

# FAR FROM HOME

DATE: SUNDAY, 14TH OF JUNE 2020 | SERIES: DANIEL - PART 1

## DANIEL 1:7-20

*The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.*

*But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."*

*Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.*

*At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.*

*To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.*

*At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.*

## START TALKING

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's message?
2. What is the biggest change in culture that you have seen in your lifetime?

## START THINKING

1. Read Daniel 1:7-20. Our "angle of approach" makes a big difference. Obeying God rather than men doesn't mean you have to be aggressive and disagreeable. What approach did Daniel use when the overseer wanted them to eat from the king's table? What approach has worked well and poorly for you personally?!
2. Discuss how living a life committed to God's standards is healthier than feasting on the delicacies of the world.

## START SHARING

1. Daniel knew his identity and controlled his appetite, and God showed him favour. Share about a recent time that God worked behind the scenes in your life when you were faithful to Him and did the things that He has called you to do?
2. Read Daniel 1:7-20. Daniel and his friends were placed in a new environment and a new culture.
  - a). How did they engage this new culture? How did they remain faithful to God?
  - b). What challenges in our culture are you currently facing? How does engaging these challenges and this culture, while remaining faithful to God, look in your own life?

## START PRAYING

Pray for wisdom and conviction that we might know better how to be in the world but not of it.

## START DOING

Daniel teaches us that we can cooperate, but we should not compromise on the things of God. In what area of your life have you compromised on the things of God? How can you cooperate with the world in that area of your life without compromising on the things of God? Now take steps to stop compromising.

# SUMMARY

## OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, Dusty shared a message from Daniel chapter 1. Our new series from, the book of Daniel, focusses on following God in a culture that doesn't.

Daniel's writing seeks to give hope to Christians, offering comforting assurance that present sufferings, however terrible, will not be in vain. After all, God is the powerful sovereign Ruler of all things, and He is able to rescue His children from trials and carry His children through trials as human faithfulness to God offers a peace in this life and the life to come.

Daniel challenges us to walk in faith, seek the Messiah, and await the coming completion of all things. We learn that despite present circumstances, God is with us, and He is in control.

Our story begins in Daniel 1. Babylon has besieged Jerusalem taking captive some Israelites, including Daniel and his friends. Daniel is around 15 years old and having been schooled in scripture (the Torah), he is rather wise for his age. Daniel and his friends all had personal traits that qualified them for jobs as servants in the king's palace, but they first had to be trained for three years before they could enter the king's service. This included learning the language and customs of Babylon - basically, the idea was to make them forget who they were so they would become Babylonians.

Daniel and his friends found themselves far from home. Sometimes we can feel like foreigners in our environment or the circumstances we find ourselves in, but in Philippians 3:20, Paul tells us: *But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our saviour.* And in Ephesians 2:19, Paul reminds us that *"...you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household."*

We are the Daniels, Hananiahs, Mishaels and Azariahs of this world. Planted here to bring a message of hope - that God is sovereign, His love is unconditional, He is mighty to save, He is in control, and He is Lord of all!

### Three lessons from Daniel to help us follow God in a culture that doesn't:

#### 1. Know your identity

The first thing the Babylonians did was to try to indoctrinate Daniel and his friends by educating them in their system and feeding them their food. The goal was that after a while they would think like Babylonians, look like Babylonians, behave like Babylonians... and eventually that they would think that they were Babylonians.

The Babylonians thought that by changing their names, Daniel and his friends would forget to Whom they belong:

- Daniel means God is my judge
- Hananiah means Yahweh is gracious
- Michael means who is like God
- Azariah means Yahweh has helped

We are sons and daughters of the living God, but as we do life in this foreign land, it constantly tries to rob our identity. We get called lazy, sinners, hypocrites, failures, CEOs, bosses, interns, assistants... regardless of any earthly label given to us, we are first children of God, co-heirs with Jesus! Daniel was wise to know that while on the job, the Babylonians could call him Belteshazzar, but truly he was 'Daniel'!

We often have to change 'caps' here on earth, but we are first children of God, made in His image, representing Him. Our identity is not earned, requested, or begged for. It's a gift, given through grace when we accepted Jesus! God calls us chosen, anointed, redeemed, forgiven, free... But if we look to find our identity in our worldly position, possessions, or from our situation we are going to have problems.

When you know who you are and who God has called you to be, it doesn't matter what situation you are in, what oppression you are under, you live free! Daniel teaches us that if we know our identity, we can maintain our character - even in tough situations.

#### 2. Control your appetite

*But Daniel **resolved** not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.* Daniel 1:8. Resolved is a strong word - it means firm determination. This was a big deal! This was the king's food - everything of the best - that Daniel was firmly determined not to eat. But Daniel knew that the food had been sacrificed to the Babylonian idols and he was therefore not allowed to eat it. Some might think that it was not such a big deal, but Daniel and his friends would rather please God than their appetites. In the same way, the world may try to convince us that a small act of disobedience is not a big deal; but one small act of disobedience can slowly make our souls sick!

Daniel teaches us that we can cooperate, but we should not compromise the things of God. Daniel's battle wasn't against the government or rulers, but against falling for the things of this world. We should not allow ourselves to get comfortable with earthly standards by feeding our appetite with gossip, negative talk, complaining, ungratefulness... How did Daniel follow God in a culture that didn't? He knew his identity, and he controlled his appetite!

#### 3. God will give you favour

Now God had caused the official to show favour and compassion to Daniel. Daniel 1:9. The official could have lost his life over the four teenagers who were being 'picky eaters', but because they understood their identity, controlled their appetites, and trusted God, He showed them favour! Favour didn't mean that they wouldn't experience pain or hardship - the fire and the lion's den was still coming - but God delivered them!

If we know our identity (we don't compromise, we cooperate); we control our appetite (take in what is good and represent Jesus well), we will enjoy the favour of God. Chapter one teaches us how they laid the foundation of 'no compromise' but of graceful co-operation!