming God's way was better
- Stayed faithful to God in something that seems minor

2//Trust God with the small (v.8-14)

- We would likely say: "it's just food"
- "I don't see the big deal"
 - This is how how satan gets us **comfortable with compromise**
- Daniel made a big deal over a little thing. The only way to be fully obedient to God is to be faithful in little things.
- People might ask, "Daniel, why bring religion into it?" But Daniel realized that his **relationship with God touched every area of his life**, including what he ate.

SCRIPTURE// (Luke 16:10)

"If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities."

ILLUSTRATION//

- **Small drop of dye can change/contaminate a whole thing of water**

-Sin starts small: disobedience to God in the small things shows you won't be obedient to God with the large things

- The fall of man, 1st sin was **eating** fruit
- Sometimes it's not what it is, but it's what it means- Disobedience to God

APPLICATION//

-We'll often have to take steps of FAITH + Obedience

-God's way will sometimes seem risky/counter our feelings

-God's way isn't always popular

-But we can trust God's way is always BEST for us + others around us:

SCRIPTURE//

15 At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. 16 So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

17 God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.

18 When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and

no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. 20 Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom.

-How can we stay faithful in a faithless world? How can we continue to follow Jesus when the world pulls us the other way?

3//Know God's favor follows faithfulness (v.14-20)

-God will be proven right + faithful!

-As we see in this story, It worked! God's way was proven best (shocker)

-They made what Daniel + His friends did the standard!

-This is a powerful reminder that the things God calls us to are not random, they are for us to flourish!

- The call to sexual purity is not random
- The call to love our enemies is not random
- The call to care for the widows and orphans is not random
- The call to prayer is not random
- The call to discipline is not random

-It's all for OUR best and the BEST of OTHERS!

-God's favor follows our faithfulness!

-Daniel + His friends were promoted! God blessed them with incredible wisdom and put them in positions of influence

-So many times we find ourselves in situations of loss + brokenness

-We can ask ourselves "why God?"

-Daniel + his friends likely asked God why he allowed them to be taken captive

-But because of their faithfulness and God's favor, this chapter ends with Godly people in positions of power + influence!

-As we study through this book we'll see people come to know God that never would have if it wasn't for Judah being taken captive

-It's all for God's glory!

CLOSING//

-Be encouraged that God is working things together for our good + HIS GLORY!

-ROMANS 8:28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

(that's a promise!)

-If we will:

1. Trust God even when we can't see the good
2. Trust God with the small

-We can know:

3. God's favor **will** follow our faithfulness

-It will all WORK TOGETHER

-May not always be good, but it will come together for our good + God's glory

ALTAR//

1. **SALVATION**- Give my life to God + begin to follow Jesus
2. **SURRENDER**- Is there any area of your life that you need to surrender to God?
 - Is there something I'm not being faithful to God in?
 - Is there a situation I need to intentionally invite Him to work in?
 - Am I trying to go my own way?