

Daniel: Holy Living in a Hostile Culture

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1. Why is Daniel important?

The life-story of Daniel exemplifies what we should be:

- A man who knew God, and lived a holy life in an unholy world
- A man whose own holiness positively influenced other believers, and convicted unbelievers
- A man whose holiness was tried to the point of death; he and his friends trusted God and were preserved
- A man who won the grudging admiration of the world he opposed, and brought God glory

2. What is Holiness?

- By definition, to “cut apart”
- In the Bible, a “cut above”
- Linked to God’s transcendence—His holy “aboveness” to all that is created (and ultimately touched by sin). See e.g. Is 55:9.
- In Christ, God has come near physically, but not sinfully; he was “receiving sinners and eating with them” (Lk 15:2), all the while retaining His character as the one who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Hb 7:26).

3. What does God expect from me, now that I am saved?

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy’” (1 Pt 1:15-16).

- This is the explicit, non-negotiable will of God for our lives!
- God has left us in this world, but he wants us to live above its sin and corruption.

4. Why is this important today?

21st-century culture is increasingly hostile to Christianity (the recent election is an example).

- It is tolerant of everything but truth.
- It is inclusive of everything but righteousness.
- It eschews hatred of everything but God.
- What it cannot persuade, it corrupts.

5. A great example, Daniel as a—

a. Prepared Man (in the family room)

- The value of learning Biblical principles while young
- Daniel and friends possibly only about 16 years old
- The Lord Jesus engaged in “My Father’s business” at age 12.

b. Purpose-Driven Man (in the dining room)

- The test of convictions—“purpose of heart”
- Wisdom to seek Godly alternatives to defilement
- The ungodly acknowledged God’s blessing without knowing its secret—“fatter on wheat than meat”!
- The Lord Jesus: “not my will...the will of Him that sent me”

c. Praying Man (in the bedroom)

- The public power of secret prayer
- 2:18-23 seeking the mind of God—“mercies...concerning this secret”
- 6:10-11 “giving thanks,” “making supplication”
- The Lord Jesus as the ultimate man of prayer

d. Persecuted Man (in the furnace room)

- Obedience is costly—
 - they yielded their bodies rather than bow to a false god
 - experienced fellowship in the trial with a heavenly companion
 - in the end, no smell of the fire; free of contamination
 - In the den—lions! “O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God able?”
- Cf the Lord Jesus: “reviled not...threatened not...committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pt 2:23).

e. “Point-Blank” Man (in the bar room)

- Courage to pronounce judgment on evil
- “You have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this.”
- Not sensational, but faithful, accurately giving the words of God
- The Lord Jesus, “a man that told you the truth”

f. Prevailing Man (in the throne room)

- At the end of each cycle, Daniel is given higher honors, and God is praised
- God’s blessing on Daniel was doubtless a blessing in the kingdom of Babylon
- The Lord Jesus: “I have glorified Thee on the earth” (Jh 17:4). “Highly exalted...a name above other name” (Ph 2:9).

Bible Reading Outline

1. The Prepared Man (in the family room)

- **2 Tm 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**
 - **Study the Bible while you’re young.** The value of learning Biblical principles while young: “From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tm 3:15); “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Ps 119:9).
- **1 Pt 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind [prepare your minds for action], be sober [self-controlled], and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**
 - **Train your mind while you’re young.** Daniel had an aptitude for every kind of learning. Learn to love the Lord with your whole mind (Mt 22:37; Mr 12:30). “In [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Cl 2:3). “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Cl 3:2).
- **Ps 119:63 I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.**
 - **Develop Christian friendships.** The world has never changed its opinion about Christ: “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jm 4:4). Cf 1 Jh 2:15.

- Daniel stuck with his friends. Unsaved friends are the principal means Satan uses to drag Christians back into the world. They disown God’s authority, reject His Son, and resist His Spirit. You can be friendly without being “friends.” Separation isn’t isolation—if you never talk to unbelievers, where is your mission field? Spend time with unbelievers to show them Christian love—show genuine concern and genuine hospitality, and seek to win them for Christ. But in your spare time, seek out friends more godly than you are.
- **The Example of Christ:** He was engaged in “My Father’s business” at age 12. “How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Lk 2:49).

2. Purpose-Driven Man (in the dining room)

- **Pr 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.**
 - **Develop a fear of God while you’re young.** “Daniel” means *God is my judge*. That was his testimony—he feared no one except the Lord. Daniel preferred to spend a night in the den of lions than to displease the Lord his God! Only God’s thoughts and God’s approval mattered to him. *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe”* (Pr 29:25).
- **1 Cr 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.**
 - **Develop convictions while you’re young**—“purpose in your heart.” Christ should be Lord of every part of your life. Don’t compartmentalize your life, so that you permit areas where He is not welcome. Don’t compromise!
 - If you find it impossible to locate a field of work or study completely under the Lordship of Christ, the burden of proof is on you to show why you should continue in that field.
 - Make a stand for God at work and in your neighborhood. Let the world know from the outset that you belong to Christ. It will keep them from tempting you to be one of them. If you sing their songs and talk like them, they will think you’re one of them.
- **1 Pt 1:15-16 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”**
 - **Protect your conscience while you’re young.** “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tm 1:5). “...war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some, having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck” (1 Tm 1:18b-19).
 - Daniel realized that the king’s food *might* cause defilement, so he wouldn’t partake. The world wants you to adopt its names, its food, and its garments. “You must not live according to the customs of the nations...I am the Lord your God, who has set you apart from the nations” (Lv 20:23-24).
- **2 Cr 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?**
 - **Separate yourself from the world.** Just as God prohibited Israel from intermarrying with the nations around them (Dt 7:3-4), He still commands that you steer clear of unequal yokes.
 - An important area of separation is that you marry “only in the Lord” (1 Cr 7:39). It should be as unthinkable to *date* an unbeliever as to marry one. Don’t allow yourself to develop a crush on an unbeliever, even if initially you say you would never go out with him/her. The partnership *cannot* be God’s will because it flies in the face of His clear Word. And if you tell the suitor the real reason, he won’t keep trying.
- **The Example of Christ:** “Jesus saith unto them, ‘My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work’ (Jh 4:34). “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Jh 6:38). “Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Hb 7:26).

3. Praying Man (in the bedroom)

- **Ph 4:6-7** **Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**
 - **Cultivate regular prayer while you're young.** Become fast friends with God, so that even if you are isolated and have no other companions at all, you have learned to live alone with God and to find your companionship and solace in Him. If you learn to walk with Him, as Enoch did, you will be happy anywhere. You wouldn't think of grieving Him. Then, even if Christian friends seem too few or too cold, you will never consider befriending the world.
 - If you want to have the mind of Christ, you must get to know Him well, and make Him a part of everything you do. You get to know Him like you get to know anyone—by spending time with Him. Through study, reflection, and thought, He speaks to you; through prayer, you speak to Him.
- **The Example of Christ:** “And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone” (Mt 14:23).

4. Persecuted Man (in the furnace room)

- **2 Tm 3:12** **Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**
- **The Example of Christ:** “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pt 2:23).

5. “Point-Blank” Man (in the bar room)

- **1 Pt 3:15** **“Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”**
 - **Be salt and light** (Mt 5:13-6). As salt we retard the world's decay, and as light we bring the gospel message in the context of our truthfulness and visible good works. “But speaking the truth in love” (Ep 4:15). “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tm 4:2).
 - Ethically, you must give your employer an honest day's work. Strive for competence in your field of work, so that your work has the highest possible quality.
 - The distinction we draw between the sacred (Sundays, Wednesday evenings) and the secular (the rest of the week) is artificial and unscriptural (1 Cr 10:31; Cl 3:17). Work “as unto the Lord,” and conduct business for His glory. “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Mt 25:21) applies to your secular employment as well as your use of spiritual talents.
- **The Example of Christ:** “But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham” (Jh 8:40).

6. Prevailing Man (in the throne room)

- **2 Pt 1:10-11** **Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**
- **The Example of Christ:** “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (Jh 17:4). “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Ph 2:9).