

This year, the church's emphasis is on living lives of witness, and I believe the book of Daniel is particularly well suited for that focus. The overarching theme of Daniel is that he and his companions consistently live lives marked by prayer and faithful witness. While some of Daniel's actions may appear extraordinary, he is ultimately doing something very ordinary: bearing witness to who God is. His faithfulness is not rooted in dramatic gestures, but in steady obedience and trust in the Lord.

Already in chapter one, we see a clear example of Daniel's willingness to bear witness to God despite the potential for serious consequences. Daniel finds himself in an environment that is radically different from—and often opposed to—the truth he has been taught. Very quickly, he faces a defining moment: will he continue to live according to the ways of the Lord, or will he conform to the culture and expectations of his new surroundings? His response demonstrates that faithful witness begins with everyday decisions rooted in conviction. Daniel is determined to not defile himself before the Lord and denies the king's food.

Some may object to comparing our situation with Daniel's by pointing out the vast differences in historical and cultural context. Yet, in many ways, our world is more similar to his than we might expect. Daniel and his companions were in a society that looked very different from the one their parents knew, with radically different values and assumptions. Likewise, we live in a post-Christian culture shaped by dramatic technological and cultural shifts over the last few decades. Just as Babylon aggressively sought to shape hearts and minds, our world persistently presses for conformity. This makes the call to appeal to God's authority—and to depend upon it—all the more urgent. Like Daniel, we must resist looking to institutions, cultural voices, or social media as our ultimate guides, and instead submit ourselves fully to the Lord.

If we wish to live lives of witness we must fully grasp the implications of what we claim to believe. If what we believe is true, then the people we love and care about face eternal separation from God apart from Christ. At the same time, we confess that we serve an all-powerful, sovereign, and comforting God whose approval matters more than that of any earthly authority. If we truly understand these realities, we will look for and create opportunities to share the good news of Christ. This may feel uncomfortable or intimidating at first, just as it likely did for Daniel and his friends, but that discomfort is normal and tends to lessen with faithful practice.

As a brief side note, some have raised the question of whether Daniel himself was a eunuch, since he served under a eunuch's authority and Scripture records no wife or children. While the text does not explicitly state this, it is unlikely that Daniel was physically castrated. More likely, he was made a ceremonial eunuch—a common practice in which royal servants were required to abstain from marriage and family life to ensure undivided loyalty to the king. This practice is similar in rationale to the Catholic requirement of priestly celibacy. Additionally, Daniel 1:4

describes him as being “without blemish,” which strongly suggests that no physical mutilation had taken place.