

DARING TO BE DIFFERENT

Daniel 1

We've all spent our lives learning about fairy tales; wondering how to make our story end like fairy tales!

They always "live happily ever after!"

People want to live "happily ever after!"

Daniel presents 6 stories about how to "live happily everafter."

As story begins, Daniel is worried and upset.

He has reason to be.

His homeland is in ruins.

No hope of relief anytime soon.

Due to unfaithfulness to God, Israel's in captivity.

Daniel's anxious for deliverance & restoration.

God reveals program to bring about restoration.

But that involves many years of pagan control.

Picture for immediate future is anything but rosy.

How do you trust God in the midst of such uncertain times?

How would we have responded?

Daniel writes to encourage them to remain faithful to God in hard times.

The faithful always triumph in the end!

HISTORICAL Evidence Dan. 1-6 – 6 examples

Faithful people, facing impossible circumstances in past, experience victory.

God could handle it in the past;

He can handle it in the future.

Principles are just as true as we face uncertainties of 21st C., as they were 26 hundred years ago!

God was in control in past; He's in control today – even in pagan lands

Faithful people triumphed in past;

faithful people in 21st C. will triumph!

6 examples: God controls pagan governments--5

Elements:

1. Conflict—for the faithful

Power & pride of human leader are confronted

Creates conflict—God's servant must *make a choice*, or do something

2. Faithfulness of God's servant

Faces conflict, makes right choice

3. Triumph God's control over pagan government seen

4. God is glorified

5. Faithful is exalted

Doesn't promise "success" always follows (cp. Heb. 11)

Some die by sword and flame—but not here

God is always in control—even when it isn't clear how He could be!

The faithful *always* triumph in the end

1st Example: Daniel's faithfulness in Nebuchadnezzar's training program

Captivity 1:1-2 Daniel begins with historical background.

Occurs in 3rd yr of Jehoiakim = 605 = Nebu.'s 1st attack

Entered Jerusalem—took 1st deportation captive, including Jehoiakim, Daniel, and select group of young men.

2 "The Lord delivered Jehoiakim..."

God was never defeated.

Pagan concept: most powerful god wins!

Daniel wants everyone to know ***Yahweh never lost!***

He delivered people into enemy's hand,
due to disobedience

Preparation of young men 1:3-7

In spite of popular impression, Daniel isn't a prophet.

As story begins, he's student–political science major, with
minor in near eastern philosophy–training as politician in
Babylonian court.

Politician who loved God–honored Him before pagan kings
Nebu. looks for best young men in Babylon 1:3-4a

He picked brightest, best looking, & strongest–most talented

All the traits you'd look for to predict success.

They're prepared to serve the king.

They're taught by best teachers!–in all areas of culture
1:4b

Most powerful nation in world–brought in smartest teachers

They're fed finest foods 1:5

Society wants to change their values. 1:6-7

Deliberate attempt to brainwash them!

Education expanded. **Diet** changed. Even **names changed**:

Daniel = “God judges” => Belteshazzar

= “Lady, protect the king”

Hananiah = “Yahweh is gracious” => Shadrach

= “I am fearful”

Mishael = “Who is like God?” => Meshach

= “I am despised (humbled)”

Azariah = “Yahweh helps” => Abed-nego = “Servant of Nebuchadnezzar”

Wanted them to think like Babylonians!

Abstinence of the young men 1:8-16

We're used to adage: "***When in Rome, do as the Romans do!***"

Spanish saying: "Wherever you go, act like what you see!"

Act like everybody else! Think like everybody else.

Talk like everybody else. Just blend into the crowd.

Daniel isn't willing to accept that philosophy!

He's in Babylon; isn't about to act like a Babylonian.

He lives in king's court; isn't willing to act like pagan nobles.

Daniel took his faith on the road with him!

When we're away from home, do we live by same principles
we live by at home?

*When we're away, do we leave our religion at home and act
like everybody else?*

Not just rebellious young men who wanted to be
different!

J. I Packer: "They were men who knew God, and who ... felt
compelled ... to stand out against the dictates of irreligion and
false religion... It doesn't worry them that others of God's people
see the matter differently, & do not stand with them.... They're
clear as to what *they* ... had to do...."

King's diet creates conflict with his conscience. 1:8

Issue not a specific prohibition—none mentioned

Concerned about getting hooked on popular, pleasure-seeking,
humanistic, Babylonian lifestyle.

Daniel **made up his mind** to draw a line,

remain aloof from *entrapments* of the good life.

He made commitment to remain faithful to His God!

He'd stick to vegetables and water—just enough to get by.
Daniel made a commitment to do NOTHING that could defile him.

THOSE WHO WALK WITH GOD MAKE A COMMITMENT NOT TO GET CAUGHT IN ENTRAPMENTS OF THIS LIFE!

whether it be diet cultural lifestyle

the rat race, or climb for success.

Daniel determined not to get sucked in by the system—popular pagan lifestyle.

Not legalistic adherence to a bunch of rules.

Voluntary submission demonstrates priority God has in our life.

Have WE decided we'll be faithful whether anyone else comes along or not?

Daniel's commitment to remain faithful to Yahweh motivates 3 others!

"One example more clearly shows what virtue looks like than a thousand eloquent descriptions of it"

That's the pattern Daniel followed.

Other "Christian kids" didn't join them; 4 determined to *hang together* & be faithful. They made a difference on campus!

They're the *only ones* whose names we know.

Are we willing to take stand, even if it earns label: "different?"

—at conventions when we spend week away

—at home where some family members desire to please God; but some don't.

Official wants to cooperate, but he's afraid. 1:9-10

If they fail test, he dies.

His expectation: if you don't go along with crowd—with what everyone else thinks—you'll be a failure!

He's evaluating everything from human perspective.

No consideration to results God's intervention could make.

He's never seen god who could do that!

Daniel suggests 10-day trial 1:11-14

"Give us the 10-day test!"

Daniel's not rebellious nor offensive.

He expresses convictions respectfully

He wins official's support.

Daniel's not afraid to put his faith to the test!

He knows the God he's trusting!

Results of the test 1:15-16

They look *better* than the rest, so official approves request.

Success isn't result of his diet!

This isn't a lesson to teach children to eat their vegetables!

Doctor told elderly patient, "Wonder drugs won't help. You need rest & change of living. Go to a quiet country place for a month. Go to bed early, eat lots of vegetables, drink plenty of milk, & smoke just one cigar a day." When he returned to doctor, he looked like a new man. "Doctor, your advice did a world of good. I did all the things you told me. But that 1 cigar a day almost killed me. It's not easy to start smoking at my age!"

Success is the result of God's work in his life.

"Success" comes from God—"who gives the increase!"

Point here: *this is God at work!*

God intervenes, glorifies Self, exalts them because *they're faithful*

Exaltation of the young men 1:17-21

Implication at start: *taking stand for God will ruin his chances*

Daniel determines to take stand for doing things God's way.

He can trust God with consequences.

Isn't committed to getting ahead. *Committed to pleasing God.*

God assumes responsibility for results of Daniel's faithfulness

God gives them superior wisdom & intelligence
1:17-19

Students surpassed their teachers 1:20-21

What's message this account teaches us?

God exalts those who remain faithful to Him!

Everyone thinks if they don't do things the way culture mandates, they'll have to give up everything & lose it all!

4 stood out! –those who stand firm & remain faithful to God!

4 faithful ones honored in the end!

God blesses those who obey Him – even in adverse circumstances

Rom 12:2 (Phillips) *"Don't let the world force you into its mold."*

God-honoring convictions yield God-given rewards!

What might WE face that relates to Daniel's experience?

The issue here isn't whether you eat vegetables or meat!

In fact, it isn't about what you eat at all.

It's about who sets the standards we're going to live by!

It's about desire for success by world's standards (& "trappings" of that success).

We think **to be successful we have to act like the world.**

- => Longer hours to get ahead, at expense of family
 - => Drive for more stuff--"Keeping up with Joneses" => Credit crunch
 - => Pursuit of world's standards/measures of success
- Are we doing things the way everybody thinks you're suppose to?
- Are we making the big bucks?
 - Are our numbers increasing?
 - Have we planned well enough for tomorrow?
- "You can't just trust God & pray!
You have to plan for success!

Incident demonstrates *we don't have to be like world to succeed!*

We stand out by being faithful to God.

God blesses those who obey Him first, even in adversity.

Daniel stands against crowd for what's right

It starts with commitment when he's young--commitment not to defile himself [Never too late to start!]

For 66 years Daniel faithfully serves pagan kings, but NEVER compromises his faith--even when threatened with death!

Bible offers no better model of how to live among people who don't share our faith, or respect it.

The faithful always triumph in the end!

How does this incident relate to our experience?

Think back to *incident past* when you took stand--decided you'd be faithful to God's standards, even if you stood alone. How did it work out?

The faithful ALWAYS triumph *in the end*.

Where do we sense pressure to conform to world's standards?

Do we ever find ourselves in situation where we're embarrassed to do right?

How do we handle the pressure?

What does God want us to do?

How will our life stand out as different if we do it God's way?