

## DANIEL

Lesson 2: Daniel 1:1-21  
Right Priorities

### CONVERSATIONS WITH A HOUSE REP

- Conversations with an evangelical Christian representative: “It is virtually impossible to be elected without compromise.” Is this true? Is it impossible to be a committed Christian and be promoted? Especially when you are in hostile territory? Daniel is a striking example of a man who was promoted without compromise. How did he do it? Here’s his seminar!

### DANIEL’S “STAY THE COURSE” SEMINAR

- Reasons to go rogue – ID the landmines.
- Three conformity challenges – test the tests.
- Nope – Draw the right line in the sand.
- How God works – Trust the process.

### REASONS TO GO ROGUE

- Reason #1: Teeth on Edge
- Jeremiah 31:29: “*In those days they will not say again, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’*”
- Daniel could easily complain: “I am reaping the consequences of someone else’s wrong decisions.”  
(**The Eden challenge!**)

### REASONS TO GO ROGUE

- Deuteronomy 28:15, 41: *“But it shall come about, if you will not obey the Lord your God ...that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. ...You shall have sons and daughters but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity.”*
- Parental disobedience does impact children. But in Daniel’s case, this was not a demotion! ■

### REASONS TO GO ROGUE

- Reason #2: Homesick / Overcome by Loss
- Psalm 137:1: *By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down and wept, When we remembered Zion.*
- Everything I remember that is good has been taken from me. (Actually not true, but can seem so.) What difference does it make to serve God? **(The Job challenge.)** ■

### REASONS TO GO ROGUE

- Reason #3: Disappointment with God
- Daniel 1:1-2: *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand**, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, **to the house of his god**, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.”*

### REASONS TO GO ROGUE

- God did this! How could He? This is **the Habbakuk challenge**:
- Habbakuk 1:13: *Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?*
- You are not doing what I expect. How can you even do this? This doesn’t make sense! ■

### REASONS TO GO ROGUE

- This is not fair – I am being penalized for someone else's failure.
- This is not good – You have taken away everything good.
- This doesn't make sense – You are not doing what obviously needs to happen.

### REASONS TO GO ROGUE

- Have you turned from God because (in your eyes) He is not fair, has not treated you well, or is not making sense? (These = lies from Eden.)
- I will admit to times when reasons #2 & #3 assert themselves in my life.
- Step one: Recognize the rogue! ID the landmine.

### THREE CONFORMITY CHALLENGES:

- Challenge #1 – King's College.
- Daniel 1:5: *And he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ...and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.*

### THREE CONFORMITY CHALLENGES:

- To enter the King's College is to be immersed in a completely alien polytheism that includes exploring mathematics and glass making formulas but also includes understanding omens, incantations, myths and legends. **Sounds like Hogwarts!**
- A trinity of great gods (Anu, Enlil, and Ea) and lesser gods are interwoven into curriculum. Pass? ■

### THREE CONFORMITY CHALLENGES:

- Challenge #2 – New Names
- Daniel 1:7: *Then 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.*

### THREE CONFORMITY CHALLENGES:

- Daniel = God is my judge; Belteshazzar = Belet (wife of Marduk), protect the King
- Hananiah = Yahweh has been gracious; Shadrach = I am very fearful (of a god)
- Mishael = Who is like God; Meshack = I am despised (before my god)
- Azariah = God has helped; Abednego = servant of Nebo (also known as Nabo)

### THREE CONFORMITY CHALLENGES:

- They have all been given names which disavow their connection to the God of Israel.
- Every time Daniel is called Belteshazzar, his name is an invocation for the patron goddess Belet to protect the King.
- How would you feel if given a name that denies your God and your relationship to Him?



### THREE CONFORMITY CHALLENGES:

- Challenge #3 – New Menu
- Daniel 1:5 – *And the king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank.*
- New School, New Names, New Menu – which is the true threat? You know they picked #3, but let's examine 1 & 2.

### KING'S COLLEGE?

- Much of what was taught in the King's College concerns what is abominable and had been long since banned in Israel (Deut. 18:10-12).
- But there is a difference between understanding and embracing.

### KING'S COLLEGE?

- *These young men from Jerusalem's court needed to be secure in their knowledge of Yahweh to be able to study this literature objectively without allowing it to undermine their faith. ...In order to witness to their God in the Babylonian court they had to understand the cultural presuppositions of those around them. – Baldwin, J. G.*

### NEW NAMES?

- They determined that their new names would not define them. You can call me what you want, but my faith will tell you who I am.
- Just like Jesus will someday give us new names!
- Listen to how much better their God focused names fit who they have shown themselves to be!

### TRUE NAMES

- Belteshazzar = Belet (wife of Marduk), protect the King; **Daniel = God is my judge**
- Shadrach = I am fearful (of a god); **Hananiah = Yahweh has been gracious**
- Meshack = I am despised (before my god); **Mishael = Who is like God**
- Abednego = servant of Nebo; **Azariah = God has helped;**

### NEW NAMES?

- Understanding what you believe (even when I don't agree with what you believe) is not a hill to die on. Believing the truth matters.
- What you call me is not a hill to die on. (What Jesus calls me matters.)
- But the menu, in this case, matters! Does this not seem odd. What's the problem? Why did they refuse?

### NOPE – DRAW THE RIGHT LINE IN THE SAND

- Some think the menu problem is about Jewish dietary laws. But (1) nothing in context suggests as much and (2) wine was not on the prohibited list.
- Some think the menu problem is about food sacrificed to idols. This is a NT issue from Corinth, but nothing in context supports this as the basis for their refusal. Plus anything could be so tainted in Bab

### NOPE – DRAW THE RIGHT LINE IN THE SAND

- What is it?
- Dining together can be a form of confirming allegiance & agreement.
- Proverbs 9:5-6: *“Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding.”*

### NOPE – DRAW THE RIGHT LINE IN THE SAND

- Daniel 1:5 mentions the king's **choice food**.
- This exact expression (**pat.bag appears 5x's in chp 1**) is only found in one other place in the OT!
- Daniel 11:26: *“And those who eat his choice food (**pat.bag**) will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain.”*

### NOPE – DRAW THE RIGHT LINE IN THE SAND

- To eat the king's choice food is to swear fealty to him.
- The irony in Daniel 11:26 arises from the fact that those who should be the most loyal (to a certain king) betray him.
- For Daniel and his three friends, eating the king's choice food is a major loyalty conflict.

### NOPE – DRAW THE RIGHT LINE IN THE SAND

- Daniel and friends are facing a challenge of allegiance. Will you be loyal to God alone or, by eating his choice food, obligate yourself to supporting the king's future actions?
- This is our line in the sand, too. There are moments when we must choose: Obey God or obey men.
- D & Friends are deciding now, in this moment!

### NOPE – DRAW THE RIGHT LINE IN THE SAND

- Daniel Says: "I welcome an education in what you believe, I will not protest if you call me by names that reflect your mistaken beliefs, but when it comes to the matter of my allegiance, I am loyal to God alone. This is non-negotiable."
- Daniel (and friends) see the clear challenge to keeping the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment: God alone!

### NOPE – DRAW THE RIGHT LINE IN THE SAND

- Daniel understands that *pat-bag* opens wide the door to breaking the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment and says "no" to hearing "you owe me."
- How is it possible for four teens to demonstrate such courageous faith! Think about this!
- Parents! How would your MS student do in similar situation?

### PARENTING SIDE-BAR

- In heaven, you will get to meet the most amazing parents never known!
- Clue #1 – These are names of four children from God-fearing families.
- Clue #2 – Proverbs 22:6: *Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.*”

### HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

- Clue #3 – These young men show clear evidence of having mastered at least two of the OT books that are part of the core curriculum for children.
- Proverbs 1:1-2: *The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know **wisdom** and instruction, To discern the sayings of **understanding**.*”

### HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

- Requisites: Daniel 1:4: *showing intelligence in every branch of **wisdom**, endowed with understanding and discerning **knowledge**.*
- These young men show clear evidence of having graduated from the school of wisdom that Solomon founded. They have been thoroughly trained in the way! They will not depart from it!

### HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

- Certainly God was at work in Daniel + 3.
- But, these clues give us a glimpse of a process through which God worked that involved parents.
- Did you know that there are three books in the OT which were written as child-training curriculum?
- Is it possible to raise a Daniel (Danielle) today? ■



### HOW GOD WORKS: TRUST THE PROCESS!

- Daniel 1:8-9: *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. ... God granted Daniel favor and compassion.*
- Then God blessed them in a miraculous way – who shows marked improvement from the test group in 10 days?

### HOW GOD WORKS: TRUST THE PROCESS!

- Daniel 1:19:-20: *The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.*

### HOW GOD WORKS: TRUST THE PROCESS!

- The young men have clearly demonstrated where their heart is.
- 2 Chronicles 16:9A: *"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."*
- This is happening right now, in this room!

### HOW GOD WORKS: TRUST THE PROCESS!

- In this passage, Hanani is talking to king Asa whose heart did not belong to God. When he encountered opposition, he relied on his skills as a negotiator.
- When he became severely ill, he did not seek the Lord.
- To such a one, Hanani explained the heart of our God.

### HOW GOD WORKS: TRUST THE PROCESS!

- You may feel that God has given you a raw deal despite having sought to serve him well.
- But if you will make your devotion to Him the one constant, that is when it pleases God to work through you. You could actually be someone God chooses to use in a profound and powerful way in a world that is coming unglued.

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