**Daniel’s Determination**

**Daniel 1:8-16**

**Introduction**

Parents ought to be concerned about the spiritual well-being of their children. There are many pressures from the world. There is not always encouragement to do right among their peers. Daniel wrote with a concern about the spiritual well-being of the next generation. They were moving back into the land of Israel. He wrote because they would have to make decisions upon returning to their place in Israel. There would be a natural disconnect with the past. They needed one generation to help them know the way to go. They needed to hear from someone who lived a godly life in an ungodly society. They were privileged to hear from Daniel. Daniel and his friends were examples of young men who lived for God despite the pressures from an ungodly society and a lack of godliness from other peers. We should all be challenged by Daniel’s determination. How do you keep from being pressed into the mold of your culture?

1. **There were three sources of pressure on Daniel and his friends.** 
   1. Compromise of the previous generation subjected them to additional compromise.
   2. The king wanted to assimilate them into the mainstream of the Babylonian culture.
      1. He implemented his agenda to remove references to God and break down their morality.
      2. He wanted them to exchange their allegiance to their homeland to Babylon.
      3. He brought them into contact with the splendor of Babylon. Satan is a master at making life without God look good. He has been doing it since the Garden of Eden.
      4. Their indoctrination involved a three-year degree where they would learn from the literature of the leading thinkers and spiritual leaders of Babylon. They would learn Babylonian ways of belief and practice. They would learn how to understand dreams and visions. Basically, they would learn how to serve Nebuchadnezzar, rather than the LORD.
      5. By changing their menu, he wanted to give them an appetite for that which was forbidden and would make them truly Babylonian. They were to eat food that had been offered to idols and that violated their dietary restrictions as Jews.
   3. There was apparent apathy on the part of others who were of their faith. (v. 3-6, 10)
2. **Central Idea:** **Daniel lived for God despite the pressure to do otherwise because he determined to please God rather than people.** 
   1. Daniel based his decision upon conviction, not convenience.
      1. “A belief is something you hold. A conviction is something that holds you.”
      2. “Inner conviction can overcome any outer pressure to compromise.” (Chuck Swindoll)
   2. It would have been convenient and even tempting to eat the king’s meat.
      1. It would have been an insult to the king to refuse! You didn’t want to be on his bad side.
      2. Everyone else was going along with the king’s program. Why stand out?
      3. It would have jeopardized their opportunity for advancement in the kingdom.
      4. What young man would not enjoy such a feast of meat?
      5. They were far from home. This wasn’t Jerusalem. It was Babylon! Who would know? Who would care? Why rock the boat? Perhaps it was time to assimilate.
   3. Daniel did not assimilate into the culture because he knew where to draw the line.
      1. He went as far as he could without compromise. He learned their language, studied their literature, changed his name, etc. He would not eat the meat nor drink the wine.
      2. When Moses was exposed to the ways of Egypt he had to learn where and how to draw the line. He chose to identify with the people of Israel. At first, he resorted to violence, but found it the wrong approach. Eventually, he returned to Egypt prepared to lead Israel to be distinctly God’s people.
      3. Paul was familiar with and referenced poets of his day but knew where to draw the line. He was careful not to endorse them in any way.
      4. “Beware of the atmosphere of the classics. True, we ought to know them; but only as chemists handle poison – to discover their qualities, not to infect their blood with them.” (Robert Murray M’Cheyne)
   4. He made a godly choice from the heart. (v. 8)
      1. The word “purposed” means that his heart was set on pleasing the Lord. He had made up his mind. He was fully determined not to defile himself.
      2. Daniel was willing to live by faith. “Faith is not believing in spite of evidence, but obeying in spite of consequences.” (Wiersbe)
      3. He was not alone in his decision to stand for the Lord. His three friends stood with him. How blessed we are to have godly friends who will stand with us! (2 Timothy 2:22)
   5. God was already at work when Daniel took his stand.
      1. Aspenaz already favored Daniel. (v. 9) God gave him favor and tender mercy in this man’s eyes. You can take a godly stand and still be friends with the ungodly without compromise. He was sympathetic toward Daniel when he did not have to be.
      2. The administrator was concerned that they would appear malnourished. (v. 10a) He feared that it could mean his own life. (v. 10b) He had good reason to be concerned about King Nebuchadnezzar’s mood swings. He was known to be harsh.
      3. Daniel was understanding towards a governmental official who did not understand what it meant to live by faith. He was also tenacious.
      4. They took a stand without being obnoxious. He simply asked. (v. 12) They didn’t march on Babylon. They didn’t burn down a temple. They acted like gentlemen.
   6. When Daniel failed to convince the court official, he sought to convince the guardian (lit. the melzar) whom the official had appointed. (v. 11-16)
      1. He asked him to put them to the test. “Prove” means to put to the test; try. He asked for a 10-day trial. This would allow enough time for him to see the difference and short enough not to get him in trouble.
      2. He requested vegetables and water. Pulse is that which grows from sown seed.
      3. At the end of 10 days, they proved to appear of better health than those who were on the king’s diet.
      4. When Melzar saw that the plan was going so well, he gave them strictly vegetables to eat and water to drink.
   7. Daniel’s determination set the pace for the rest of his time in Babylon. How different things would have been had Daniel ate of the king’s meat and drank of the king’s wine! Never underestimate the significance of the choices you make.
3. **Relevance: You can live for God despite the pressure to do otherwise if you will determine to please God rather than people.** 
   1. What pressure do believers face today? Consider the pressures that come from the following sources: family, friends, business, advertising, work relationships, society.
   2. In what ways do you encounter the pressure to please people rather than God? What meat and drink has been set before you? Where do you need to draw the line?
   3. What will pleasing God look like in your situation?