

POISED UNDER PRESSURE

By Brian Flewelling 7.1.18

Intro:

Happy 4th of July weekend. I encourage you to continue to pray for our nation. Thank a vet. Thank God for our blessings and liberties and to pray that our nation prospers in God's ways and plans, justice, holiness, healing.

Today we're beginning a five-week teaching series on the book of Daniel. The first six chapters are really stories of Daniel and his three Jewish friends. The last six chapters include the visions and revelations that Daniel receives from God. We're only going to study the first seven chapters. First because that's all we'll have time for. And secondly, I don't understand the last five chapters of the book so I'm not going to try to teach it to you.

Daniel is a fascinating book. It's an exotic book filled with strange tales from ancient Persia. One writer says that it's kind of like Arabian Nights. Their world is so different from our modern experience. It's filled with *"kings and harems and eunuchs, of bawdy pagan rituals and drunken orgies, of bizarre methods of capital punishment involving fiery furnaces and pits full of lions, and of strange experiences."*

If you have trouble understanding this book, you're in good company. Yet, the themes we can learn from Daniel's life are so helpful to us. Turn to Daniel 1.

Setup -- Analogy: Chinese Hostility

Exile! Where is God? How could he let this happen?

Daniel 1:3-7

- Taken away their history, passions, calling, identity
- Daniel – God is Judge; Belshazzar – Prince of Bel's
- This is what Babylon does. It plays King Kong. It controls you. It tells you how to think. It forces you to fit in. It's a worldly system.

Daniel 1:8-12, 15-16

- Of all the places to draw a line in the sand
- This was Daniel's chance to start over. He could have blended in. No need to make waves yet. Nobody else was making this a big deal. Let's pick our battles wisely Daniel. – vegetables only! Really!
- God called the Jewish people to set themselves apart in very specific ways—Diet! God is holy, I will be holy as God is holy!

- **Vs 8** – Daniel’s actions are communicating this message, “*I refuse to be polluted by the world.*” Babylon wants to tell you what to eat. Daniel is still setting himself apart as holy to God.
- **What are you feeding on?** Consuming?
 - Are you nursing a grudge and feeding on the bitterness?
 - Are you feeding on the hopelessness of your situation?
 - Do we pull out our “golden trophy” fantasy and shine it, and imagine people adoring us because of our accomplishments?
 - Come home and we’re tired so we turn on the magic rainbow screen and we eat whatever they feed us without thinking about it? Videos, News, Movies, Music
- Babylon wants you to eat without thinking about it.
- God says, “Don’t eat certain foods.” Some things are clean and some things are defiled.
- Jesus taught us to go to the Father and ask for daily bread.
- “Whatever is holy, pure, right, admirable...”
- What makes you fully human is the ability to say “no” to the things I desire so I can say “yes” to the things that are good.
- Pay attention to what you pay attention to.

Matthew 6:22-23

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

Illustration: Dirty oil. Bad lamp. Clean oil. Good lamp.

What you feed the lamp determines the quality of the light!

What you feed your eyes with, and the things you pay attention to determine the quality and purity of your soul. That’s why it’s so important to have God habits in our daily and weekly routine. Focusing on him.

- “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...”
- “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Illustration: The quality of your Lamp!

Daniel 1 is setting you up for the next 5 chapters: In which they face life or death situations. Daniel 1 is interesting because he provokes the conflict himself. This is the lesson of Daniel 1:

- The **habits** you fill your life with **prepare** you for the pressure to come.

Jerry Rice was the greatest NFL receiver of all time. Because of his habits.

- “**Pressure exposes the patterns you practice.**”

- Your lifestyle is your message.

“When God shapes us in the small things, He is preparing us for success in the big things.”

Don't discount the small things daily, that add up. Worshipping in the car. Being courteous. (ie. our marriage, integrity, in grief, power & influence).

So chapter 1 is a preparation for chapters 2-6.

In Daniel 2 His preparation comes into immediate usefulness!

Daniel 2:1-5

The king is being unreasonable, and the magicians know it.

Daniel 2:9b-14

Vs 14 Daniel spoke with **wisdom and tact**.

Notice how different his reaction is to the magicians.

They're freak'n out. He's got faith. Because he spends time every day with the one who has the answers to all his problems.

Vs 15 Daniel asks great questions. He's empathizing. How empathy would help some of our marriages. How empathy would help some of our political discourse. Seek to listen and understand.

But all of these are just extra details to the story.

Vs 17-18 He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of Heaven.

- Notice the contrast in the reactions. The astrologers say, “no one can reveal it to the King.”
- Daniel says the “God of Heaven”

Some of you are looking to man for answers only God can provide.

You're looking for people to fix your problems. Or the government. Or your church. Or maybe your parents. Daniel and his brothers ran to their Wise Father. The Revealer of Mysteries.

Let's finish the story and then I have one final point.

Daniel 2:19-20; 44-47

So Daniel takes his life in his hands and gives credit to YHWH and not himself.

- The king recognized the spirit of the God in Daniel. He fell in awe and fear at the power that Daniel wielded.

Faith isn't about what God can do for me. It's about living in Truth and displaying the character of God to the world.

I am a Billboard. You are a billboard. My lifestyle is my message.

There's a theme that runs through the entire book of Daniel. But to understand it I have to give you a bit of history. In ancient days they thought deities were territorial. So part of the purpose of Daniel is to show that God's supremacy isn't restricted to one place, or one people.

- Not just God of the Israelites and the Judean hill country
- He's the God of Heaven; supreme over all the territories of the earth.
- He's not just the white man's God or in Christian America. He's the God over all the earth.

We judge them as archaic, but we still live this way:

- Lord over my finances. But I don't know that He is Lord over my health.
- I know he helped that family, but I don't know about mine.
- I have confidence in our services he's powerful. But I don't know if he's going to show up on Franklin Street.

Message & Hope of Daniel

God is the sovereign. In our language—He's the King Kong, not Babylon, and He does and He will have a kingdom that will one day crush every mountain you face, and every injustice you see. Wisdom & Power are His. And no one else's. Live in confidence.

Closing Song:? God Be Praised