

Daniel-Man of Commitment



Daniel in the Lion's Den (Daniel 6)

Commitment is a word we hear frequently in our modern culture ([see graph of frequency of use since 1800](#)). Commitment is the trait of sincere and steadfast fixity of purpose. It is the act of binding oneself to a course of action. Commitment describes the person who is willing to give their time and energy to something that they believe in. And so commitment is an "in vogue" term. But sadly commitment to the moral and ethical standards of the Holy God of the Universe is not so "in vogue" as evidenced for example by the high percentage of marital partners who fail to remain committed to their covenant marriage vows. And yet as we study the book of Daniel, we discover that Daniel's commitment to the Covenant keeping God as a young man "set the sails" of his life for the remainder of his time on earth. Daniel's commitment was so sincere and steadfast that Jehovah Himself testified that "Noah, Daniel, and Job were in its midst (the kingdom of Judah facing impending divine judgment), by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves," declares the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 14:14, 20). The exhortation from the writer of Hebrews would be apropos to believers today...

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews 6:11, 12)

So how were Daniel and his three friends able to remain committed to God and keep from caving in and compromising with the Babylonian brainwashing (Daniel 1:3-7)? Let's take a look at the cultural and historical context for clues. First, recall that most scholars place their age at around 15 which is certainly not a time when one would expect young men to manifest the strength of character to resist the sophisticated Babylonian brainwashing and not compromise their ethical and moral standards! Furthermore, consider the risk associated with resisting the will of Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful pagan king in the world! And consider how taking a no compromise stand would surely jeopardize the chance for advancement in the Babylonian court. And yet as discussed below in Daniel 1:8 these four took an uncompromising stand. Why? How would this have been possible? The answer is not directly stated but there were at least 3 things that could help understand their ability to resist indoctrination.

(1) Revival of interest in the Word of God - There was a "revival" under King Josiah when the "book of the law" which had been lost in the house of God (the temple) was discovered (2Ki 22:8-11, 23:3-4). If Daniel was 15 in 605BC, it mean roughly the first 10 years of his life would have been during this time when the Word of God was once again prized in Jerusalem.

(2) Godly parents taught the Word of God - They named their children with God honoring names. They also knew (especially because of the discovery of the Book of the Law described in #1) Deuteronomy 6:4-8 which charged godly parents to "saturate" (the Hebrew word for "**teach...diligently**" in Dt 6:7 = engrave a stone tablet and figuratively = "teach incisively"!) their children with the Word of God.

(3) Prophets spoke the Word of God - Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk were prophesying the Word of God and it is likely Daniel was impacted by Jeremiah's ministry (Daniel later refers to Jeremiah's written word - Da 9:2).

In sum, these young men had a strong faith nourished by their exposure to the **Word of God** (cp Ro 10:17-note), and God's Word provided a grid through which they could filter the godless Babylonian brainwashing. If our children attend "Babylon State University", they need to be equipped so that their faith and commitment to the Word of God is strong, and they are able to filter out those teachings which are clearly anti-God by comparing them with the Word of God. As we watch America drift further into the darkness of godlessness, many Christian parents fear for the fate of their children. Be encouraged by this young man Daniel. However it does behoove Christian parents to be diligent to practice the principles of Dt 6:6,7,8, for without the Word of Truth their children will be vulnerable to the lies and attractive deceptions of the fallen world system controlled by Satan (1Jn 5:19) (See related resource: **Memorizing His Word**)

In **Daniel 1:5** we read that "The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service." One might dub this verse "Operation Assimilation" as the Babylonians sought to brainwash these godly young men in the ways of their godless worldview. Nebuchadnezzar was not interested only in **education** but **indoctrination!** Beloved, our children in America are being exposed to the same godless agenda, for the enemy of our souls knows that the future of a nation is not Wall Street or Washington as much as it is our children. **Ray Stedman** advises that "If you are working in a company surrounded by a godless crowd who are taking the name of God in vain every moment, who agree with the ideas and attitudes of the world and its ways, and who make fun of the things of God, showing little interest in what God says to mankind, then I suggest that you read carefully the book of Daniel. ([Daniel - On the Way to the Future](#))

In Daniel 1:7 we read that "the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego." But what is so significant about "new names?" Clearly this was part of the process of "Babylonization" of the boys. By calling them by names that glorified the idolatrous gods of Babylon the captors sought in effect to obliterate from their memory their given Hebrew names all of which glorified the only true and living God. It is worth noting that there was no divine law prohibiting a name change, even a change to a pagan name! After interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, the Pharaoh exalted Joseph to second in command in Egypt and changed his name to "Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt." (Ge 41:45). As Tony Garland says "Although there can be little doubt that the young men disliked their assigned names, they realized that what they were called by other people would not change their devotion to the One True God. They wisely determined not to take a stand because it would not compromise their walk with God. Thus, the young men demonstrate great wisdom at an early age. This is an important principle: believers are not called to take a stand on things where God has not specifically spoken, but to seek peace where no principle of God is directly violated (Rom. 12:18) ("Sometimes Christians argue over the things where God hasn't spoken, while allowing the things He has spoken to slip under the rug."—Jeremiah, [The Handwriting on the Wall: Secrets from the Prophecies of Daniel](#), 32.)

The name changes summarized:

- **Daniel** = "God is my judge" > **Belteshazzar** = "Bel Protect the King." (Isa 46:1; Jer 50:2; 51:44). Every time His name was called it was a good thing reminder that one day he would stand before a holy God (cp 2Co 5:10-note) . Most of don't possess the name "Daniel" but we need to conduct ourselves as if that were our name!
- **Hananiah** = "**Jehovah** is Gracious" > **Shadrach** = "Command of **Aku** (Babylonian idolatrous god)."
- **Mishael** = "Who is like God?" > **Meshach** = "Who is what **Aku** (Babylonian idolatrous god) Is?"
- **Azariah** = "**Jehovah** is my Helper" > **Abed-nego** = "Servant of **Nego** (Babylonian idolatrous god)" also called Nebo, a god of vegetation (cf. Isa 46:1).

Daniel 1:8 describes a pivotal moment in the life of Daniel which says "But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself."

Have you ever heard the saying '**We make our decisions and our decisions turn around and make us**'? Certainly this proved true in Daniel's case, just as in Joseph's (Ge 39:9, cp Ge 38:21), Ruth's (Ru 1:16, 17), Moses (Heb 11:24, 25, 26, 27) and a host of other saints many nameless and unknown, except to God Who will cause them to shine forth like stars throughout eternity (cp Da 12:3). A choice in time yields a destiny in eternity. It is interesting that many of these "destiny changing" decisions are made when we are younger, like Daniel and his 3 friends. We are who we are today because of decisions and choices we made years ago. Two roads diverge in the woods. Which one will we follow?

What's the big deal about the king's choice food? For one thing, the fact that it was the "King's choice food" would be a constant reminder of the source of their daily bread. It is interesting that in the model prayer, one of the first requests is "Give us this day our daily bread." (Mt 6:11-note) The decision Daniel makes here radically changes his entire life. It's interesting that when we first read about it, it doesn't seem like such a big deal. But it turns out to be very big indeed as the "rest of the story" demonstrates.

Elisabeth Eliot, a very wise saint, once said "Does it make sense to pray for guidance about the future if we are not obeying in the thing that lies before us today? **How many momentous events in Scripture depended on one person's seemingly small act of obedience!** Rest assured: Do what God tells you to do now, and, depend upon it, you will be shown what to do next." Indeed, God blessed Daniel's obedience exceeding abundantly beyond all he could have ever asked or thought! Next time you come to a spiritual (ethical, moral) crossroads, ponder what Daniel's purposing in his heart on such a seemingly small matter. A moment of disobedience may seem small to us on earth, but it is huge to God and could have untold ramifications. Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey!

Baldwin has another thought on why Daniel may have refused the food noting that "by eastern standards to share a meal was to commit oneself to friendship; it was of covenant significance...The defilement he feared was not so much a ritual as a moral defilement, arising from the subtle flattery of gifts and favors which entailed hidden implications of loyal support, however dubious the king's future policies might prove to be. (**Ed Note:** One is reminded of Jesus in Re 3:20-note which clearly speaks of a spiritual intimacy associated with sharing a meal. Dining conveys the idea of intimate fellowship in Lk 19:5, 6, 7; John 13. See also **Covenant The Oneness of Covenant** which discusses how the sharing of a meal was a symbolic gesture in a covenant relationship)

It is a mistake to think that the "small choices" don't impact on our lives. What may seem small to us (the refusal to eat the king's food) proved to be a watershed event in that led to the good hand of the Lord upon Daniel's life for the next 60+ years! The impact of "small" bad choices is well illustrated by the giant redwood tree. Ray Pritchard tells the story of such a tree...

This week I read about a 400-year-old redwood that suddenly and without warning toppled to the forest floor. What caused the death of such a majestic giant? Was it fire? Lightning? A strong wind? A post-mortem examination revealed a startling cause. Tiny beetles had crawled under the bark and literally eaten the fibers away from the inside. Although it looked healthy on the outside, on the inside it was virtually hollow and one day finally collapsed. The same thing happens when we refuse to stand our ground for Christ. **Every time we compromise** something bad happens in our soul. Eventually the little decisions add up and we become hollow on the inside even though we may look great on the outside. Don't let that happen to you. Godly convictions yield God-given rewards. Here is the final lesson. What starts with Daniel ends with God. What starts with courage ends with a lifetime of blessing. Look what God did for this courageous teenager: God protected Daniel (when he proposed the test) God prospered Daniel (during the test and afterward) God promoted Daniel (in the eyes of the King) I cannot read this story without thinking of the words of God to Eli in 1Samuel 2:30b, "Those who honor me I will honor." I told you in the beginning that this was the crucial event of Daniel's life. It may not have seemed important at the time, but his decision not to eat the King's food shaped the next 60 years. We talk about Daniel 2500 years later precisely because of his decision. If he doesn't make the right choice, the rest of the book never gets written, and he becomes a forgotten Jew in Babylon who looked and acted just like everyone else. I know that in terms of scientific progress, the world has changed since Daniel's day, but God has not changed. God's Word has not changed. And the world still tries to seduce us. The good news from Daniel 1 is that it is possible to live for God in high school, in college, at work, and in your career. Daniel has shown us the way. ([Dare to be a Daniel - sermon by Dr. Ray Pritchard - November 1999](#))

Some lasting principles (from Insight for Living)...

- (1) Inner conviction can overcome any outer pressure to compromise.
- (2) God-honoring convictions yield God-given rewards.

><>><>><>

ANOTHER TREE ILLUSTRATION - It started as a seedling on the slopes of the Colorado Rockies some 500 years ago. For centuries it had stood tall, enduring violent winds, lightning strikes, blizzards, even avalanches. Now, however, the once-towering tree is just a mound of decaying wood.

What caused its demise? A horde of beetles had attacked it, gnawing away until that skyscraper of nature surrendered to those tiny pests and toppled over.

That's also the tragic story of many Christians. For long years they stood tall for God. They resisted temptations, weathered crises, and were bold in the strength divinely provided. But little sins began to eat away at their lives--little lies, little compromises with greed or lust, sins that gradually eroded their character. And suddenly they fell.

Song 2:15 states, "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines." This colorful Old Testament verse should sound a loud alarm in our consciences. We must not tolerate the little evils that eat away at the roots of our lives. Otherwise, our once-strong witness for Christ will become a silenced casualty of sin. Let's confess those "tiny" evils to God now, before they lead to a big fall. -- Vernon C Grounds

Nothing between, like worldly pleasure,
Habits of life, though harmless they seem,
Must not my heart from Him ever sever--
He is my all! There's nothing between. --Tindley

A big fall begins with a little stumble.

(I would add a blessed life can begin with what may seem like a little obedience!)

><>><>><>

Refusing The Easy Way

Looking out the window of an airplane, you can see the winding paths of rivers below. Except for some man-made waterways, all rivers have one thing in common—they all are crooked. The reason is simple—they follow the path of least resistance. Rivers find their way around anything that blocks their flow because they take the easy way.

The same can be said for some people. Because they fail to resist the devil, they yield to temptation and deviate from the path God would have them follow. Unlike Daniel, who “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8), they bend to worldly pressures and compromise what they know is right.

Writing to followers of Christ, John said that we can be victorious in our struggle against evil, because “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Rather than being overcome, we can be overcomers. Nothing should deter us from the course God wants us to travel. We don’t have to yield to any temptation or foe. The Holy Spirit who lives in us will strengthen us so that we can remain steadfast.

We won’t become “crooked” if we refuse to follow the path of least resistance. — by Richard De Haan

We need a strength to keep us true
And straight, in everything we do;
We need a power to keep us strong
When we are tempted to do wrong. —Anon.

You won't go astray on the straight and narrow way.

><>><>><>

TAKING A STAND... NO MATTER THE COST!

The OT has a number of examples of men and women who took a "Daniel-like" stand at a pivotal moment in their life circumstances, none more dramatic than Ruth the Moabitess' reply to Naomi (who was trying to coerce Ruth into going back to "her people" the pagan Moabites)...

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."
When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her. (Ruth 1:16, 17, 18-note)

But Daniel - "But" always marks a contrast (see importance of analyzing this [term of contrast](#)), and in this case instead of "going with the flow" or "taking the easy road", Daniel and his 3 friends chose the "narrow road". Is it any surprise that "God granted Daniel favor"? From Genesis to Revelation the way to experience the "good hand of the LORD", the blessing of the LORD, is to conduct one's self in obedience to the revealed will of God. Jesus reaffirmed this basic Scriptural principle in Luke declaring...

On the contrary (to Lk 11:27), **blessed** are those who **hear** the word of God, and **observe** it. (Lk 11:27, cp Ezra 7:9, 10-note)

Reading the Word is not enough. We must heed (obey) what we read. And here is where the problems begin to arise as one "tries" to obey in their own power only to fall into the subtle trap of legalism and self-effort. Under the New Covenant, believers have the Holy Spirit to enable obedience to the revealed will of God in the Word of God, but we must learn to walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16-note).

DANIEL SET HIS SAILS FOR ETERNITY: HE MADE UP HIS MIND!

Made up his mind - Literally "placed it on his heart".

See articles on the importance of our spiritual heart - HEART.

- [Give Me An Undivided Heart](#)
- [Heart - Kardia \(Greek Word Study\)](#)
- [Heart - Leb, Lebab \(Hebrew Word Study\)](#)
- [Integrity - A Whole Heart](#) - especially as seen in the life of Daniel!
- [Proverbs 4:23 Commentary](#)

The word rendered "mind" in the NAS is the Hebrew word for **heart** (Hebrew = [leb](#); Septuagint = kardia [word study]), which in Hebrew thought was the center of reason and decision in Hebrew. The heart was the deepest seat of one's emotions and decisions. The heart in the OT often refers to one's thinking, feeling, choosing - mind, emotions and will. Think of the heart as the control center (like an "Air Traffic Controller") of one's thoughts and actions (conduct, behavior).

Richison - The word "purposed" carries the idea of decided resolution. Daniel's character was already formed for following God before the test came to him. The phrase "purposed in his heart" could be translated "laid upon his heart." Daniel put himself under the full commitment to follow his heart. PRINCIPLE: An all-consuming purpose to live for the glory of God will enable us to meet spiritual tests of life. ([Daniel 1:8 - Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

Gleason Archer - Rather than break faith with God, Daniel was willing to risk expulsion from the Royal Academy with the disgrace and danger that entailed. His priorities were firm. (Ibid)

Chapter 1 could well be entitled "**Daniel Uncompromising Man in a Pagan Land**"

Jerry Bridges - We need not only a commitment to holiness as a total way of life, but frequently a commitment regarding specific areas of temptation. Job made a personal covenant not to look lustfully at young women (Job 31:1). Daniel resolved not to defile himself with forbidden food, even though from the king's table (Da 1:8). These two Old Testament saints are commended by God Himself as among the most righteous who ever lived (Ezekiel 14:14); yet both found it necessary to make a commitment regarding some specific area of temptation. Job found his temptation in his own breast; Daniel found his in his particular circumstances. Both responded with a commitment to obey God. They lived up to their convictions.

A W Tozer - The Set of Our Sails - Daniel 1:8 - Though we do not hear much of it in this age of spineless religion, there is nevertheless much in the Bible about the place of moral determination in the service of the Lord. "Jacob vowed a vow," and it was the beginning of a very wonderful life with God...Daniel "purposed in his heart," and God honored his purpose. Jesus set His face like a flint and walked straight toward the cross. Paul "determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2)...These are only a few of the many men ... of the Bible who have left us a record of spiritual greatness born out of a will firmly set to do the will of God....Let us, then, set our sails in the will of God. If we do this we will certainly find ourselves moving in the right direction, no matter which way the wind blows.

Dwight L Moody - I CAN imagine men saying to Daniel, "Look here, young man, you are too puritanical. Don't be too particular; don't have too many religious scruples. Bear in mind you are not now in Jerusalem. You will have to get over these notions, now you are here in Babylon. You are not now surrounded by friends and relatives. You are not a Jerusalem prince now. You have been brought down from your high position. You are now a captive. And if the monarch hears about your refusing to eat the same kind of meat that he eats, and to drink the same kind of wine that he drinks, your head will soon roll from off your shoulders. You had better be a little politic." But this young man had piety and religion deep down in his heart; and that is the right place for it; where it will grow; where it will have power; where it will regulate the life. Daniel had not joined the company of the faithful few in Jerusalem because he wanted to get into "society," and attain a position: it was because of the love he had toward the Lord God of Israel.

Wake Up Your Mind - (Daniel 1:8) - Great people usually aren't smarter, richer or more talented—they're just more committed. Before you can make a real commitment to anything, you have to overcome three problems: First, the security trap. Insecure people don't take risks! They always have a "Plan B" in case God doesn't come through; they depend on things rather than on Him. Next, the success problem. When you've had some success, you want to guard it. You want people to continue thinking well of you, so you start living defensively. Then, there's the satisfaction problem. Listen, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:15). If your life is not touched by need, how can you be moved by the needs of others? Great commitments are made in dark hours. When the Battle of Britain began, Churchill rose and said, "Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bare ourselves that, if the British Empire lasts for a thousand years, men will say—this was their finest hour." Make your commitment because it's right—not because it's easy. It was after Daniel committed himself that. (Bob Gass - A Fresh Word for Today)

So he sought permission - This could have cost him his life for we see in Daniel 3 the king did in fact cast Daniel's 3 friends into the fire for refusing to bow to his image.

CRISES:

GOOD TESTS OF OUR CHARACTER

Remember that this is a time of crisis in Judah, and the "opportunity" to rise to the top in Babylonian government and society would have been a great temptation (we have no record of any of the other "youths" taking an uncompromising stand like Daniel). Times of crisis help to hone and develop one's character, but such times also test the mettle of our character. In other words, how we respond when difficulties arise says a lot about our character and our trust in God's sovereignty. You've probably not been ripped from your native country, the comforts of your home, your family and taken to a foreign land, but you have doubtless experienced many "smaller" crises (but not small to you!). **How have you responded?** Your answer says much about your belief in God and your character. Remember, **reputation** is what others think of you, but **character** is what God knows is true of you (cp 1Sa 16:7)

Daniel faced the same challenge every believer of every age faces...to obey the command of God not to be "conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2-note)

As Phillips paraphrases Romans 12:2 **"Don't let the world ("Babylon") around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice ("make up your mind", "purpose in your heart") that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity."**

WHAT WERE THE PRESSURES TO CONFORM?

(1) Spiritual pressure - Daniel was in the birthplace of idolatry and false religion (Rev 17:6)

(2) Intellectual Pressure - Three years in the "University of Babylon" which must surely have included courses in "astrology" and other pagan practices.

(3) Peer Pressure - While we have to be careful when the Scripture is silent, Daniel has no record that other Jewish youths refused to bow to the pressures of the wealth and power of Babylon. After all when you're in Babylon, you do as the Babylonians do. No. Not everyone did. Specifically not Daniel and his friends. They had their priorities straight! The question that comes to mind is "Who do you want to please?". Do you want to please your peers, mere men or do you want to please the Almighty God? (cp 2Co 5:9-note)

That he might not defile himself - Daniel did not downplay this issue and choose a strong word, emphasizing the point that he was bold and courageous, not fearing the king. The idea of "defile" is that of polluting or staining something (cp Jas 1:27) How do you feel when you are watching TV or a movie and they take the Name of "Jesus" in vain, even using it as a curse word? Even more convicting, how do you respond? Do you "come apart from them" (cp 2Co 6:17 - The major part of this quotation (after the Lxx with several changes) is from Isa 52:11. The reference in Isaiah is to the captive nation leaving Babylon and returning to their own land, but the spiritual application is to the separation of the people of God today. God commands His people to "come out," which implies a definite act on their part. Get out, escape for with your life like Joseph when he fled from Potiphar's wife Ge 39:12! Flee! 2Ti 2:20, 21, 22, 1Co 6:18 Isa 52:11; Jer 51:6 Rev 18:4 Nu 16:21,26,45 Ezra 6:21, 10:11, Pr 9:6 Note command come out of "Babylon" Isa 52:11, Jer 51:45; Rev 18:4.Nu 33:51-56 cp Ex 23:24,33; 34:13; Dt 7:2,5; 12:3; Jos 11:12; Jdg 2:2)

Paul gave a similar charge to his half Jewish young disciple, Timothy

Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things (false teachers, false teaching), he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified (set apart), **useful to the Master, prepared** for every good work. Now **flee** (present imperative = Command to do this continually.) from youthful lusts, and **pursue** (present imperative = Command to do this continually) righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (Do you observe anything that reminds you of Daniel 1? Was he by himself?). (2Ti 2:21-note, 2Ti 2:22-note)

Gleason Archer - By their early refusal to disobey God, they prepared themselves for future greatness as true witnesses for the one true God in the midst of a degenerate pagan culture. It is significant that precisely in the matter of forbidden food, in which Satan successfully tripped up Adam and Eve (Ge 2:16, 17, 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), these four Hebrew youths passed their first test with flying colors. (Ibid)

DANIEL'S UNCOMPROMISING LIFE LED TO AN UNASHAMED BOLDNESS

John MacArthur emphasizes that Daniel 1:8 and the succeeding passages emphasize that Daniel had an **unashamed boldness**,

and that this God pleasing trait is mentioned directly or indirectly a number of times in Scripture, for example see Ps 71:15, Da 3:13, 14,15, 16, 17, 18, 1Pe 4:16, Ps 119:46, Php 1:27, 28, 29.

Dare To Be a Daniel

by Philip Bliss

Standing by a purpose true,
Heeding God's command,
Honor them, the faithful few!
All hail to Daniel's band!

Refrain

*Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known.*

Many mighty men are lost
Daring not to stand,
Who for God had been a host
By joining Daniel's band.

Refrain

Many giants, great and tall,
Stalking through the land,
Headlong to the earth would fall,
If met by Daniel's band.

Refrain

Hold the Gospel banner high!
On to vict'ry grand!
Satan and his hosts defy,
And shout for Daniel's band.

Refrain

><>><>><>

Wisdom for the Workplace - Daniel 1:8 - If there was ever a manual for Christians in the workplace it is the book of Daniel. Every time I read this book, I am impressed by Daniel's solid character traits. Before you discount his example, consider some very important details of Daniel's career. He was a foreigner employed in a hostile environment. He worked under some of the most wicked men in history. Very few of his peers shared his values. He served in very high-profile positions with incredible responsibility. He was persecuted for his beliefs. Daniel faced the same challenges that many of us face on a daily basis at our places of business. Don't think everything went smoothly for him. He didn't rise to the top without conflict. He didn't achieve success without paying a price. Daniel's career gives Christians a model for behavior. It is possible to serve God and work in a hostile environment. For most believers, there is no choice. A living must be earned. Like Daniel, we need to have an unbending commitment to God, yet a graciousness in our demeanor. Jesus said we are to be "wise as serpents, yet harmless as doves." There is no record of Daniel talking bad about the king or cutting down a fellow co-worker. If God has called you to the hostile workplace, work efficiently and diligently. Faithfully serve your employer. Get along with your co-workers. If you do, then your life will be a living testimony of Christ. "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." (Matthew 10:16) (Robert Neighbour - Living Water)

><>><>><>

Daniel's Undaunted Courage - "Therefore he requested the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Dan. 1:8). It was a brave stand followed by a courageous step. How dare he do it! Take his stand contrary to the command of the king and to the customs of the court! Even the prince of the eunuchs feared that his consent to Daniel's unheard-of request, would endanger his own head to the king. But Daniel with much wisdom pled for a ten days' trial — and Daniel won out completely; for at the end of the days the countenances of him and his three friends were fairer and fatter than those of any of the youths, who had eaten the king's meat and who had drunken his wine. There is a word that goes the round these days. "When you are in Rome do as the Romans

do." This was wholly obnoxious to Daniel. He believed that when he was in Babylon, he should do as God would have him do, having no fear for the consequences. It would have been the easy thing and the natural thing and the pleasing thing, for him to have graciously accepted the wishes of the king. Was he not a youth thrust by good fortune into the very presence of the king? Daniel might easily have reasoned thus: "I have every possible chance of favor and preferment now with the prince of the eunuchs; why should I spoil it all with my conscientious quibbles? My raising has been faulty, the requirements of my God are too severe. Why should I be different from others? Why spoil my chances?" It is always easy to drift with the tide, to follow public opinion, to do the natural thing. Illustration: We know of a youth who, just before he went to college, spent a while with a civil engineer corps. There were eight in the gang. Most of them young men from the same village. Only one was a Christian. This youth found the habits of the other boys quite contrary to his own. The real test came at bed time; when he had prepared to retire and the time had come for him to kneel down by the bed, as he had done from childhood. It was a simple thing to do? It did not seem so to him. He dreaded the laughter of the others — for all the men were sleeping in one large room. Finally, refusing to side-step his responsibility, and to merely pray under the covers, or even to wait until the light was out; he fell on his knees and began to pray. Some of the boys made fun. One fellow turned a somersault on his bed and said mockingly, "Now I lay me down to sleep." When, however, the ordeal was over, the other fellows stood up for the one who had dared to pray, and as he crawled into bed, and quiet came on; he heard a still small voice saying: "My son, I want you to preach My Gospel." That was years ago, today that boy is a preacher and he sits here pounding the machine and thanking God as he writes this lesson, thanking God he won out in a very simple but wide-reaching test. (Robert Neighbour - Sermons and Bible Studies)

Making a Difference - "Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief official not to defile himself. (Daniel 1:8) Would you dare to believe that God, who called you to Himself and equipped you with His Spirit, could work mightily through you? Have you made the connection between the time and place in which you live and God's call upon you? World events never catch God by surprise. He placed you precisely where you are for a purpose. Daniel did not let the temptations of his day interfere with his relationship to the Lord. He knew that to make his life useful to God he must be obedient in all things. Regardless of what the most powerful king in the world commanded, Daniel refused to compromise what he knew God required of him. History is replete with examples of Christian men and women who believed that God would work through them to make a significant difference for His kingdom. God placed Esther strategically in the king's court at a crucial time when she could save the lives of God's people (Esther 4:14). God placed Joseph strategically to become the most powerful adviser to the pharaoh in Egypt and to save Jacob and his family from a devastating drought (Gen. 41:39–40). Are you allowing your surroundings to determine how you invest your life? Or are you letting God use you to make a difference in your generation? Ask God to reveal His purposes for you and His will for your life today. (Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby - Experiencing God Day by Day).

><>><><>

Daniel's Holy Purpose - "And Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine that he drank" (Dan. 1:8). Many young men want to have their fling; they seem to have a craze to try out the sinful pleasures of this world. Even Solomon said: "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure." Solomon also said: "I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom." But not so Daniel. Daniel refused to defile himself. Daniel's way proved far the wiser. Solomon sinned in many things. He grievously departed from God. Daniel never did. While, in after years, Daniel said in one of his wonderful prayers: "I prayed unto my God and made my confession, and said * * We have sinned;" the striking truth still remains that Daniel is one of the few characters in the Bible, which are treated with any fullness, against whom not one condemnatory word is recorded. It is utterly false that a young man must sow his wild oats; that he must taste the world in order that he may realize its folly. Young men may live and die without ever having transgressed the highest ideals of rectitude. Nor need any one doubt but that such a course of action always pays — pays immeasurably. How many homes today are wrecked and ruined because the father sinned in the days of his youth. He sowed to his flesh; and his children and his beloved wife, in after years, suffered the harvest of his deeds. Daniel's course is the sane, the safe, and the satisfying course to pursue. It is the best in the end, the best in the beginning, and the best all the way along. It never pays to defile one's self in any way. The young man who smokes, swears, keeps bad company, plays cards, goes to the theater, drinks, gambles, will find out some day to his sorrow, and to the sorrow of all those intimately associated with him, that sin does not pay. The wages of sin is death. Therefore let us, like Daniel, refuse to defile ourselves. Let us "enter not in the path of the wicked and go not in the way of evil men." Let us "avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away." Sin will darken your countenance, destroy your character, degrade your morals, and lead you to the doom of darkness and eternal despair. (Robert Neighbour - Sermons and Bible Studies)

><>><><>

SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS - Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself. (DANIEL 1:8) In addition to an overall commitment to pursue holiness in every area of life, I find it helpful to make specific commitments in areas where we're particularly vulnerable to sin. There's great value in identifying those areas—either in what we do (for example, gossip) or in what we fail to do (such as loving our wives as Christ loved the church)—and then making specific commitments of obedience to God in those areas. I urge you to list any

areas of temptation wherein you need to make this specific commitment. Do you need to make a covenant with your eyes about what you look at (Job 31:1), or with your mouth about what you say, or with your mind about what you think? Is there a particular temptation or sinful practice that arises in your work environment that needs a commitment to fortify you against it? Write these commitments down on paper, for your eyes only, so you can review them and pray over them daily. Perhaps there's a particular area in your marriage or in your relationship with your children, your parents, a friend, or an associate at work where you aren't demonstrating the Spirit's fruit of love, patience, or kindness. Do you need to make a commitment that, in dependence on the Holy Spirit to enable you, you'll seek to display that particular "fruit" toward that individual? If so, I urge you to make such a commitment. You may find the need to make several commitments—sins to put off or avoid and Christlike traits to put on. If you don't commit yourself to the pursuit of holiness in these specific areas of your life, you'll find a tendency to vacillate in the face of these temptations. (Jerry Bridges - [Holiness Day by Day: Transformational Thoughts for Your Spiritual Journey](#))

><>><><>

UNDEFILED IN THE MIDST OF WICKEDNESS -But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8-9). The word defile here suggests "freeing through repudiation." Daniel was saying, "Any compromise of my standards will rob me of my freedom." So he committed to eat only beans and drink only water for ten days. When the chief of the eunuchs learned this, he told Daniel, "You are going to cost me my life! You will look sickly at the end of ten days. Your cheeks will be sunken, and the king will surely notice. Here, eat just a little meat. You need the protein. Drink the wine to build up your blood. Eat some of these sweets to give you energy!" I believe Daniel and the three Hebrew men had something more in mind than avoiding being ceremonially unclean. They had been taken captive along with thousands of their countrymen. What they saw when they first arrived in Babylon must have shocked them beyond belief. It was a society so loose, immoral and full of wickedness, these four men's spiritual sensibilities were assailed. They made a commitment with each other: "We dare not compromise. We will be separate from society and disciplined in our walk of faith." They did not go about preaching their way of life to others. It was strictly a matter between them and God. When you are in a crisis, do you cry out in unbelief and frustration? What if the Lord should answer, "I need strong voices in these sinful times through whom I can speak. Where are you when I need a voice? You say you want Me to come to your crisis—yet you remain a part of the wicked, worldly system. Tell Me—are you committed to My purposes?" Daniel and his friends' witness was a testimony that turned all the people's heads around. They were delivered from the lions' den and the fiery furnace—and the whole society knew it was God who did it. (David Wilkerson - [God is Faithful: A Daily Invitation into the Father Heart of God](#))

INTEGRITY STANDS ON PRINCIPLE - "And the king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.... But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself." DANIEL 1:5, 8 ✧ ✧ ✧ **Godly integrity is built upon the foundation of biblical authority.** From the world's perspective, King Nebuchadnezzar had much to offer his Hebrew captives: the best food, the best education, and high positions in his kingdom. But Daniel's perspective was quite different. He did not object to receiving a pagan education because God had given no direct prohibition against that, and a Babylonian education had much to offer in the areas of architecture and science. But as with anyone receiving a secular education, Daniel would have to exercise discernment in sorting out the true from the false and the good from the bad. It was when Daniel was asked to violate a direct command from God that he drew the line and took his stand on biblical principle. That's the character of godly integrity. It bases decisions on the principles from God's Word, not on mere preference, intimidation, or peer pressure. Seemingly Daniel had every reason to compromise: he was young, away from home, and facing severe consequences if he defied the king's order. Yet he was unwavering in his obedience to God. Although Daniel couldn't obey the king's order, he handled the situation in a wise and respectful manner by seeking permission to abstain from eating what God had forbidden. From his example we learn that standing on principle will sometimes put us at odds with those in authority over us, but even then we can love and respect them. Suggestions for Prayer: Pray for those in authority over you who may want you to do things that would displease the Lord. ✧ Pray for wisdom and grace to maintain a loving attitude toward them while still standing on biblical principles. For Further Study: Read Acts 5:17–29. How did the apostles respond to the authorities who commanded them to stop preaching the gospel. ([John MacArthur - Strength for Today](#))

><>><><>

H A Ironside - Daniel and his three friends, and Paul the apostle, are striking examples of men who would not risk the ruin of their testimony by self-indulgence or pandering to "fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11-note). Christians cannot afford to be careless as to these matters. The body is the Lord's. It is the temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells. To defile it by any form of unclean living is to dishonor God and to render one powerless in the hour of stress. In the world we hear much today of efficiency experts. Men realize that if a workman, a clerk, a professional man, or an executive, is to be at his best, he must avoid many things

that others indulge in who think only of momentary pleasure and sensual gratification. The man to be trusted is the man who rules himself and holds all his appetites in subjection. In spiritual things the same rule applies. He who purposes in his heart that he will not "defile himself," but yields to the control of the Holy Spirit, is the one who will be most used of God on earth, and some day will stand before the King to be rewarded in the day of revelation.

There is a purity of heart,
A cleanness of desire,
Wrought by the Holy Comforter
With sanctifying fire.
There is a glory that awaits
Each blood-washed soul on high,
When Christ returns to take His Bride
With Him beyond the sky.

><>><><>

Compromising Convictions (Daniel 1:8; 3:16–18) " Vindicate me, O Lord, For I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the LORD; I shall not slip."(Psalm 26:1) When Daniel refused to defile himself by eating the king's food, he held fast to a conviction he deemed worthy enough for death. Convictions always challenge our level of commitment. Daniel viewed continuing his relationship with God far more important than satisfying the king's whims. Once he took his stand, God provided a solution to the situation, and Daniel was allowed to eat what was in keeping with God's commandments. Pleasing God, not men, was the most important issue to Daniel. Loving the Lord and keeping His commandments were his utmost desires. It wasn't a matter of preference but a matter of godly conviction. Preferences are based on feelings. They change erratically and are often abandoned for the sake of immediate gratification. However, a conviction is based on God's principles and deals with life from an eternal perspective. Satan's ultimate goal is to move you from a point of conviction to a point of preference. Once he has done that, he changes your view from God's best to what satisfies the flesh. Be wary of compromising your convictions, for you belong to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Dear Lord, help me to stand firm in my convictions despite the temptation to compromise. (Charles Stanley - Seeking His Face)

><>><><>

"I HAVE SET MY FACE" by Vance Havner - For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isa. 50:7). So wrote Isaiah concerning God's suffering servant, and when that suffering servant came to earth "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

Our Lord did not have a hard face for it was full of love and compassion, but He did have a set face. He had made up His mind. He knew where He was going. He had fixed His course and He allowed no one to deflect Him. The devil offered Him the kingdoms of this world but our Saviour took no short cut; He chose the way of Calvary. John the Baptist in prison, questioned whether Jesus was "he that should come" (Luke 7:19), but our Lord answered, in effect, "I'm running on schedule and doing what I came to do." His brothers urged Him to go up to Jerusalem and perform before the world. That was not His program. Peter confessed Christ but denied the cross and remonstrated at the thought of Calvary. Our Lord declared him to be speaking not for God but for the devil. When He heard of Herod's threats, He called the king a fox and made it clear that He would go ahead with His plans as scheduled. He had set His face like a flint, and neither friend nor foe, man nor devil, could divert Him from His goal.

Throughout the Word of God, the heroes of faith were men who set their faces like a flint.

- Caleb "... wholly followed the Lord God" (Joshua 14:14).
- Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- Elijah asked, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21).
- Daniel "purposed in his heart" (Daniel 1:8) to be true to God.
- Paul said: "... this one thing I do" (Philippians 3:13).
- He also set his face to go to Jerusalem and said, "... none of these things move me" (Acts 21:24).
- (**Ed:** To this list of godly men I would add the godly woman Mary of Bethany - Luke 10:42, context Lk 10:38-42)

One of our biggest problems today is that most of our church people have never really made up their minds to follow Jesus Christ. They are like Mr. Looking-both-ways in The Pilgrims Progress, or like Lot's wife looking back toward Sodom. They are like the man in the Civil War who wore a blue coat and gray trousers, and was shot at from both sides. They are like a donkey between two bales of hay—undecided as to which to eat. They are like the son in our Lord's parable who said, "I go, Sir" (Matthew 22:30), and went not. They receive the word with joy, but have no root nor depth and soon fall away. They never really make up their minds, and are

like the man who was asked, "Do you have trouble making decisions?" He replied, "Yes and no."

In the ninth chapter of Luke we read that our Lord steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. In the same chapter, we read in contrast of three who were exactly opposite; they were not really going anywhere. They sounded as though they were serious but, one had not counted the cost, one wanted to bury his father, and another to bid his family goodbye before following Jesus. Whether it be the uncounted cost, the unburied corpse or the unforsaken circle, their attitude was, "I will follow Thee BUT...." Our Lord made it very clear to each of them, that He meant business, that He was going somewhere, and that His kingdom was no place for a man with his face pointed in one direction and his feet in the other.

I have been a pastor and have tried everything to induce church members to go on with God. I have scolded, praised, coaxed, and persuaded, but I am convinced that they go where they want to go, and where their hearts are, their heels will follow. We are dealing largely with a mixed multitude of uncommitted, disinterested, undisciplined people, who have never set their faces to say, "This one thing I do." Theirs is the sin of dissipated devotion. As someone has put it, their lives are not like swords with one point, but like brooms ending in a thousand straws.

Dr. J. B. Gambrell was a great dog lover as a boy. He got hold of a book that told him what he could be in life if he applied himself. He decided, "I cannot be what I ought and keep up with all these dogs," so he gave up dogs. He once wrote quite a piece about the neighborhood dog that wears no collar, is unattached, doesn't belong to anybody, feels no responsibility to keep stray dogs and cats off any place, goes around smiling and wagging his tail, and will bark as much at one house as another. The neighborhood dog, Gambrell wrote, is broad-minded, makes up with everybody, gets in no fights, for to him nothing is worth fighting for. "Judicious barking", we read further, "is a fine trait, but miscellaneous barking is worth nothing, and is confusing to dogs that are really hunting something." Then Dr. Gambrell made his application. "The neighborhood dog has a lot of kin who are too broad-minded to join any church. They run to all churches, particularly if there is a special service for they like crowds. The man who says one church is as good as another doesn't love any church enough to be of any use to it. There are hoboes in the dog world and deadbeats in the religious world. A thousand of them would never support a church or send a missionary."

These are the opposite of the saints of the set face! When Cortez landed on these shores, he burned his ships so that he and his company could not leave. He made no arrangements for a retreat. He had come to stay. God grant us a crop of saints who have steadfastly set their faces to go to Jerusalem; who will allow neither man nor the devil, friend nor foe, to deflect them from their holy resolve, "This one thing I do!"

><>><><>

A Will to Choose - [Frederick Brotherton \(F. B.\) Meyer](#) was a dynamic preacher and author of more than seventy books. Charles Spurgeon wrote: "Rev. F. B. Meyer is a great gain to the armies of evangelical truth; for his tone, spirit and aspirations are all of a fine gospel sort. In all his books there is a sweet, holy savor." How did F. B. Meyer develop such closeness to the Lord and accomplish so much in his lifetime? When he was seventeen Meyer believed that the Lord was calling him into the full-time ministry. He discussed it with his mother and she pointed out that being in the ministry would involve sacrifice and many trying times. She also mentioned that if he later regretted taking such a step he could always leave the ministry. Looking her straight in the eye the young man said, "Never, Mother! That would be putting my hand to the plow and looking back." Through God's grace, F. B. Meyer did not waiver from his high calling and maintained a vigorous ministry serving Christ. Many have pointed to his decision as a seventeen-year-old as a watershed act, a resolve that carried him through a lifetime of service. How's your resolve? Today in prayer, give thanks to Jesus Christ that He rewards those who seek Him in all that they do. "God has given us a will to choose his will.."—[Henrietta C. Mears](#)

><>><><>

TODAY IN THE WORD - Daniel 1:8 - In 1877, a group of Cambridge University students began to study the Bible, pray, and witness to their classmates. This InterVarsity student movement spread across England to Canada, and in 1938 the first U.S. chapter opened at the University of Michigan. Today, more than a thousand InterVarsity staff members work on more than 550 campuses, publish books and training materials, and facilitate events such as the Urbana missions conference. Like InterVarsity at secular universities, Daniel and his friends in the Babylonian palace stood out by contrast. They were God's lights in a dark place. From a human perspective, though, they were in no position to be leaders. They were young and inexperienced. They were exiles from a conquered nation, taking part in a highly competitive three-year imperial education program for a shot at a civil service job. The training rules were strict; the punishments for violations dire. This was a power-deficit situation if there ever was one! Yet God called Daniel to be a leader, and Daniel knew that God's sovereign control (Da 1:2) actually gave him the upper hand. He resolved not to accept the royal food and wine, and influenced his friends to do the same, probably because the prescribed food would have been offered to idols (Da 1:8). Instead, he boldly requested a special diet. Given the reality of the situation, he chose a non-confrontational approach: He asked permission from the proper authority and was ready with a ten-day-trial plan when the man (not unexpectedly) balked. God honored these steps of faith, and after the ten days their request was granted. In the end, Daniel and his

friends graduated with honor. God gave them success in their studies and even gave Daniel an ability to interpret dreams (Da 1:17-20). This is how Daniel began his career, leading by tact and example and saturating everything he did with faith in the Lord. It wasn't flashy, but it was highly effective. and it honored God. Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the obstacles to obedience in his life, Daniel tallied up the advantages on his side and stepped out in faith. Servant leadership or witness may seem to you like similar impossibilities. But have you counted the advantages you have? We all have a God who is sovereign over your bosses. You may also have favor in a supervisor's eyes, access to professional training, or whatever your circumstances may offer. You can approach your workplace challenges in the spirit of Daniel and his friends.

><>><><>

TODAY IN THE WORD Daniel 1:3-7 - Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities. - Romans 13:1 - Stella Ho lived in Venezuela for thirty years, running a shop with her unsaved husband. In January 2004, Stella was abducted by three thieves. God used her compassionate spirit and godly influence to change the hearts of her captors. In just eight days, Stella was freed, her captors' hearts were changed, and her husband accepted Christ after witnessing the outpouring of prayer and love from her fellow believers. Stella said, "Our time is short. We never know what may happen to us. We must strive to serve the Lord and discern what we can do for God." If Daniel had been allowed to plot the course of his own life, he probably wouldn't have picked "abducted by Babylonians" as his first choice. He didn't get to choose his circumstances, but he served the Lord by accepting the position in which God had placed him. We usually remember Daniel for his courageous stands against compromise, but the first test of his allegiance to God was one of humble submission. Some scholars conclude that Daniel was in his early teens at the time of his abduction, and the word for "young men" in verse 4 supports that theory. For Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, submitting to Babylonian rule could not have been easy. They had been the cream of Judah's crop, members of the nobility, and among the most promising young men in their nation. But their new captors erased their Jewish names and assigned them names that would identify them with pagan gods. Daniel and his friends could have rebelled. Along with adopting pagan names, they were to eat from the king's menu, learn the Babylonian language, study their literature, and enter the service of the king. But of all those foreign practices, these four young men would refuse to obey only the dietary guidelines. Overall, Daniel and his friends showed maturity beyond their years. Daniel's right attitude toward divinely appointed leadership gives us our first glimpse of his extraordinary character. If you find yourself working for an unsavory boss or living in a town you wish you could flee, take heart. Although you may feel desperate to escape your circumstances, ask God to use you to brighten your surroundings with His glory. That can be done by standing up to people who urge you to do wrong, but it's just as likely God will ask

><>><><>

TODAY IN THE WORD Daniel 1:3-20 - You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. - Isaiah 26:3 In 1924, Scottish sprinter Eric Liddell found his decisions questioned. His sister Jenny wondered if he was wasting time running races when he could be headed to the mission field. Fellow racers and the British Olympic committee doubted the wisdom of his decision not to race on Sundays. Eric famously told his sister, "I believe that God made me for a purpose, but He also made me fast. When I run it is in His pleasure." He declined to run his best event, the 100-meter dash in the 1924 Olympics because it was held on Sunday, but he won the gold medal in the 400-meter race. In our story today we read of Daniel and his friends standing for what was right. Their courage impressed the Babylonian leaders and was blessed by God. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were the cream of the crop of Jewish exiles in Babylon (Da 1:3). They were selected for service to Nebuchadnezzar, an honor that included luxurious meals of the king's choicest food. The Babylonians stripped away their Hebrew names, but they could not take away their loyalty to God and His Law. Eating the food would have required Daniel and his friends to violate Jewish dietary requirements. Rather than refuse outright to participate, Daniel asked the chief official whether they could abstain. When the official balked, Daniel proposed a test. After ten days on their diet of vegetables and water, the four Jews were healthier than the others; one wonders how happy the other young men were to discover their access to the king's lush banquets was now curtailed (Da 1:16)! Scripture is clear that God blessed Daniel (Da 1:9, 17). All four young men became high officials in Nebuchadnezzar's court and sought to give him their best service (see Dan. 2:12-49). At the same time, they all remained faithful to God and continued to pursue obedience to Him as their highest priority (see Daniel 3, 6). Most of us have obligations at work, school, or our community. At the very least, we are subject to the laws in our country. Daniel gives us an example of how to navigate tensions we might encounter as a follower of Christ and also as an employee, citizen, or student: first, commit to obeying God; second, be a responsible, hard-working contributor; third, try to negotiate solutions; and always surround every situation with prayer (cf. Dan. 2:18).

><>><><>

TODAY IN THE WORD Daniel 1:8-13 - But Daniel resolved not to defile himself. - Daniel 1:8 - "Please, sir, I want some more." Those words from Oliver Twist are one of the most famous requests in literature. Even though Oliver spoke on behalf of his fellow starving orphans, barely surviving on paltry servings of gruel, his boldness earned him solitary confinement and dismissal from the parish. Daniel put himself in similar peril, except he was being offered a feast prepared for a king and he asked to be given less. The text doesn't indicate what exactly about the meat and wine would have defiled Daniel, but we can assume the Babylonians prepared

the food in a manner contrary to Mosaic Law. What we do know is that Daniel made up his mind that he wouldn't compromise on the matter of his diet. **Daniel's resolve didn't detract from his overall attitude of respect.** He asked for permission to have a different diet, and God rewarded him by granting him sympathy from the chief official (Da 1:9). Personal affection, however, was outweighed by fear of Nebuchadnezzar, and the official wouldn't grant the request. Daniel didn't react stubbornly or brazenly. Instead, he sought out a different opportunity with another authority figure, his personal guard. He asked for a ten-day trial run on a vegetarian diet. His request was reasonable and respectful, and it was phrased to allow the guard an alternative plan of action if the results of the new diet were unfavorable. Notice how Daniel operated within the construct of authority he was under. He opposed ungodly orders without being self-righteous or rebellious. Both Daniel and the chief official spoke of comparing Daniel and his three friends with other young men their age. We can assume that they weren't the only young Israelites recruited into the three-year training program. Judging by Judah's history of floundering faith, Daniel and his friends were probably very rare examples of people who still remained true to the commands of the Lord. Daniel's faith didn't just stand out against the pagan culture, it was also one of the last signs of hope among God's chosen people. It's certainly unacceptable for Christians to silently adopt sinful behavior, but we should not loudly and proudly parade our rightness. If someone orders you to compromise your beliefs, make up your mind to stay true to the Lord. Then ask God to soften your heart to avoid heated conflict or pride. Respect for authority and love for others is more important than drawing attention to ourselves. Remember, forcing the spotlight on our righteousness tends to reveal our sinfulness as well.

><>><><>

ABHOR ... EVIL, CLEAVE TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD (Romans 12:9; Genesis 39:7–9; Daniel 1:8) - Stronger words could not be used to describe our attitude toward evil. Abhor it. It is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. It means to 'detest utterly' or 'to hate'. There can be no compromise or accommodation of evil in any way in our lives. The Psalmist instructs us, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil', Ps. 97:10, and sets the example for us, 'I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me', Ps. 101:3. Evil here is that which is evil in effect or influence. It goes beyond things that are essentially evil and includes that which spreads evil. We are to simply hate it. We hate it because God hates it. It is everything that opposes Him and is contrary to His will. It is destructive and leaves its victims in misery and despair. This is entirely opposite to the effect of the gospel and therefore a reason why the Christian abhors evil. Evil is around us everywhere in our culture. It presents itself in subtle and deceiving ways. It gets into our thinking and our lives almost unnoticed. How we need the word of God to keep us alert and cleansed from evil. But today's command is not just negative. Our lives are not to be spent only in hating evil, but embracing good. In fact a life that is filled with good will not be able to accommodate evil. The word for cleaving here means 'to glue or stick'. The idea is that embracing good is not an occasional or changing practice but something that is done continually and becomes the habit of life. In our other two readings, Genesis 39 and Daniel 1, we have examples of these very principles. Joseph, who fled from the presence of Potiphar's wife, demonstrated the need to abhor that which is evil. He asked, 'How ... can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?', Gen. 39:9. The injustice that he suffered did not deflect him from such a habit of life. Of Daniel, we read that he 'purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself', Dan. 1:8. The risks involved with his decision were great but obedience to the command of God is not optional, whatever the consequences might be. (John Bennett - Day by Day: Bible Commands)

><>><><>

PICKING A WINNER - But Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself. (Daniel 1:8) HOW WOULD YOU define a winner? If you had to pick someone out of a crowd and hold him up as an example of what it takes to get ahead in life, what would you look for? What would it be that sets that person apart? King Nebuchadnezzar decided that he knew winners when he saw them, and those were the kind of people he wanted around him. He didn't want any slouches serving in his court, so he commanded his chief palace official to bring him the best and brightest he could find from among the Jewish royal family and nobility. " '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 sense, and have the poise needed to serve in the royal palace' " (Daniel 1:4). Then when his guards rounded them up, he instructed them to treat the young men like kings. They were to eat the best foods and drink only the finest wines from his own kitchens. They were to be taught Babylonian history and literature by the greatest professors around. They were to "be all that they could be," and serve as a reminder to all Babylon what kind of people the king admired. These were the winners in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar. Among the ones chosen was a young man named Daniel, but he wasn't about to let it go to his head. He saw himself as a child of God, not a protégé of the king, so he immediately set himself to a different standard. "Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief official for permission to eat other things instead" (1:8). Much of the food the king wanted them to eat was forbidden by Jewish law, so Daniel convinced his handler to let him and his four friends eat only vegetables and water. "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other[s]" Daniel told him (1:13). The king's attendant agreed and soon saw that they were healthier than the rest. Because of Daniel's obedience, God gave him a special measure of wisdom and knowledge as well as the gift of interpreting dreams and visions. In the eyes of God, Daniel was a winner. It wasn't because he was strong or intelligent or good-looking. It was because of his loyalty to his King. His willingness to stand up for his beliefs. His obedience to his God in spite of the pressure and temptation to

go along with the crowd. **REFLECTION** - Have you ever come under pressure to bend your principles? How did you react? How did God bless your response? ([Embracing Eternity: Living Each Day with a Heart toward Heaven](#)).

Ed comment: I refer to "living each day with a heart toward heaven" as **VERTICAL VISION**" in contrast to living with your eyes on the world which I call **"HORIZONTAL VISION."** Daniel was clearly a man who even as a youth choose to live his life with **"VERTICAL VISION!"** May his tribe increase in Jesus' Name and for His glory. Amen See my discussion of **"VERTICAL VISION"**

><>><><>

DANIEL HAD A GOAL - TO GLORIFY GOD - Christians without goals are a little like Alice in the fairy tale Alice in Wonderland. In a conversation with the Cheshire Cat, Alice asked, "Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?" "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat. "I don't much care where," said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat. That way of living may be okay in Wonderland, but it doesn't work in the real world. If I am going to make spiritual progress, I must be specific. It's not enough, for example, to say, "I'm going to try to be a better Christian." That's far too general. I need to say, "I'm going to set up a plan to battle my tendency to think that other people always have life easier than I do." If we do not establish specific spiritual goals for ourselves, we will make little if any real progress. We'll wander aimlessly from one experience to another. Realistic goals stretch our faith.—D. C. Egner.

If you aim for nothing, you're sure to hit it!

><>><><>

Daniel 1:8 - An interesting thing to watch from an airplane is the winding path of a river. No two waterways are alike, but they all have one thing in common: they are crooked. And the reason is simple—rivers follow the path of least resistance. They flow around anything that blocks their eroding work. Rivers are crooked because they take the easy way. Christians become crooked for the same reason. When we fail to overcome temptation, resist the devil, or tackle the enemy head-on, we deviate from the straight path God would have us follow. Unlike Daniel, who "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself," we bend to worldly pressures and compromise what we know is right. This shouldn't happen. Nothing is so strong that we need allow it to sidetrack us. Writing to Christians, John said, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1John 4:4). Believers can be "strong in the Lord" and press forward in "the power of His might." Rather than being overcome, we can be overcomers. Nothing should deter us in our Christian walk or divert us from our prescribed course. We don't have to give in to any temptation or foe. Unlike rivers, which have no choice in the matter, we can remain straight by refusing to follow the path of least resistance. —R W De Haan

**No one ever goes crooked
who stays on the straight and narrow.**

><>><><>

Daniel 1:8 - WHILE working on a summer construction job to pay his way through seminary, Byron accepted a special favor from his supervisor. In exchange for a little painting and repair work on the man's hunting lodge, he could spend the rest of the day fishing, swimming, and relaxing at full company pay. Byron was enjoying his first evening in the cabin when the phone rang. It was his father. "What are you doing collecting company pay for private work?" he asked pointedly. Byron felt the sting of conviction. Even though he needed the money and knew he might be fired if he backed out, he left the cabin at once and told his supervisor he could not continue the arrangement. Many Christians are serious about guarding against the "big" sins like sexual immorality, but they aren't as careful about the "lesser" ones. Byron made this mistake, but he was sensitive enough to recognize it and correct it

The prophet Daniel and his three friends were asked to eat food that was ceremonially unclean according to Jewish law. To them it seemed like a little thing, but they had decided to be obedient to God in everything.

**How we handle little temptations
is the true test of our character.**

—H V Lugt

><>><><>

Dare To Be A Daniel—Daniel 1:8 - Bible characters like Daniel encourage us and show us how to live. We still need "Daniels" today—men and women who have convictions and the courage to stand for them even when it involves sacrifice or unpopularity. My father, Dr. M. R. De Haan, was just such a man. Oh, he wasn't perfect. He was human. He had his faults. Some people even thought of him as stubborn. But he was a man of the Book. He was a man of conviction. And he was a man of courage. It was 30 years ago, on December 13, 1965, that my father went home to be with the Lord. Yet I can recall his words to me on one occasion as if he said

them only yesterday. Accenting his statement by pounding his fist on his desk, he said, "Richard, I don't care if the whole world differs with me. I must do what's right. I must act according to my convictions!" Of course, we must be careful to make sure our beliefs are properly grounded. But once we are certain of that, we should be like Daniel, who not only had convictions but the courage to stand for them. Today, when you are tempted to compromise your principles, don't give in. Dare to be a Daniel! — by Richard De Haan

The life that counts must toil and fight,
Must hate the wrong and love the right,
Must stand for truth, by day, by night—
This is the life that counts.
—Anon.

**Christ gives us the courage of our convictions.
You won't fall for what's wrong if you stand for what's right.**

><>><>><>

Gaining Respect - Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. —Daniel 1:8 - When a professional musician nicknamed "Happy" became a Christian, he quit playing in nightclubs and offered his services to a rescue mission. Some time later, he received a phone call from a club manager who wanted to hire him to do a show that would have brought in a lot of money. But Happy turned down the offer, telling the manager that he would be playing at the mission. Happy said, "He congratulated me. That surprised me. Here was a man who wanted me to play for him and he was congratulating me for refusing his offer." The manager respected Happy's decision. Daniel was a captive in a foreign land, but he did not forget his religious principles. He could not in good conscience eat meat that had been dedicated to a pagan god and had not been slaughtered in accordance with Hebrew laws. He asked for a simple fare of vegetables and water, and the steward risked his life to honor his request. I believe he did this because Daniel's noble conduct had earned his respect. The world looks with disdain on Christians who do not live what they say they believe. That's why we should remain true to our convictions. Consistency of character is what gains the respect of others.— by Herbert Vander Lugt

You'll gain respect when people see
That you are faithful to God's Word;
There may be some who disagree,
But they will know you love the Lord.
—D. De Haan

**If you're living for Christ you may lose some friends,
but you won't lose their respect.**