**God’s Demonstration**

**Daniel 1:17-21**

**Introduction**

We compare many things in life to determine which is better. We compare presidential candidates, sport teams, athletes, cars, restaurants, computer systems, smart phones, and most importantly coffee. When you compare items or people, you evaluate which is better. Nebuchadnezzar interviewed and personally evaluated all the candidates for his administration. He based his evaluation on their physical appearance and mental ability. There were four that he put at the top of his list. Four Hebrew prisoners of war ranked higher than other young men who grew up in Babylon. They were deemed brighter and more promising than those serving on his current cabinet. He concluded Daniel and his friends were “ten times better.”

More was at stake than their reputation and position in the kingdom. They represented the Lord. In a godless culture that is growing more and more antagonistic to the faith, it is imperative that we have a testimony that brings honor to the Lord. Why did the king find the four Hebrew young men to be ten times better than the others? How would your life be evaluated? How could your life bring the same conclusion? We have considered culture’s indoctrination and Daniel’s determination. In this lesson, we will consider God’s demonstration.

1. **Review: Daniel lived for God despite the pressure to compromise, because he purposed to please God rather than people.**
   1. He had real pressure on his life to compromise.
      1. There was pressure from Babylon. Refusing to eat the king’s delicious meal and drink the king’s rare wine could be perceived as an insult to the king. You did not insult Nebuchadnezzar if you wanted to live! They would have to eat the king’s meat if they wanted to advance. Many of you are facing similar pressures in your educational experience or business. The world wants you to conform to their mold if you hope to advance.
      2. There was pressure from the other young men of Jerusalem who went along with the king’s demands. They would not want their fellow Israelites to rock the boat!
      3. There was pressure from their own appetites. What teenage young man wouldn’t love to indulge in such a feast? They didn’t have family around to tell them what to do and not to do. The conditions were right for compromise.
      4. In short, they were tempted from every angle, as described in 1 John 2:16. The meal was appealing to their flesh and their eyes. It appealed to their pride that they were invited to eat at the king’s table! Not everyone could say that.
   2. Regardless of how good the king’s food may have appeared, they chose to refuse it because of conviction. They knew where to draw the line.
      1. They fit into their new culture where they could without compromising. Nonetheless, they chose to remain pure and that choice made all the difference!
      2. “Daniel who lives at court, stands by the side of the king, and serves the empire, is one who has taken his stand and kept himself pure; and we are challenged about our own willingness to accept an involvement in the world, but to recognize that there are points at which we have to draw a line. We are called to be citizens of two worlds.” (Goldingay)
      3. This harmonizes with Jesus’ prayer for us in John 17:15, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”
   3. At the end of ten days, they appeared to be of better health than those who ate from the king’s buffet. (Daniel 1:15) Would their decision prove to be the best over the next three years?
   4. Their choice would take time to reveal its wisdom and benefit.
2. **At the end of three years, the young men stood before Nebuchadnezzar for evaluation. (v. 17-21)** 
   1. Those of you who have spent years of study in a particular field can understand the tension that exists at times of major exams. Whether it is a bar exam, a test to receive your electrical license, or your driver’s test, there is a certain amount of stress that comes at these times. Yet, these men had no reason to fear because God demonstrated His power through them.
   2. God gifted them with more ability than their peers. (v. 17)
      1. God helped them to excel in academic learning. They had insight in what they read. They demonstrated a high aptitude in the realm of wisdom.
      2. Daniel had a special ability to understand visions and dreams. This would prove an essential asset for the future.
   3. God enabled them to graduate at the head of their class. (v. 18-20)
      1. They were the most qualified of the whole group to enter the king’s service, including those in his current administration. (v. 19)
      2. When Nebuchadnezzar tested their understanding, he concluded that they were ten times better than (lit. ten hands above) all the other students of their class. (v. 20)
         1. “Ten times” was a common idiom to communicate extent. For example, in Genesis 31:41, Jacob exclaimed that Laban had changed his wages “ten times.”
         2. They were more qualified than the magicians (lit. engravers or writers). These were the religious scribes who advised the king and served as a channel to the spirit world.
         3. They were superior to the astrologers. (lit. conjurers, necromancers).
   4. Daniel enjoyed a long ministry in the realm. (v. 21) He lived through the 70 years of captivity without compromise. The passing of time only reiterated that God’s way is the best way!
3. **Central Idea: The quality of their lives was better because God blessed their decision to maintain their purity.**
4. **Relevance: A pure life proves to be the best life because of God’s blessings.** 
   1. The world presents life without God and restraint as the “good life.” Yet, take notice of the medical conditions associated with sexual promiscuity, alcohol consumption, and drug use. Add to that the despair and broken homes connected to such a way of life. An impure life proves to be the worst because you miss God’s blessings.
   2. We often face life situations that demand an immediate decision. It takes time to reveal the full impact of those decisions. Can you think of an example in which you chose to obey the Lord? How is that decision affecting your life today?
   3. Given enough time, it becomes clear that God’s way is ten times better! Consider how this applies to the following areas of life:
      1. God’s way of marriage is ten times better.
      2. God’s way of parenting is ten times better.
      3. God’s way of finances is ten times better.
      4. God’s way of friendship is ten times better.
      5. God’s way of work is ten times better.
   4. The day of your ultimate examination is coming. Live every day with the realization that you will stand before the Lord. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)