

Daniel 1
My Life Through the Lord's Lens
Pastor JD Farag

KAPONO: Amen. Would you join me in a word of prayer? Lord, we are excited to hear Your word this evening, Lord. We thank You for watching over us as we traveled here, Lord. And when all is said and done, would we have received what it is that You have for us, Lord And would You take us home safely? In Jesus' name, Amen.

PASTOR JD: Amen and amen. Good evening. Welcome. You can be seated. Really looking forward to tonight. I think you know why. So only the first eight verses, though. What? Really? Well, then you're not going to be too happy on Sunday morning because we start the *Book of Revelation*. Three verses.

[Laughter]

So let's just get that out of the way now. Oh, my goodness. So looking forward to what the Lord has for us. I have been, just really with great anticipation, preparing for the teaching of this amazing book. We're in for a tremendous blessing as we embark on a verse-by-verse study through Daniel.

Daniel has been affectionately referred to as the Old Testament *Book of Revelation*. And others have commented that you can know better and understand better the *Book of Revelation* if you understand the *Book of Daniel*. Perhaps better said the *Book of Daniel* unlocks the *Book of Revelation*.

And as we're going to see in just the first eight verses is how it is and why it is that God uniquely gifts us and positions us in our lives for His glory. And we're going to get to know this Daniel. What an amazing man. He's actually a very young man, as we'll see in a moment. But he could have never imagined that his life would be this way.

But again, as we're going to see, he sees his life through the Lord's lens, the Lord's way. Here he is a young man, and he finds himself as a captive, one of the first ones taken captive because, and we'll see this as well tonight, by the way, they always take the cream of the crop first, the first and the best.

And Daniel was outstanding in that he stood out among all of the Jews that were taken captive by the Babylonians. So here he is, like Ezekiel, which we just finished last week, a young man at the time. He was being trained for the priestly service in the temple, except

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that he wouldn't serve as the priestly service in the temple because there would be no temple for him to serve the priestly duties in.

Why? Because the temple would be destroyed. And now, Ezekiel's life has taken this abrupt turn. And instead of serving in the temple, he's prophesying about the temple, namely the destruction of the temple.

Now, how's that one? It's been said that God ruins you, me for Him. He ruins all of your plans. I'm sure Ezekiel had goals. Daniel had plans, you know, for after graduation. Only that wasn't what he planned. That's not how he saw his life. But God had different plans. And God's ways are higher than our ways and infinitely better than our ways. Unsearchable are His ways. **“Who can know the mind of the Lord?”**

So here's Daniel. And now he's there in Babylon, different than Ezekiel, though. He's in the palace there in Babylon. Ezekiel was in a place close in proximity called Tel Abib, not Tel Aviv, Tel Abib. So Daniel and Ezekiel and even Jeremiah would have known each other. Some believe they would have known each other very well. So even Jeremiah refers to Daniel. So does Ezekiel, I think. So these are contemporaries if you will.

And now we're going to be introduced to this amazing young man tonight, and we're going to see the hand of God on his life. And we're going to see his life through the Lord's lens, not through Daniel's lens, because God completely ruined any plans that Daniel might have had and abruptly changed them.

And here he is. He will never see Jerusalem again. He's going to be there into his nineties in Babylon. And at first glance, at first blush, as they say, it almost seems cruel. But God has this plan to use this man in a powerful way. This is certainly a profoundly prophetic book, but so too is this certainly a profoundly personal book.

Let me explain. Yes, there's the prophecy woven into the fabric of its pages. But so too, is there much in the way of personal application. For those of you who have read the *Book of Daniel*, you know what's in store. We're going to go through quite a journey with this man. We're going to go into a lion's den.

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We're going to interpret a few dreams along the way, (Chuckling) and we're going to prophesy prophetic events yet future that are so accurate that the very authorship of Daniel will be brought into question.

I mean, so precise and so profound are the prophecies in this book that the critics of this book have suggested, even accused the author of this book as not being Daniel because there's no way. So it's a forgery because there's no way you could have a book with prophecy that precise coming to pass exactly as it was written way before it happened and was fulfilled.

Now, you know that when we get to specifically *Chapter 9*, we have a very profound prophecy related, yet future, related to where we're at right now, *Daniel 9:27* to be exact. So we'll get there. But there are prophecies in this book that happened. Example. True story.

You know who Alexander the Great is? So when he was conquering — in fact, he got — he went into depression because he ran out of cities and peoples and nations to conquer. He had basically conquered the known world at the time.

And he was now there in the Middle East. And a Jewish rabbi took him aside and said, Alexander the Great, first of all, welcome to Jerusalem, Aloha or shalom or whatever.

[Laughter]

Sorry. By the way, did you know that you're mentioned in the *Book of Daniel*? And Alexander — I'm going to communicate this as best as I can. You'll forgive the way I share this true story. But Alexander the Great is like, Wait. I am? Now you got to know this guy was an ego maniac, right? So he's like, I'm in — I'm in the Bible? I'm in your Jewish Bible? Show me.

So the Jewish rabbi takes him to the *Book of Daniel* and the kingdoms that are prophesied that will rule and reign over the known world. And he said, you see that kingdom? That's you. It hadn't happened yet.

So check this out. He spares Jerusalem because of it. He does — he could have ate Jerusalem for lunch. Well, the Babylonians would eventually, but he could have. But he didn't because of the prophecy about him in the *Book of Daniel*, which came to pass, as we talked about.

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Was it last Sunday? That's pretty bad, again, when you don't know which — what you talked about. What was the pastor's sermon about? I don't know; why don't you ask him? He doesn't know either. (Chuckling)

It was, I think it was last Sunday about prophecies coming to pass with 100% accuracy. That's the gauge. That's the litmus test to know whether you're dealing with a Jeremiah or a Hananiah. Because there's false prophets. And the way — talk about a deterrent. If a prophet prophesied falsely, they were to be killed. I'd think twice about “thus sayeth the Lord” if, you know, I lived at that time, even to this day.

How do you know if a prophecy and a prophet is a true prophet or a false prophet? Does it come to pass with 100% accuracy, not 99.9, by the way. 100% accuracy. And all of the prophecy we're going to see in this prophetic book is going to come to pass, much of which has already come to pass with 100% accuracy.

One last thing because as God would have it, and as only God could, timed it to where — I mean, what are the odds? I mean, that's so odd you know it has to be God that we would finish Jude at the same exact time that we finish *Ezekiel* and slide into *Daniel* and *Revelation* in the same week.

Again, I mentioned this. Please don't look at me like, wow, that's really clever that you timed it that way. Ha! Yeah, no, uh-huh. That was God. I could never have done that even if I tried, by the way. And I actually — I have to confess. I'm like, you know, this is looking like it's gonna happen, God. And then I was thinking, no, we're going to get to Daniel before Revelation.

And then I remembered that we had invited Pastor Steve Santos from Calvary Chapel, Westside, in Lahaina on a Thursday night. So that pushed it forward one week. And here we are! Ha-ha-ha! I love it when God does that! Anyway....

So but you've got the prophecy side of the book, and then over here, you've got the personal side of the book, the personal application. There are countless lessons that we can learn from this book that we can apply to our lives as we view the life of Daniel through the lens of the Lord.

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One last thing, and we'll pray, and we'll actually get started with the Bible study. How about that? Aren't you glad that we're only taking eight verses tonight?

There are two men in the Bible. Now don't misunderstand me because this is — I don't want you to misunderstand what I'm about to say. There are only two men in the Bible for which there is no recorded blatant, overt sin. Now, that doesn't mean they were sinless. That just means that there was no recorded sin in Scripture.

Two men. Daniel's one of them. You know who the other one is? Joseph. Now why do I mention that? And why is that important? Because these were godly men. You understand that when Joseph was taken into slavery in Egypt, captive in Egypt, like Daniel in Babylon, he was a teenager.

And I mean, this guy had every right to be bitter and angry and resentful towards his brothers, towards everyone because of everything that he went through. His boss' wife falsely accusing him, and his brothers abandoning him and selling him into slavery.

There's one account that is really painful to read. It's a detail in the account of Joseph when they threw him into the pit, left him for dead before they sold him into slavery. He is screaming. I mean the text doesn't even really — I don't think it really communicates the intensity of the pain he was in. Why are you doing this to me? You're my brothers. Don't leave me here to die. And he's screaming and he's wailing, and he's crying and he's weeping bitterly.

And all of the things, inexplicable, by the way — Joseph could have never imagined that his life would be like that. But God had his life like that. It's almost like this. Daniel, Joseph, you, me — if only you could see your life through My lens. But you can't.

It's called faith. And faith is the antithesis of sight. There is coming a day when we will not need faith because we will see Him face to face. But **“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence [Strong word] of that which is yet unseen.”**

See, if I see it, then I don't have to live by faith. But the righteous are to live by faith. I don't see it. But I believe by faith. It's not seeing is believing. Jesus said, **“Believe. And you'll see.”**

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So these men believed God, and they would be so blessed by God. In fact, I'm just thinking about next week is going to be about how God honors those who honor Him. God is going to bless Daniel. God is going to honor Daniel because Daniel is going to honor God. And there's a takeaway right there. So this is a blessed man and a blessed life. And we're going to see this life through the Lord's lens.

So you ready? Let's pray. Father, thank You. Thank You so much for this amazing man. We're going to meet him tonight as a very young man in this amazing book that You inspired him to write Lord, there's much here. We don't want to rush through it certainly.

We want to take our time, and we want to glean from it and mine from it the many riches that are here for us within this book, riches that we can take with us and apply to our lives, truths that could be so life changing in our lives.

Lord, help us tonight by the Holy Spirit to see our lives through Your lens as we now begin this book. Would You bless our time, Lord? Speak to our hearts. Thank You. We love You so much. In Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

Verse 1 is a prophetic timestamp. **“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, [He was a vassal king, a puppet king, if you prefer] Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.”**

This is the third siege. This is game over. He's had it. There was two sieges before, but he got word that his father was dying. So he leaves Jerusalem and rushes back to Babylon. He, in fact, made it there — I think it was within two weeks he traveled X-number of miles — unheard of for travel speed in that time. Travel was very difficult.

Why was he in such a rush to get back to Babylon and leave the siege there in Jerusalem? It wasn't because his father, he loved his father. No, he wanted to make sure that he held on to power when his father died. So that's what led to finally the third siege. And this places this because of the detail in the year 605 B.C.

Now, why do we need to know that? Because if this is 605 B.C., that means that Daniel is between 13 and 17 years of age. Why do we need to know that? Because like Paul would write to Timothy as a very young man, don't let the older guys look down on you, be condescending to you because you're young.

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Do you realize that when Jesus called the disciples, they were very young, late teens, early twenties. Twenties? Yeah. Early twenties. I still can't say it. Easy for me to say. Rough week again. Be gracious to me. You have to. In their early twenties.

I mean, the disciples — I mean, I don't know what you picture them. No thanks to the movies — I can't watch those, by the way. Just saying. I can't watch them because first of all, I know the Bible well enough. I hope that didn't come off wrong, but I know Scripture, and I know it wasn't like dat.

I mean, some of the older Jesus movies. I mean, Jesus is so robotic and stoic. Come. Follow Me. *[Talks in reverb]* And I will make you fishers of men. And the disciples are like, okay. And then they follow Him.

I'm like, are you kidding me? No, it wasn't like that. And then the newer ones even — I got to get this off my chest, it seems. That's okay. I got time. Some of these newer movies that — I guess there's one coming out or already came out. I don't even know the name of it. Don't tell me. I don't want to know. (La-la-la) I don't want to know. I already know. I'm not going to watch it because I can't. I've tried. God knows I've tried it. I make it like four minutes in. And I'm like, no, no. I mean, it's all — it's just wrong. It's wrong! Okay?

I think I might feel a little bit better now, so we'll move on. These were young men. They were not, you know, in their forties or fifties or retirement age. No, he's...

Mary, the mother of the Savior of the world — the virgin birth of the Savior of the world. Do you know how old Mary was? She was a teenager. Some Bible scholars estimate that she was maybe 15, 16, 17 years old. How's that one? How old's Joseph? Don't know. They were young.

So what's your point? Maybe you're asking do you even have a point? I absolutely have a point. Don't look down on the young because oftentimes God will choose and use the life of a young person in ways that He cannot otherwise choose and use if the person's older. You've heard that expression? I'm sorry for lack of a better one. “You can't teach an old dog new tricks.” That's not very sanctified, is it? How about “new wine and old wine skins?” That's way more biblical and sanctified, right? How about “fresh fire on the altar?”

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You know, one of the things in ministry that I'm learning still, even at my age, especially at my age, is that there are things you have to unlearn before you can learn. And I tell you; early on in my walk with Lord, I've been walking with the Lord for over 40 years, I mean, there was so many things that He just had to get out of me before He could impart and get things into me. This has got to go first before I can do this.

It's been often said, well said, that God cannot do the work through you until He first does that work in you. So He's chosen this Daniel to be the one whom He would use to prophesy the most profound prophecies in all of the pages of Holy Writ and yet still have this personal side to him. And again, as we get to know him, we're going to be so blessed by him.

So we've made it to *verse 1*. Now let's get to *verse 2*. **“And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand [This is Nebuchadnezzar now king of Babylon] with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; [Notice that's lowercase] and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.”**

Now watch this. Treasure and talent. Here we have the treasure, and we're going to see next the talent, the treasure in the articles and the talent of these young men, of which Daniel was chief, taken from where they rightfully belonged into this place where they worship false gods. Hang on to that.

Verse 3. **“Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children [Young] of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men [Verse 4] [I want young men] [I don't want the old guys on walkers, no offense] in whom there was [Watch this] no blemish, but good-looking, [I want some good-looking kids] gifted in all wisdom, [They got a pretty high GPA, these kids] [I want them] possessing knowledge, [I don't want them to be stupid] and quick to understand, [They got to be a quick study] [They got to be teachable] [And they got to be willing to learn and quick to understand] and those who had ability.”**

That's quite a list. That's a pretty tall order. Did you see the order here? First of all, old guys need not apply. We're out right away.

Verse 4. No blemish, no, you know, I hate to say, “disability.” And I only want handsome and good looking, easy on the eyes, gifted, talented, knowledgeable, quick to understand, and those who have outstanding abilities. That's who I want **“...to serve in the king's palace and**

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whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. And [Verse 5] the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel..."

First and foremost, Daniel. he met all of the qualifications. He checked off all of those boxes of ability, very good looking, very handsome, very knowledgeable, very gifted, all of the above, and then some. So he's in.

You know, what the name — and we're going to talk about this in a moment — the name is the nature, right? In fact, in that culture, in that time, they would wait to name the children until they learned a little bit about the nature of that child. So they would name the child according to the nature of that child.

Example: Yitzhak — Isaac — born to Abraham and Sarah miraculously; Abraham is 100 years old. Sarah was 90 years old. Her womb long ago was barren. And God, true to His word and His promise, gave them a son, the promised son even after they tried to help God out and birthed an Ishmael, a type of the flesh, Isaac, a type of the spirit.

Now, in English, we pronounce it Isaac. In Hebrew, it's pronounced Yitzhak. Arabic: It's pronounced Yitzhak. You know what that name means? Literally: laugh, laughter, laughable.

Okay, I say to you in Arabic, ana yitzhak ma'akum, What did I just say? I am laughing with you. I wouldn't say I'm laughing at you. You laugh at me. I don't laugh at you. So I'm laughing with you. I just used Yitzhak, ana Yitzhak: I laugh with you.

His name: How would you like that? You're in school — you know they — I don't know if they still do it. They probably don't. The roll call, you know? Farag? Here. Ribbit.

Smith? Here. Laughter? Ha, ha. You're here.

I mean, that was his name. Every time you mention the name Isaac or Yitzhak or Yitzhak, you were saying “laughter” because that was the nature of who he was. It was laughable that this boy was ever even born, and that's laughable.

And also your mom, by the way, you don't know this because you weren't born yet. She laughed when God, through her husband said, you're going to have a son at the ripe old age of 90 years old. And God even said she's going to laugh.

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And that's exactly what happened. And she laughed; in fact, the angel of the Lord inquired of Abraham, **"Why is your wife laughing?"** Oh, she — I don't know. She must be watching something funny on Netflix. I don't know.

No. No, you're going to name him laughter because this is laughable if you're looking at it through the human lens. But if you're looking at it through the lens that God looks through, it's not laughable because nothing's impossible for the Lord.

You know, I think this would — I might as well. I haven't shared this in a very long time, but I'm kind of sensing a prompting from the Holy Spirit to share with you one of the most powerful experiences in my life concerning Abraham and Sarah.

So as many of you know, my wife and I could not have children. We were what the medical world called "unexplained infertility." We would get pregnant, but we would lose the baby in the miscarriage. We have three babies prior, in the first ten years of our marriage because we couldn't have children. We lost one baby. And in fact, our first pregnancy we lost in the second trimester.

But they said you have unexplained infertility. What's that? That means your infertility is unexplained. Thank you. So you might want to consider adoption. So we're like, okay. So we're into this thing — how many years now? So I think about year seven, year eight.

We're thinking, hey, let's find a Hagar somewhere. And let's — it wasn't like that. But I mean, let's, you know, find an Ishmael; let's help God out. And so we found a birth mother, 15 years old, who two weeks prior to meeting us for the first time to place in an open adoption, her baby girl had given her life to Christ.

But here she is, a 15-year-old mother, soon to be, whose mother, the grandmother of the baby girl, who was really pressuring this 15-year-old who just gave her life to Christ to place the baby in an open adoption. And she selected my wife and I to adopt her baby girl.

So the girl was born on June 1st of 1997, and after she was born — my wife was in the room. We videotaped it. We named her. I was waiting in the hall. And the birth mother starts bonding with the baby and asks us for permission to take her home to — before she places the baby with us for adoption — was going to be an open adoption — she said, "Can I just take her home for maybe a couple weeks?"

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And we knew that was the Lord saying you need to release her. And we didn't adopt her. This is June 1st, 1997. I go to the Lord on my face before the Lord, and I'm praying. And God just — it wasn't audible, didn't need to be. Nothing wrong with that.

I was just talking to a brother on Sunday. He said, "I had God speak to me audibly." I was like, wow, He's never spoken to me audibly. But anyway, so — but it didn't need to be because it was so clear that a fool could not err thereof. God spoke to my heart that — just like with Abraham — He came to Abraham, and He said one year from today you will have a son, a biological son. And that's when Sarah laughed when He told her.

So God spoke that to my heart, and it was so clear that one year from today you're going to have a son. Now you're going to go tell your wife, and she's going to do a Sarah impression and she's going to laugh. And it wasn't just a laugh. It was more like, okay, honey, we're going to get through this. I know you're devastated. But no, I'm like, honey, we're going to have a son one year from today. I was so convinced.

We had a son one year to the day on June 2nd, 1998. He's 25 this year. It gets better. Wait. Wait for it. On August 14, 1994, my dad died of a sudden heart attack. Unexpected, devastating. My mom and my dad had stayed married — I say it like that for a reason — for many, many years. And so my mom was just lost without my dad. And so she died in my arms on May 22nd, 1995.

So we're rewinding here. I knew it was just a matter of time, and I prayed, and I asked the Lord, Lord, if you take my mom, I no longer have parents, nor am I a parent. And then being the negotiator that I am, I kind of tried to make a deal with God.

Okay, God, here's the deal. You take my mom. I get a son. And it was one of those prayers where afterwards you just kind of feel — there's like a remorse and a conviction. I'm sorry, God. I got caught up in the moment. My mom's dying and — and here I am, like, you know, trying to — "Let's make a deal" with God. And I'll trade you mom for a son.

And I actually asked God to forgive me for praying that, and I forgot all about it. Well, fast forward to 1997. It wasn't long after that when my wife tells me "I'm pregnant again." And only this time I knew that's my son, that God promised He was going to give us, like He did Abraham and Sarah.

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In fact, you know, when they did the ultrasounds, they said do you want to know the gender? I said, no, we've been waiting for ten years. I can wait a few more months. Besides, I already know it's a boy. So we never had a doctor tell us it's a boy. No, I know that's my son because we already had his name picked out nine years earlier.

Elias. We had his name picked out nine years earlier. And so not only did we, by faith, believe God, didn't see it but believed God, that it was going to be a son, we already had his name. Elias is the Greek for Elijah.

So the doctor — you know how they give you the due date? Hang on very loosely to due dates. So he said your conception date was August 14th. Hmm. Your due date is going to be May 22nd. Hmm. That's exactly nine months. And the exact dates two years prior went on August 14th, 1994, my dad died, and nine months later on May 22nd, my mom died.

And then that prayer I prayed (Clapping) was brought right back to me. And I'm like, wait a minute, God, that would be so cool. Because back on June 1st, You told me we were going to have a son one year from today. I'm looking at the dates. It's looking like that's going to happen. So what happens?

Well, he's post-due. May 22nd comes and goes. And finally, he's born on what day? June 2nd, one year to the day, exactly as God said. I mean, I'm getting chicken skin talking about it all these years later.

There's one more. It gets even better. You ready for this one? When I prayed May 22nd, 1995, as my mom, I knew, was about to take her last breath, I said, God, if You — I made a vow. Be careful with vows. That's Ecclesiastes. We've talked about this.

Don't be quick to make vows. But I made a vow. I said, God, if You will give me a son, I will serve You all the days of my life. And I got more specific. I will sell my business, and I will serve in the ministry.

Now, when you do that, you're thinking Zimbabwe, some place in Nigeria, you know, Siberia. But no, it was Oahu. And I didn't spell it wrong, as one board member told me on the mainland, No, God called — it's not Oahu, it's Ohio. I always tell online visitors from Ohio. By the way, I think I was supposed to go to Ohio, not Oahu. But anyway...

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So I made a vow to God that if He would give me a son, I would serve Him no matter what, whatever it was all the days of my life, if He would give me a son. So I sold my business, and I started my first church in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, shortly after he was born. And then the rest is history, as they say, 2003. He was born in '98. 2003 we came here, and I started this church.

And if you were to tell me that I'd be standing here on a night like tonight, running out of time again, telling you and sharing with you this powerful testimony to you the most amazing church a pastor could ever have the privilege of being the pastor of, I would have said I don't believe you, being the great man of faith that I am.

But anyway, maybe that's for somebody. If there's an infertile couple maybe watching online, you take heart and you be encouraged. God is able to open up that womb.

Okay. We were in *Daniel* when we took a little side route to *Genesis*, but we'll come back to Daniel now. Daniel, the name — oh, that's what it was. That's how — this is where I was going. The name is the nature. Daniel: The name is the nature. It means “God is Judge.” Hananiah: That name means “the Lord is gracious.” Mishael means “none is like God.” And Azariah — these are the Hebrew names — means “the Lord is my help.”

Now they're about to get a legal name change from their Hebrew names to Babylonian or Chaldean names.

Verse 7, “To them, the chief of the eunuchs gave names [Changed their names] [Because they want to change their nature] [We'll come back to that] He gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar [Which means “Bel's prince.” Bel - a false god] to Hananiah [The name] Shadrach; [Which means “illuminated by sun god”] to Mishael, Meshach [Which means “who is like Venus,” the goddess Venus] and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.” [Servant of Nego]

These are all Babylonian gods. So what's happening here? Well, this is what the world, our Babylon tries to do to us. Stay with me. The world wants our soul, (nature, name, identity) our body (delicacies), and our mind (indoctrination). All three.

King Nebuchadnezzar wants to indoctrinate them, educate them, brainwash them, reprogram them in the ways of the Chaldeans. And it's going to be a three-year program. And that's what the world does to us. The world wants to change your identity.

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So I don't mean to get too far into this, but "I identify as." you might say, Satan is being met with a measure of smashing success in this area. It's the identity, the name, the nature. And how about our bodies? That's the temple of the Holy Spirit.

So here they're given — and you have to understand in that day there was a — it's not like today. You know, rich and poor can still go into a restaurant and eat delicious food. In that day? No way. To have even wine to drink and meat to eat, which by the way, the meat was sacrificed to idols, which we're going to see in a minute.

But it was all to change them and form them and fashion them after the image of Babylon. And in so doing, it would require the unlearning, if you will, of everything that they learned as Jews serving the one and true God, the God of Israel. So now we're going to have you unlearn that, so you can relearn. We're going to reeducate you, indoctrinate you in the ways of Babylon / the world.

Can I draw your attention to *Romans 12:1-2*? For those of you that were with us, this is many years ago, we went verse-by-verse through Romans. That was a tough book. It's a meaty book. It's a doctrinal book.

And I remember these two verses very well. I can still taste — I have the taste in my mouth still. I went back and taught the same passage the second week, and I still didn't walk away like I even scratched the surface, as they say.

What I'm trying to say is these two verses in *Romans 12:1-2* are amongst the most — how do I say it? They are probably amongst the most, if not the most, life-changing verses in all of the Bible.

I know I use that, maybe overuse that. But listen to what Paul writes in *verse 1*. **"Therefore, I urge you, [I beseech you, I beg you, please] brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer [Listen] your bodies as living sacrifices..."**

Living sacrifices. Dead sacrifices? No problem. There's no — what are they going to do? They're dead. If you're a living sacrifice, you're going to fight being put on the altar and offering your body. There's going to be a struggle there.

"...Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — [Daniel. That's Daniel] this is your spiritual act of worship. [And then verse 2 is wow!] Do not conform any longer

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to the pattern of this world," *the implication being that heretofore you have been conforming to the pattern, the mold of this world.*

Stop. It stops right here. It stops right now. No longer are you to conform to the pattern, the fashion, the mold of this world. The world's trying to squeeze you into its mold, reeducate you, indoctrinate you, and rename you and remake you after its own image. No longer.

But instead don't be conformed, **"Be transformed [How?] by the renewing of your mind."**

Ahh! That's the battleground; it's in the mind. **"As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."** It's, as one called it, "stinking thinking." You need a checkup from the neck up. That's *Philippians 4:8*, which comes after *verses 6-7*. That's deeply profound in and of itself. Worry about no thing. How? By thanking God for anything and praying for everything. **"And then the peace of God [From the God of peace] will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord."**

And then *Verse 8* says, **"Think on these things."**

Why? Because you are what you think. And you go through that list. **"What's pure, peaceable, holy, good, noble — think on these things."**

Because if you think like that, your mind will be washed by the water of God's word. Now watch this. This isn't a play on words. It's not being brainwashed, which is what the Babylon of this world wants to do. It's having your brain washed, washing your brain. Let me try that again. It's not being brainwashed. It's washing your brain, renewing your mind.

How? Here's the answer. It's by the word of God. **"Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — His good, pleasing, and perfect will,"** His way through His lens for your life. That's what is pleasing to Him.

And that's how you're going to know, test, approve, prove what's God's will. That's the number one question. I just need to know the will of God. I have good news for you. God wants you in His will more than even you yourself want to be in His will. Never imagine that God is in heaven playing a chess game try to keep you from figuring out His will.

Can you imagine: You guys, emergency meeting. JD is about to figure out My will. Get down there, mess it up for him so he can't figure out My will.

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No. God, consistent with His character, who He is and how He is, will always create an environment that is conducive to our obedience and being in His will. He'll choreograph the steps, and He'll orchestrate the circumstances. in order for us to be in His will. He wants us not in just His will, but His perfect will. And it's good and it's pleasing.

And this is Daniel. You could take a picture of Daniel — he's very handsome, by the way. Very photogenic. You take a picture of Daniel; you can put it right next to *Romans 12:1-2* because this is exactly what he's going to do. *Verse 8*. “But Daniel purposed in his heart...”

Stop right there. Purposed in his heart? Let me expound on that. He made a decision. This was a conscious effort on his part. He purposed in his heart. This was deliberate. This was a decision.

See, God gives us sovereignty, our own free will; otherwise, we would just be robots if we just automatically did what we're supposed to do. No, we have a choice to obey or disobey, to please God or displease God.

So Daniel purposed. I mean, his sole goal, if I can say it like this, in his heart — because **“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”** And **“The issues of life come from the heart of man.”**

So he made this decision in his heart. And this is what we're going to see next week. And God honored it. But he made this decision **“that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank.”**

I want to — we'll finish the verse but hang on. You got to know these guys; these four guys that just got their names changed to Chaldean names. They're a long way from home. Nobody's going to know. And we're a little bit hungry right now, too. And that prime rib is looking really good right now. The only problem is they know that it was sacrificed to idols.

This is why Paul said don't ask. If somebody invites you over for dinner, don't ask them if that's been sacrificed to idols. No, just eat the meat. Enjoy.

Now we're going to — we have to revisit this next week because a lot of vegetarians have misinterpreted *verses 9-21 of Chapter 1 in Daniel* to be a — an admonition to be a vegetarian. And I just want to go on record now. You're going to have to come next week and bring your prime rib with you. We'll have a barbecue if you want.

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But you have to understand that it wasn't meat versus vegetables here. This was meat that was sacrificed to idols. And they would violate their... Could they have eaten it? Absolutely. Could they have drunk the wine? Absolutely. They had the liberty. But would it be profitable? Absolutely not.

Here's an illustration I heard. You know it's going to be good because I didn't come up with it. Okay. So is it lawful for a runner in a competition to wear a sweatshirt, sweatpants, smoke a cigarette? Am I taking it too far? You'll just bear with me.

Yes, it's lawful. But is it profitable? True story. A runner asked his pastor, "Can I smoke?" Oh no, it wasn't his pastor. It was his coach. "Can I smoke and still run?" And the coach said, "Absolutely. You can smoke and still run, but you won't win."

You know, runners — I don't want to give you too much of an image here. And we're almost done. But, you know, they have like nothing on, I mean, dental floss. Why? Because it will weigh them down.

This is the writer of *Hebrews*. "**The sin that so easily besets us,**" hinders us, weighs us down to run the race. Our Christian life is likened unto a race. So we're in it to win it. So why would you want to do anything that would be a hindrance, that would weigh you down?

Can you? Sure. Do you have the liberty? Absolutely. Will it be beneficial, edifying, and profitable? Absolutely not.

So he made the decision and purposed in his heart that he would not partake of those delicious looking delicacies. And how about the honor of being seated at the king's table to eat this kind of food when everybody else is scrounging for scraps, hoping for food, and you're at the king's table with limitless delicacies before you, and you say no?

And I want you to watch this ,and we'll finish the verse and the chapter of the Bible study with it. "**Therefore [Speaking of Daniel] he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.**"

Now, listen, please, I beseech you, therefore, please listen to what I'm going to point out here. Notice it doesn't say, therefore Daniel protested. It says therefore Daniel requested. Now he's already made the decision. This goes against what he believes in his heart. So he's

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purposed in his heart that he's not going to partake of that which he has the liberty to do. So what's he going to do now? He's going to start a protest.

Here's where I'm going with this. You probably already know, so I might as well just get to the point, then we'll close. I think we do err greatly, brothers, sisters, when we are so disrespectful, even belligerent — something that we decide, purpose in our hearts that we do not want to participate in or partake of. I'm not talking about the blatant obvious ones. I'm talking about the areas where we major on the minors, and we die on that hill.

You've heard the expression “pick your battles.” Well, I'm going to take this one step further and just trust that the Holy Spirit will fine tune this before it reaches your heart from my lips. What kind of message are we sending to the world when we protest instead of request? How respectful is that?

When we share Jesus with people, it's not what we say. It's how we say what we say. It's the right heart saying the right thing in the right way at the right time. How often do we do the right thing in the wrong way with the wrong heart? You know how it is.

You can — there's a saying “you can get a lot more bees with honey than vinegar.” Is that how it goes? Did I botch it? Is that — is it flies with honey? With vinegar? I think it's bees. Please, somebody help me out here. Get me out of this mess I've gotten myself into. Bees love honey, right? But not vinegar. Are we good? Can we just say bees so we —

[Congregation says, “Yeah.”]

Please? It's bees, please. Okay, it's bees. Well, I think we can win a lot more people to Jesus with respectful honey than belligerent vinegar. Well, that was a good save right there.

[Laughter]

Thank You, Lord. Wooh! Got me out of that one. You know what I'm saying? Can I just again leave that between you and the Holy Spirit and myself included, by the way, in fact, myself, chief of sinners, as Paul would say. I have a Ph.D. in belligerence. I'm obnoxious for Christ.

Well, you might win the argument, but you'll lose the opportunity to win them to Christ. Here's the personal application again from the *Book of Daniel*. Yes, there's the prophetic. But how about the personal? Can we take this with us? Is this a takeaway for us? He

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requested. "Excuse me, sir." That's respect. "If it pleases the king." That's respect. "May I humbly ask?" That's respect. N

o, I demand! I protest! I refuse!

No, no, no, no. I request. Watch what God will do with that. How much of a better witness is that? As one said, "I think Christians are really bad advertisement for Christianity." I get so convicted just even quoting that quote. That's true. I think we have the right heart. We're trying to do the right thing, but we do it in the wrong way. And instead of requesting we're protesting. You know, what are you saying to that person?

Do I dare bring in abortion at this late hour? I just did. You know, one of the things I learned and I'm learning about abortion is that there's a mother and actually a father that for the rest of their lives will view through the lens of their lives every child that they see and think, my child would have been that age.

So when you talk about abortion — or let's even bring in divorce. You would think that a divorce was the unforgivable sin, that you blasphemed the Holy Spirit. No, God hates — boy, this preaches — God hates divorce!

Judgment of God is coming upon the nation for abortion! Have you ever heard of that Westboro Baptist Church? Why don't you go join that church? I'm sure they're winning a lot of people to Christ. Do you think? No, they're not.

How about this approach? You had an abortion? It's forgivable. And the good news is, if you're born-again of the Spirit of God, you'll see your baby in heaven. And yeah, it's going to hurt. And you're going to wonder for the rest of your life about that child.

But God is a gracious and a merciful God, and God loves you. And God forgives you. Now we can talk. Instead of pounding and protesting, you're really caring for that person. That's the heart of God.

Okay. Sorry to end on that note. But at least I'm ending. Come on up, Kaponu. Stand up. We'll close in prayer and song. Oh, we're off to a good start, yeah? That what was the first eight verses. Can you imagine?

Oh, Lord, thank You. Good stuff. So Lord, now we're going to close. We're all going to make our way home and go our separate ways and get up tomorrow and slide into the weekend.

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But don't let us get away with just leaving what we saw here tonight and heard here in Your word tonight. Lord, we want to let the Holy Spirit, keyword, "let" the Holy Spirit start that process of applying the many lessons that we can learn from this to our lives. What an inspiration is Daniel's life.

Lord, I pray that we would view our lives through Your lens instead of our own. Lord, renew our minds. Change our hearts. Change us. Make us more like You. Conform us, Lord, into Your image, not the world, the mold of the world, but Your image, Lord. And transform us by the power of the Holy Spirit so we can be more like You. Daniel was. So thank You, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.