

Just Say No

Daniel 1: Standing Firm with God series

by Chris Famisaran

Thank you, Ben. Today, some of you are wondering, well, we're going through the book of Daniel and we wanna give an opportunity because let's just be real. I'm not gonna be able to cover everything in the book of Daniel over the next 10, 12 weeks. So I know some of you are gonna have questions. So we're gonna provide an opportunity on Wednesday night at 7 p.m. When? Wednesday at 7 p.m. You can join me on Zoom and we'll discuss and we'll also go through a study guide as well to give better perspective on the Book of Daniel. Now, I have one rule, though. We cannot ask any questions that are going to be in the future lessons. So let's say we're in chapter five. We can only ask questions up to chapter five. Is that fair? Okay. And so if you are interested in joining us, please email or text us at 562-869-6013 to get on the email list and we'll send the Zoom, the contact login information to you, okay? Or just come see me and I'll pass the information on to you.

Okay, I'd like for you to go and open your Bibles to Daniel chapter one. We're gonna read primarily, well actually, I'm gonna combine chapter six as well because there's some similarities, but also if you're watching online, you wanna take a screenshot of this or write these verses down, this will help us to have a better perspective. Okay, Daniel 1. Now last week we also had an introduction on how we can read our Bible. And so one of the things that we also want you to be doing to be keeping in perspective is the various things that help us to think and more clearly to ask good questions. That is ideally the three C's. What are the three C's that we talked about last week? Content, context, and cross reference. That just tells you I need to do a better job. Alright, what are the five W's? Who, where, what, when, and why.

Okay, let's begin. Chapter one, starting at one, and let's read the first couple of verses. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, along with some of the articles from the

temple of God. off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. All right content we see that this is a story recounting of a time of something that happened. What is the context? Who's involved? King Jehoiakim. When? It was the third year of his reign. Who, what, where, when, why? God delivered King Jehoiakim and Judah into King Nebuchadnezzar's hands. Now going back to the third scene, which is cross-reference, we see was this perhaps ever mentioned before? Was this something that might have been prophesied earlier? Let's go to, as you can see on the screen, let's just keep a thumb on Daniel 1. Let's go to Isaiah, though. Isaiah 39 verses five through seven. Isaiah has a couple of books over to the left, maybe about five or six books. Isaiah 39. Verses five through seven. Okay. And it says, then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, and who was Hezekiah? He was a king. Hear the word of the Lord Almighty. The time will surely come when everything in your palace and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day will be carried off into where? Babylon. Nothing will be left says the Lord and some of your descendants your own flesh and blood who will be born to you Will be taken away and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon Okay So has Isaiah makes a proclamation to Hezekiah. Hezekiah is a king from all accounts, he was a good king in Judah, but There will be a time in the future where all will not be well. And at this point, just to kind of get the Reader's Digest version, Israel and Judah, there were two kingdoms actually. Judah, which was on the south, and Israel to the north. The northern kingdoms had rebelled because they didn't want to go along with what was happening in the south. Northern kingdom had fallen 150 years before. And then for 150 years, Judah was able to stand alone. In 605 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar decides, well, probably if anything, well, God allows him, delivers victory over Judah. So let's continue to read. Um... Actually, wait, no, let's take back. So it also says, I want to make one other point. And the Lord, verse two, and the Lord, the Lord is Adonai. We talked about this before as well. And when it says delivered, you could also translate that as gave. It comes from the Hebrew word natan. Everybody say natan. Natan, OK? God gave Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. It's not because Nebuchadnezzar had this super awesome army. Maybe he did. But God allowed. God gave. God delivered. OK? Question for y'all, is it possible that sometimes God will allow us to fall into the hands of the enemy? Does this change our view of God? Some of you are being honest and some of you are like, I still don't like that.

Right, but we'll see now what I also want to share and to stress is in this story of... as we go through the book of Daniel I want to focus on the goodness and faithfulness of God in Daniel. The title of our series is "Daniel: Standing Firm with God." Okay, I want to see Daniel through Daniel's eyes and his perspective but also see that how is the character of God revealed in this book? So we see here that the Lord delivers Jehoiakim, everybody. Excuse me. And then let's go to verse three. Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and their nobility, young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of quick learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and the literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were trained for three years. And after that, they were to enter the king's service. So they're not named yet, but Daniel, Mishael, or actually, as you would probably know them better, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are taken from their home to Babylon. So let me ask you this. Oh, my bad.

How many of you would feel if a foreign adversary took you away from your home and forced you into service? Let's just imagine, hypothetically, Canada were to invade the United States and take us back to Canada. Nope. Especially not the Yukon in the Northwest Territories. All right. Nope, nope, nope. I would not be happy. But they have no choice.

Now also, as it was mentioned too, some of the Israelites from the royal family and nobility, it's a strong good possibility that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were also descendants of royal blood. So, they probably had the ability to think well on their feet. And... They were pulled in, and they were given new names. Daniel became Belteshazzar, Hananiah became Shadrach, Mishael became Meshach, and Azariah became Abednego. What do these names mean? Daniel, his first name is actually God is my judge. And Belteshazzar means bell or to protect his life. That was his new name. For Hananiah, his name is God is gracious. And when he became Shadrach, he became command of Akku, the moon god. Mishael, who is what God is, became Meshach, who is what Akku is. And finally, Azariah, Yahweh has helped or will help. And Abednego became servant of Nebo. them new names. Why do you think they gave them new names? To help assimilate them into the Babylonian culture, and especially to be easier if they

were to call them something that everybody would probably be familiar with, right? So here, we also see... we see that all of these young men, they're taken from the tribe of Judah. They're probably from the line of kings. And even if there are two classes, for instance, it's the likelihood that Daniel was probably... he was of royal birth. There's a man by the name of Josephus who, later on, would write, Daniel and his three friends were probably also from Zedekiah's family line.

Now, they get to Babylon. And when they get to Babylon, they start to train. They learn the topics of agriculture. Why? Because. They knew they needed to know how food was made. You know, they didn't have factory farming like we have now. They had to be aware of also the weather. They had to, I'm sure, be understood, be understanding of economics, astronomy. They were also taught literature, I'm sure the arts, and also astronomy. But in chapter, sorry, verse 8, verse 8, Daniel Shadrach and Amishak and Abednego They make a decision. And in verse 8, it says, but Daniel resolved to not what? 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 said to Daniel, I'm afraid of the Lord my king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than any other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

All right. Now. Is it reasonable for the official to get a little scared when Daniel makes a request? Because if the request goes bad, who's gonna get punished? The official, right? Now, Daniel, though, has a solution. Okay, verse 11, he says, then he said to the chief official would have pointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Ezra. Please, test your servants for 10 days. Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. But 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 10 days. Now some might be arguing, well just eat the food. It's supposed to be the best. But again, was this another test for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? It was, not because of God. Well, I mean, yes, but also from the perspective of the Babylonians, they wanted to see, are they willing to adapt and listen to us, get comfortable with our ways, our food? but Daniel Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we don't want to ingest something, number one, that will defile, but there probably would also be physical ramifications.

Now, I'll be honest with you, when I was a child, a young man, we would go to a restaurant that maybe had a buffet. (*audience laughing*) Like Sizzler, or think of any other. I think it's called the Palms. Off the 10. And when you would especially go to brunch, there's this breakfast to lunch time where they serve a little bit of both. And I'll be honest with you, sometimes, I would go and I would see all of the good stuff that would probably be similar to what the Babylonians were serving. And before I would go back to the table, I would maybe bring a few things, put them on my plate, and then eat them before I got back to the table, where my mother... would not be able to look at me and judge me, and then scold me for disrespecting the Lord. And I learned my lesson, not because I was fearful that the Lord would strike me with wrath because I ate something that God wisely told me I should not eat. I ate these items, and I felt horrible for the rest of the day and even going into the next day. Every time I would do this, I would feel horrible. And it tasted horrible because I wasn't used to it, right? And obviously, we're told that these types of foods are not good for you. That's why God says, hey, you shouldn't eat this. You shouldn't eat that. Not because I want to punish you or make your life miserable. They may taste good, but they're not healthy for you. Amen? OK? So why didn't Daniel Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and then just try to do what I did was to try it? Well, I tried it, and I learned my lesson. They said, well, not just because of that, it would cloud their judgment, their thinking. They're in a foreign land. They're having to survive, and they need to do it well. They need to have clarity of thought. And then. Daniel says, just give us 10 days. And in 10 days, you can make a difference, right? It's still, look, if it doesn't work after 10 days, as if the chief official's concern does become validated, then they can go back to eating whatever, right? But within those 10 days, what did they eat? They ate fruits and vegetables and drank water. And what was the result? Verse 15, at the end of the 10 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 wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

Now, it took great courage on Daniel's part as a leader, but also as a believer. And it took great courage just to ask a question. How many of you like to ask questions? I like to ask questions, but I don't like to ask questions sometimes when I could get penalized or punished for it. Amen? But it took great courage on Daniel's part to not only stand up for his beliefs, but also his faith in God. Now, if

we continue on, it says, 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. Because they chose to eat things that were good for them, they were able to have the clarity of thought to learn. And they learned some difficult things, and especially having to learn a whole new language, the Akkadian language. that took a lot of discipline, but I think also by God's blessing, God's providence, God helped them to remember and to learn. Because at the end of it all, there was a test. And the test, they passed with flying colors. Now, God blessed them with intelligence and the hard work that they put in. All four of them. were tasked with the huge responsibility to learn all of these things that would be put into practice later. Astronomy, astrology, mathematics, magical arts, architecture, and agriculture. And if they didn't pass the exam at the end, well, it wouldn't go well for them. But God blessed them. And so, one of the things that's also interesting is that Daniel Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did learn... Even things that they didn't believe in, they still took, and they were able to have a better understanding. That's what, when we come later into different parts of Daniel, they'll have a better understanding and be able to speak on God's behalf.

Now... Would you be willing and wanting to move to a different country, taken away by force? No. In spite of that, though, and as we'll learn later, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were faithful. In fact, all the way till when it says in verse 21, Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus. That's four administrations that Daniel would serve in government.

Now, let's go to chapter six, okay? There's a lot that we have to counter, so I'm combining chapters one and six here. Was Daniel always well-liked? Chapter six, verse one, it says, "'It pleased Darius,' this is a Persian king now, several administrations ahead, "'to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdoms, "'with three administrators over them, "'one of whom was Daniel.'" Has Daniel risen through the ranks? Did he do so on his own intellect, or did God bless and place him there? God placed him there. Many of us know this story, so I'm just going to kind of glance over. But verse 3, Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities, and the king planned to set him over where? the whole kingdom, to be the chairman of the kingdom. And at this, did this go over well with everybody? Absolutely not. And they tried to find something against him. They tried to look at his conduct. There

was no corruption, because as it says in verse 4, he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally, these men said, we'll never find any basis for charges against this man, Daniel, unless it has something to do with the law of his God. Those of you who know the story know that what did Daniel do every day? He prayed. How many times? Three times morning, midday and in the evening. And did he do so in the quietness of his home in a closet? He opened the window where everybody could see and what did these administrators do? They maneuvered to create a law That what? Who should they worship only and not pray only to? The king. And Daniel, who is basically about to take over as the number two person, aside from the king, is given a choice yet again in his life. First, it was to not eat foods that would inhibit his ability to think clearly. Now his life was threatened by the fact He would not be able to pray if this decree were to come into effect to God. So Daniel has to make a choice. Am I gonna follow the ways and the rules and laws of man, or am I going to be faithful to God? Those of you who know the story. So the administrators, the satraps, they create a law and bring it to King Darius and say, oh, King Darius, this is paraphrasing, we only want to be able to worship you and follow you in everything. So anybody who prays to another God, they should be killed and executed and thrown to the lions. That's a big paraphrase.

And how does King Darius appreciate that? He loves it, because he's got a big head. He thinks that's awesome. But yet, how was King Darius and Daniel's relationship? Were they good friends? They were tight. So the law goes into effect. The king puts his seal on it. Cannot be changed. The next day, what happens? Daniel has to make a decision. Is he faithful? Absolutely. He goes as was his custom, and he prays. And guess who was watching? The administrators and the satraps. Soon as they saw him praying, where do they go? They go back to the king. And they inform the king. Guess who's praying? And he's not praying. He's not being faithful to you. He's being faithful to his own God. How does King Darius, those of you who know the story, how does he receive this message? It cuts and pains his heart. Because he realizes. how these individuals, with cunning and deceit, forced him into something that he cannot take back. And he knows what the consequences are. He would have to send his dear friend, Daniel, to death. And the chosen method was the lions. Those of you know the story, there was a pit. And below the pit, below the door, were what? Lions that probably had

been starved for a while who are ready for a meal And one day they take them down there and they place them but what's interesting about this though Verse 17. Actually, verse 16. So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel, and threw him into the lion's den. The king said to Daniel, may your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you.

Even though... Darius may not have been a specific believer. He says, may your God, in some way, he has some measure of faith where he says, may your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you. A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed it with his own signet ring and the rings of his nobles so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. Then the king returned to his palace and he spent the whole night, was he troubled that night? Could he eat and drink and sleep? No, he was worried for his dear friend. The next day, when at the what? The first light of dawn, the king got up. He hurried to the den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel. What kind of voice? An anguished voice. He says, Daniel, servant of the living God, Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions? And Daniel answered, may the king live forever. My God sent an angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I have found innocent in his sight. nor have I done any wrong before you, your majesty."

And the king's response was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the lion's den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him because he trusted in his God. God gave wisdom and discipline for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to learn all of the things that they would need to for a life of service, a service into a kingdom that was not of their own. And even though maybe they would not have preferred to have been in Babylon, they were still faithful to God. As it says, Daniel served until King Cyrus, at least four administrations that we know of. Daniel, so Daniel faithfully served God and the people, sorry, I got too excited.

What new lessons or reminders have you learned today that reveals to you the character of God? I see the character of God of one who in the midst of things that, or situations that we may not want to be in. God still turns something what we perceive as difficult and challenging into good. If Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had not been in there, they would not have been able to influence

the king. They could have possibly done even more horrible things to the people of God. We don't know exactly because it's not said. But Daniel as well was able to be a vessel for the Lord. And in so doing as he faithfully carried out the things that God wanted him to do He served as shining example even in a world where it seems like it can be questionable It can be chaotic It can be uncertain. Sound familiar? What happened this last week? Any of you who are tech minded know that there was a cyber attack? Anybody's business or home get affected? Okay. How about last week with the assassination attempt? Never in my life would I think that would ever happen in my lifetime. We live in chaotic times. That being said, the Lord is good and the Lord will be faithful. And just like Daniel, we can confidently stand firm with God, amen?

Now, this week, this week, because it seems like life can be challenging, And it's easy to stay negative. I want you to write down and share with someone three blessings from God you have recently experienced. Because I believe that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego looked towards the positive and not the negative. What were some of the good things that came out of it? In our first example, we see that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were able to have clear thinking. They were able to show that they could do well with a few adjustments and serve the king and the people faithfully. And we see the blessings that God literally saved Daniel's life. Instead of the roar of a lion, maybe it was more of a meow. God sent an angel to shut the lion's mouths. And if anything, he probably had a very fit, restful, warm evening. He could just snuggle up to a light, you know? Didn't need blankets. God is faithful, and God is good.

Remember the blessings, my friends, because it is so easy to be absorbed by the negativity of life. And that's what people want. We're being brainwashed to be negative and look at things, to be pitted against one another for our convictions. And yet, I truly believe, I think we are, for the most part, aligned. There may be a few things that we disagree. But I think we can find more commonality than what can separate us. Amen? I don't have to have the same belief. And the same structure, we can be disagreeing on a lot of things. I have a dear friend of mine who we probably disagree on 70% of things. But it doesn't mean that I don't love him. I love this man because he's a good man. He cares for me and I'm more concerned about that. Now we have some things that we, we certainly fundamentally disagree on, but at its core, we both love God. And I take refuge in

the fact that I have somebody who may, at the very least, listen and care. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were also not alone. They had each other. And that was a blessing. So as we journey through together, let's lean on one another. And as we go through and try to understand what God is sharing for us here today in 2024 from Daniel, let's take these lessons and apply it to our lives. And if you have questions, don't be afraid to ask. All right? Let's close prayer.

Father God, you are good and your mercy endures forever. You were faithful to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and you are to us. Even when it doesn't seem the way things are supposed to go that we would like them to go, Lord, we know in the long run you will help us to see. So be with us in the challenging times we live in. Help us to have clear thinking, to make faithful good choices, just as Daniel Shadrach, Meshach, and Amenigo did, and to rely on you in all aspects of our lives. In Jesus' name, everybody said, amen.

Grace and peace, everyone.

Read chapter two to get a head start.