

**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE[®]**

Daily

Discipleship Guide

YOUNG ADULTS • CSB
FALL 2023

STAYING TRUE IN A WORLD FAR FROM GOD
CONFIDENT IN THE FACE OF HARD QUESTIONS

ONE



DEVELOP STRONG CONVICTIONS

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Imagine a brand-new, white t-shirt. No matter how careful you are with that shirt, the bright whiteness will eventually start to fade. This isn't dissimilar to what happens to believers. Every Christian is living in the midst of a culture with different priorities, values, and beliefs, and as much as we try to remain pristine, we all become a little less bright the more time we spend in the world. Despite this natural dulling, we must remain true to who we are in Christ.

THE POINT

Our _____, not our circumstances, define who we are.

Daniel was among a group of Israelites who found themselves living in a foreign land, among foreign people. The best and brightest of Israel had been sent to the cultural center of the Babylonian Empire with the intention that they be assimilated into that culture. But Daniel intended to follow the plans of God rather than the intentions of the Babylonians.

Daniel 1:3-7 ³ **The king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the Israelites from the royal family and from the nobility—** ⁴ **young men without any physical defect, good-looking, suitable for instruction in all wisdom, knowledgeable, perceptive, and capable of serving in the king's palace. He was to teach them the Chaldean language and literature.** ⁵ **The king assigned them daily provisions from the royal food and from the wine that he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end of that time they were to attend the king.** ⁶ **Among them, from the Judahites, were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.** ⁷ **The chief eunuch gave them names; he gave the name Belteshazzar to Daniel, Shadrach to Hananiah, Meshach to Mishael, and Abednego to Azariah.**

1) The world expects us to conform to its _____.

Nobody asked Daniel and the others what they would like to learn, to eat, or even if they wanted their names to be changed. They lived in Babylon now. This dynamic should feel familiar to us because, like these Israelites, believers in Christ find themselves living in a culture with all kinds of expectations. As believers, we have an unchanging Source of truth. It's not in our nature to fit in. It is in our nature, as children of another kingdom, to stand apart.

Daniel 1:8-13 ⁸ **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 eunuch not to defile himself.** ⁹ **God had granted Daniel kindness and compassion from the chief eunuch,** ¹⁰ **yet he said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and drink. What if he sees your faces looking thinner than the other young men your age? You would endanger my life with the king."** ¹¹ **So Daniel said to the guard whom the chief eunuch had assigned to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,** ¹² **"Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.** ¹³ **Then examine our appearance and the appearance of the young men who are eating the king's food, and deal with your servants based on what you see."**

2) Draw the line where you will not _____.

Perhaps Daniel drew the line at his diet because there were specific prohibitions in the law of God regarding what to eat and what not to eat. Even so, Daniel was respectful. Like Daniel, we'll encounter places in which cultural norms and expectations contradict the law of God. But we can draw a line with the character, kindness, and confidence of the children of God.

ENGAGE

In the margin, list areas in which culture tries to get believers to compromise today. How has God helped you avoid compromise?

Daniel 1:17-19 ¹⁷ **God gave these four young men knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom. Daniel also understood visions and dreams of every kind.** ¹⁸ **At the end of the time that the king had said to present them, the chief eunuch presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.** ¹⁹ **The king interviewed them, and among all of them, no one was found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they began to attend the king.**

3) Serve and stand for the _____ no matter what the culture does.

The king was so impressed by these men that he employed them in his direct service. Daniel chose to trust and stand firm and left what happened next in the hands of the Lord. History is full of faithful believers who also stood but didn't have the same kind of results. The call of God is clear: Stand faithfully and entrust the rest to Him.

LIVE IT OUT

What actions will you take in response to today's study?

- **Draw the line.** What are you consuming that's drawing you away from God's standards? Draw the line and stop watching, listening to, and following those things.
- **Know where you stand.** Make a list of items on which you will not compromise.
- **Know God's standards.** Commit to a daily study of God's Word. Look for biblical commands and examples of godly living.

TALK IT OUT

Want to go a step further? Gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender. Read Daniel 1:3-13,17-19, then use the following summary and questions for a deeper discussion.

Daniel 1 isn't just an example of standing firmly on conviction; it's also an example of *how* to stand firmly on conviction. Daniel not only refused to allow his circumstances to alter his convictions, but he was also firm in how those convictions would be expressed in a potentially hostile environment. There is much to learn in both cases.

In our current culture, hostility abounds from all sides. The culture is increasingly hostile toward Christian convictions, and Christians seem to be increasingly hostile in response. While Daniel 1 teaches us that we shouldn't be afraid to stand by our convictions without compromise, it also helps us see that the way we take our stand can either add to or take away from the strength of those convictions. Consider these questions as you think about not only what to stand for, but also the way to stand.

- ? **What are some firm convictions that have defined your life so far?**
- ? **How can we, as believers, respond to pressure to conform to a non-Christian society?**
- ? **How can we help each other stand against the culture when it conflicts with our faith?**

DAY 1: God provides unlikely opportunities.

Read Daniel 1:3-7.

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had conquered Jerusalem, deposed its king, and carried off to Babylon some of the precious elements from the temple. Along with those vessels, he also took some of the noble youth. He planned to train them in Babylonian ways and customs for political and propaganda purposes, so that they might return to positions of influence in their own countries, and therefore extend Babylonian ideas and authority into these conquered lands. It was a way of deeply and permanently integrating formerly autonomous nations into the empire of Babylon.

That was Nebuchadnezzar's intent, but God had other ideas. Though it must have seemed like their lives were out of control, God was positioning these young men for greater impact. This is God's pattern throughout Scripture:

- Joseph's life spun out of control into Egypt, but God was positioning Joseph to help preserve His people.
- Moses's life spun out of control when he ran into the desert, but God was preparing him to be the deliverer of Israel.
- David's life spun out of control when Saul turned on him and sought to kill him, but God was engineering the right time for David to ascend to the throne.

Time and time again, when it looks like the whole world has been turned upside down, God is still there and still at work. It was true in all these circumstances, and it's true for us today. No matter how out of control our circumstances may seem, God is always at work behind the scenes moving us into a position where we can be an influence for His kingdom.

- ? **What in your life feels like it's spinning out of control? Remind yourself that God is still providing unlikely opportunities in unlikely places for those who remain faithful to Him.**



DAY 2: Compromise begets compromise.**Read Daniel 1:8-12.**

The entire book of Daniel is about choices. Such was the food issue. We might look to these verses and consider the issue of diet to be trivial. It's only food, after all. Surely there couldn't be much harm done. There were obviously more serious battles to fight—much more noteworthy issues on which to take a stand. Refusing to eat what was put in front of them? That might seem to us a place where compromise is understandable, if not even advisable.

Daniel knew better. He trusted that God's law was the good and right way, and though compromise would have been easier, he didn't bend. For Daniel, the issue wasn't about diet. It was about faithfulness. God had given clear directives about food to His people, and Daniel wasn't willing to turn on those mandates.

But perhaps Daniel also knew that the seemingly small choice before him was also an invitation to something larger. Perhaps he knew that compromise on this issue would only lead to more compromise in the future. Consider Psalm 1:1. This verse speaks of how "happy is the one who does not . . ."

- First walk in the advice of the wicked.
- Then stands in the pathway of sinners.
- Then sits in the company of mockers.

The progression is clear. The first step is just passing by sin and compromise. But if we stop there for a while, before we know it, we're sitting down. It's likely we never intend to end up sitting in this company, but it's impossible to have a casual relationship with sin. Compromise always has a way of compounding; sin always has a way of growing. Perhaps Daniel knew that as well. Compromise always begets more compromise. We can easily talk ourselves into letting go of something we consider small, but in the end our walking will turn to standing, and then sitting right in the middle of sin.

? Are there small issues in which you're willing to compromise? Go to God in prayer about these. Trust Him to give you what you need to stand firm.

DAY 3: Believers can be confident in God.**Read Daniel 1:13.**

Daniel was confronted with a choice, and he knew what choice to make. The question for him then would be just how to effectively communicate that choice. That, in and of itself, was another challenge because Daniel had no right to make a different proposal. He wasn't consulted on what he would like the menu to be, nor did he have any authority over such decisions. He was, no matter how much his situation was dressed up, still a prisoner of the lost conflict over Jerusalem. So, what to do?

Daniel reasoned with his authority and then offered up a test case. Consider for a moment what he might have done instead: He might have demanded his way; he might have tried to justify his convictions; he might have insulted his captors.

How was Daniel able to remain calm and reasonable when standing against what the culture and authorities around him demanded? He was able to do so not because he was convinced his ideas were right but because he was confident in God. He was so confident that he simply acted faithfully and then asked those around him to observe the results.

This is a convicting response for many of us. The world we live in tells us we have the right to have things just the way we want them at just the time we want them; that we should be loud enough to get someone's attention; that we should argue forcefully for our point of view, never stopping to consider how our point of view might be perceived or affect someone else. Daniel not only chose a different way when it came to food; he chose a different way when it came to expressing his conviction. His way of reasonable and respectful speech was founded in his confidence in God.

Do we have the same confidence in God? Or is our tendency to justify and argue a reflection of our insecurity in Him?

- 🕒 **Think about the areas of your life in which you tend to be defensive or insecure and ask God to help you trust in His character instead. Share your commitment with someone else for accountability and support.**



DAY 4: God's gifts are to be used for His glory.

Read Daniel 1:17.

In one simple verse, we see a preview of much of the remainder of this Old Testament book. If we keep reading in Daniel, we will see that throughout his life Daniel was able to glorify God through the gifts of wisdom and understanding that God had given him:

- He interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dreams in chapter 2.
- He interpreted another dream from the king in chapter 4.
- He understood the meaning of the mysterious handwriting on the wall in chapter 5.
- He was given a vision of the future in chapter 7.

Time and time again, we see Daniel utilizing his gifts in a way that brought praise to God. What we don't see, however, is Daniel profiting personally from these gifts or using them to elevate himself. Such is the case with all God's gifts.

Each of us has been gifted by God in certain ways. These gifts have been given not so we can make much of ourselves, but so we can glorify God and put His grace and power on display. Though we might not ever be interpreting the dreams of a king, each of us has a pivotal role to play in the expansion of God's kingdom, and we should always be aware of our tendency to use those gifts for our own ends.

? Is there any area of your life in which you are seeking to build yourself up using the gifts God has given you? Choose instead to use God's gifts for His glory in the life of someone else this week.

DAY 5: Small things lead to big things.

Read Daniel 1:18-19.

Daniel 1 is a rapid escalation. In the space of three years, Daniel and his friends went from being deported servants to direct attendants of the king of Babylon. And how did that happen? It all started with a choice about what to eat and drink.

The biblical principle is clear: “Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and whoever is unrighteous in very little is also unrighteous in much” (Luke 16:10). Daniel and his friends chose to be faithful in the small things, and God trusted them with progressively more. Of course, that doesn’t mean that if we’re faithful in the small things we will end up advising the leader of the nation. It does, however, help us see that faithfulness isn’t measured by the size of the opportunity. It’s measured by our choices within each opportunity.

If we look around our lives, we’ll see a myriad of seemingly small opportunities for faithfulness:

- We can choose to be faithful with the money we earn, contributing to kingdom work among us.
- We can choose to be faithful with our time, being careful what we say “yes” and “no” to.
- We can choose to be faithful with our friendships, investing intentionally to help those around us grow in faith.

In a sense, all of life is about management. We own nothing, but each day God entrusts a measure of resources to us. Though that measure might seem smaller some days than others, we’re still only stewards of what He gives to us. God, in His wisdom, decides the amount of each opportunity. Our job isn’t to question or second guess that amount; it’s only to be faithful with however little or much has been entrusted to us.

? Consider what small opportunities for faithfulness you have this week. How will you be faithful to those opportunities to prepare for a larger opportunity?

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Faithfulness isn’t measured by the size of the opportunity. It’s measured by our choices within each opportunity.

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Michael Kelley