

LESSON 1

The Making of the Man

Scripture Focus

Daniel 1

Key Verse

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8).

Overview

The first chapter of Daniel sets the tone for Daniel’s character throughout the book and his life. In a tense situation in his youth, he refused to compromise and to offend God. He risked losing prestige as he stood for his beliefs and placed his loyalty to God over human authority. Daniel thus became an example of uncompromising faith.

Topic

Compromise

Theme

God sustains believers when they are tempted to compromise in the midst of trials.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will determine in his or her heart not to defile him- or herself when faced with a compromising situation, thus experiencing God’s sustaining power.

Outline

- I. The Pillaging of a State (Dan. 1:1–4)
 - A. The siege of the city of Jerusalem (1:1)
 - B. The sacking of the temple of Jehovah (1:2)
 - C. The selecting of the children of Judah (1:3, 4)
- II. The Preparation of a Servant (Dan. 1:5–16)
 - A. The provisions for captives (1:5)
 - B. The people from Judah (1:6, 7)
 - C. The purpose of Daniel (1:8–10)
 - D. The proposal of Daniel (1:11–14)
 - E. The product of testing (1:15, 16)
- III. The Presentation to a Sovereign (Dan. 1:17–21)
 - A. The compilation of knowledge (1:17)

Materials

- RBP transparencies 1–3
- Lesson 1 case study from resource CD
- Daniel 1:8 verse card from resource CD
- State map

- B. The conversation with Nebuchadnezzar (1:18–20)
- C. The continuation of Daniel (1:21)

Getting Started

Lost in a Foreign Land

Show a map of your home state or the United States. Ask the learners to point to places where they once felt alone or experienced an overwhelming situation which left them feeling helpless. **Ask:** Which was greater—a desire to return to a “safe” place or an urge to adapt to your new surroundings? What did you do? (Questions 1–3)

Left with Few Options

Ask: Describe a time when you felt threatened spiritually by a superior. Perhaps it was a boss who asked you to lie or some other unscrupulous person in a position of authority. **Ask:** Describe the power of the temptation to compromise spiritually by submitting to evil.

Daniel felt the powerful pull to compromise when he faced a decision on whether to eat the food provided by the king of Babylon. He knew that giving in would mean avoiding the possible dangerous consequences of making the king of Babylon mad.

Searching the Scriptures

The story of Daniel’s decision not to eat the food provided by the king of Babylon is well known. But it was not just the food that was the problem. Daniel and his friends were placed in a very dangerous and oppressive situation.

I. The Pillaging of a State (Dan. 1:1–4)

Nebuchadnezzar was just coming into power. He had led the Babylonians in the defeat of the Assyrians and Egyptians. The Babylonians emerged from this struggle as the dominant political power of the day. Nebuchadnezzar’s father had died while Nebuchadnezzar was successfully leading the troops in subjugating the nations which bordered the Mediterranean Sea. He claimed the crown and began an illustrious reign of forty-three years.

A. The siege of the city of Jerusalem (1:1)

Jehoiakim was the second son of Josiah (a good king; 2 Kings 22:1—23:30; 2 Chron. 34, 35) to be king over Judah. After his father’s death, the Jews had made his younger brother Jehoahaz king, but three months later the Egyptians dethroned him and made Jehoiakim king (2 Kings 23:31–34; 2 Chron. 36:1–4; 609 BC). He was a vassal to Egypt until 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar brought him into subjection, after which he was a vassal to Babylon (2 Kings

23:35-24:7; 2 Chron. 36:5-8). He was a wicked, wasteful king (Jer. 22:13-19) who burned the words of Jeremiah (Jer. 36:23).

As Nebuchadnezzar swept southward along the Mediterranean, he came to Jerusalem. It appears the Jews submitted to Nebuchadnezzar without a battle (2 Chron. 36:6, 7). Thus began the first of three waves of captivity and destruction which Babylon brought upon Judah between 605 BC and 586 BC as her 70-year Babylonian captivity commenced.

ASK: How does God chasten believers today? (See Hebrews 12:5-11). **DISCUSS:** Compare and contrast this with how He dealt with Old Testament Israel. (Questions 4, 5)

B. The sacking of the temple of Jehovah (1:2)

READ: Daniel 1:1-4. **DISCUSS:** Share Scriptures which substantiate God's control in the affairs of nations. (Question 6)

Nebuchadnezzar's success was not due merely to military genius. The Lord sovereignly allowed this victory.

The vessels taken from the temple were viewed as a token of subjection to Babylon. These were placed in the pagan temple, indicating that Nebuchadnezzar attributed his success to his pagan god.

C. The selecting of the children of Judah (1:3, 4)

TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 2. Point out the location of Jerusalem and Babylon and the route between them which arched along the Euphrates River.

In addition to the vessels of gold, selected young men were taken to Babylon as a token of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest.

The king enlisted the finest young men for governmental service. He likely sought similar youths from other conquered nations. The recruitment was placed in the hands of Ashpenaz, "the master of his eunuchs."

READ: Daniel 1:3, 4. **ASK:** How are the selected young men described? (Question 7)

"Children of Israel" means Jews. "Of the king's seed, and of the princes" implies that Daniel and his companions were of the royal and messianic lineage. "Children," or youths, are believed to be about fifteen years old. "No blemish" refers to physical fitness. "Well favoured" indicates physical appearance. "Skilful in ... wisdom ... knowledge ... science" refers to mental ability. "Such as had ability ... to stand in the king's palace" refers to poise and confidence necessary to live in a royal court. They were to be youths with potential who could

The Babylonian captivity came upon Judah as a chastisement from God due in part to her violation of the law of the seventh year Sabbath (Lev. 25:1-7). God warned that there would be one year of captivity for every year of failure to institute this law (2 Chron. 36:20, 21; Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10; cf. Lev. 26:33-35). The captivity was carried out in accord with the "blessings and cursings" sections in the Pentateuch (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). The 605 BC conquering of Judah was specifically prophesied by Isaiah to King Hezekiah in Isaiah 39:7 after he showed the Temple treasures to the Babylonians (cf. 2 Kings 20:17, 18). Habakkuk (Hab. 1:6) and other writers of Scripture also prophesied of the captivity.

Although godless, Nebuchadnezzar at least showed respect by taking the Temple utensils for religious use. Contrast this with the actions of his grandson Belshazzar in Daniel 5:2.



be taught the ways of the Babylonians. Daniel's great potential was dedicated to God and enhanced by Him (1:17).

II. The Preparation of a Servant (Dan. 1:5–16)

Nebuchadnezzar took good care of the chosen youths. Since he intended for them to become government officials, it was necessary first to win their confidence, appreciation, and allegiance. This could not have been done if the king's men mistreated them.

A. The provisions for captives (1:5)

Nebuchadnezzar initiated the young men into a high-level training program which combined academic rigor with preparation for royal service—all in an atmosphere of pagan spirituality.

The food was the finest in the kingdom, as a proper diet would insure their physical health. The training period was three years. It may have been year-round, making it equivalent to a modern college education.

All this was done that “they might stand before the king.” At the end of the training, they were to be appointed to governmental service.

B. The people from Judah (1:6, 7)

The fact that only four young men were named serves as a commentary on the other Jewish youths who were taken captive—apparently the rest assimilated the Babylonian ways. Only four refused to compromise spiritually.

DISCUSS: Imagine you were one of the magnificent youths taken captive to Babylon from your devastated homeland. What might tempt you to embrace the foreign, pagan society of your captors as you considered your situation? Why stay true to God? What was there left to lose? (Questions 8, 9)

The youth reflected the condition of the nation of Judah. Only a remnant remained faithful to God.

The four names of verse 6 are Hebrew names. Each name contained the name of the true God. “Daniel” means “God is my judge.” “Hananiah” means “Jehovah is gracious.” “Mishael” is translated “Who is what God is?” and “Azariah” stands for “Jehovah has helped.”

The Babylonians gave the young men new names which referenced pagan deities. “Belteshazzar” is “May Bel protect his life.” “Shadrach” refers to “Command of Aku” (the moon god). “Meshach” stands for “Who is what Aku is?” and “Abed-nego” is translated “Servant of Nebo.”

Separated from family in a foreign land, these Hebrew young men had now lost all traces of their very identities. They would not only be tempted to compromise, but completely able to do so without restraint.

DISCUSS: Why might the Babylonians have changed their names? **DISCUSS:** What are some ways the world tries to assimilate Christians into its

culture? What are the dangers in being assimilated into culture? (Questions 10–12)

C. The purpose of Daniel (1:8–10)

READ: Daniel 1:8.

“Purposed” suggests a deliberate decision and plan of action. Daniel requested to be exempted from the menu because it would be defiling. Although it is uncertain exactly how this might have been the case, we know that strict Levitical rules governed what the Jews ate and how it was prepared (Lev. 11; Deut. 14:1–21). The Babylonians would not have prepared kosher food for the Jewish captives (they were instead trying to remove Jewish customs). Furthermore, both the wine and meat would have been offered to idols by the pagans. To eat this food was considered an act of worship of the deity to whom it was offered. Exodus 34:13–15 forbade eating meat offered to pagan gods.

DISCUSS: What excuses might men in Daniel’s position have made for eating the food? (Question 13) **TRANSPARENCY:** Display transparency 3 with the right half covered.

DISCUSS: Do believers today ever use some of these excuses? In what situations? (Question 14) (Record learners’ answers on the transparency.)

Daniel’s decision to avoid the king’s food is remarkable. He might well have rationalized that it was permissible to eat the king’s food.

We should also commend Daniel for the way in which he made the request. He did not lie to cover his true motive, but gave a Scriptural reason to his godless superiors. It was an opportunity to witness concerning his belief in Holy Scripture.

Although the prince of the eunuchs may not have understood why Daniel found the food defiling, it is certain that he respected Daniel (Dan. 1:9). One does not look favorably on a person who is merely demanding or uncooperative. Daniel had a winsome spirit from the beginning (cf. 5:12, 14; 6:3, 4). The rapport had been established before the request was made.

TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 3. **DISCUSS:** What can Daniel’s response teach us when we face compromising situations? (Question 15) (Record learners’ answers on the transparency.)

Since it was the prince’s responsibility to carry out the king’s orders, he was reluctant to grant Daniel’s request. Daniel was, in essence, asking him to join in endangering both of their lives (Dan. 1:10). While sympathetic, he feared the king greatly. But his sympathy may have encouraged Daniel to

Daniel used a play on words for the sake of emphasis in verses 7 and 8, which each begin with the same Hebrew word in the same form. Although the Babylonians “gave” Daniel a new pagan name, he “gave” his heart to the LORD God of Israel.



“Melzar” is probably not a proper name but rather a title—perhaps a guard—subordinate to the prince of the eunuchs.

This passage is not a basis for a vegetarian diet. In all likelihood, when Daniel graduated from his training and established his own home (implied in Dan. 6:10) where he could control the menu, he returned to a kosher Jewish diet.

try another approach. It also may have made Melzar more ready to consider Daniel's proposal.

D. The proposal of Daniel (1:11–14)

How do you view an obstacle? Daniel did not let the refusal of the prince of the eunuchs deter him. He tried another avenue. Blocked doors are not necessarily closed doors. Daniel found another door in Melzar.

Daniel proposed a ten-day trial period. He believed that in this short time God would intervene and make him appear physically superior to the others. The trial was short enough that Melzar saw no problem in granting it. Melzar would be the judge. Daniel demonstrated that one can have principles yet be gracious. One can have convictions without being contentious. Saints today must follow this approach when facing compromising situations.

Instead of the king's menu, Daniel proposed a diet of vegetables. (Pulse is that which is grown from seed.)

Daniel's reasoned request was accepted. Here is an example of God honoring one who honors Him. Yet we must not assume that God will always manifest His honor in this manner.

ASK: When have you had to be creative in order to keep from participating in a compromising situation? (Question 16)

E. The product of testing (1:15, 16)

At the end of the ten days, the judge rendered his decision: the Hebrew youths had passed the test. They were in fact fairer and fatter than those on the official government diet. While Americans tend to view being overweight as a health problem, in Biblical times the sickly and starving were skinny. Hence, fatness was desirable.

Since the Hebrew youths had done so well on this diet, Melzar continued to allow it. Had they shown adverse effects, he would have demanded that they return to the king's diet.

ASK: Whether Daniel compromised said as much about God as it did him. What do we communicate about God when we compromise? (Question 17)

III. The Presentation to a Sovereign (Dan. 1:17–21)

The initial problem of the diet having been settled, the youths entered three years of intense education—training at the highest level for service in Nebuchadnezzar's court.

READ: Daniel 1:17–21.

A. The compilation of knowledge (1:17)

While they were sharp youths with great native ability, now trained in

the learning of Babylon, the Scripture says, “God gave them knowledge and skill.” He used Nebuchadnezzar’s training system as He also worked in their hearts.

“Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” The Babylonians placed great emphasis on dreams and had devised methods of interpreting them. However, Daniel’s knowledge of dreams did not come from the study of Babylonian books but from God. Visions and dreams would become very important parts of his prophetic career.

B. The conversation with Nebuchadnezzar (1:18–20)

At the end of their training, the Jewish youths were given a comprehensive oral exam. Nebuchadnezzar himself was the examiner. His participation in this event shows the level these young men were at. Since he was choosing advisers for his cabinet, he wanted to become directly involved. (This would have been the first graduating class after he initiated the program.)

His examination of the four Hebrew young men found them at the top of the class. Because of this, they received commissions to high office, as indicated by the words “therefore stood they before the king” (v. 19).

After Daniel and his companions had served for a time, the king also found them “ten times better” than his established officials. The phrase was likely a figure of speech, but they were by far Nebuchadnezzar’s best ministers.

ASK: What can Christians today do to stand out like Daniel did? (Question 18)

C. The continuation of Daniel (1:21)

“And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.” This is not a reference to Daniel’s death (i.e., he lived at least until the third year of Cyrus; 10:1). Rather, it means Daniel still had an official position at that time. Since Cyrus was a Persian king, that means Daniel continued all through the Babylonian period. He served under seven rulers for at least 70 years in two major world empires. Kings and kingdom fell—but Daniel continued on, being used of God to convey marvelous predictive prophecies which Christ exhorted future generations to understand (Matt. 24:15).

ASK: What can Christians today do to leave a mark as Daniel made? (Question 19)

This lesson sets the stage for the whole book. Decisions which Daniel and his companions made here revealed their character and prepared them for the events recorded later. Daniel 1 contains no direct predictive prophecies. Yet its demonstration of God’s sovereignty—even in Babylon—prepares us for the prophecies of God’s working among Gentile nations.

In response to God’s sovereignty, Daniel and his friends displayed faithfulness. In turn, God elevated Daniel to become one of the greatest men of the Old Testament (cf. Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3).

Use the case study for lesson 1 as desired.

Right Responses	
1. Refuse to compromise.	8.
2.	9.
3.	10.
4.	11.
5.	12.
6.	13.
7.	

DISCUSS: How are the following fundamental beliefs related: (1) God is in control; (2) and I must be faithful not to defile myself in a compromising situation? (Question 20)

Making It Personal

Reading Daniel

Challenge learners to read the complete book of Daniel this week. Check next week to see how many did so. (Question 21)

Cause for Compromise?

Ask the learners to keep a journal of situations they face this week where they are tempted to compromise what he or she knows to be pleasing to God. Ask learners to record what they chose to do in each situation. (Question 22)

Review Transparency

Use transparency 1 to review the response for this lesson: Refuse to compromise.

Memory Verse

Distribute copies of the Daniel 1:8 verse card from the resource CD. Encourage the learners to memorize the verse.

OUR GOD REIGNS

... till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom
of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

Daniel 5:21

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OUR GOD REIGNS: DANIEL

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How to Use *Life Design*



LIFE DESIGN: Bible Study Designed for the Life You Live. These Bible study materials are designed to engage adult learners in inductive Bible study and in applying the truths of that study to their daily lives.

As you prepare to teach these lessons, keep these two factors in mind:

- The **FOCUS** of productive adult Bible learning is the learner. The intent of teaching is not teaching, but learning—the learner’s learning.
- The **GOAL** of productive adult Bible learning is an appropriate life-response to Biblical truth. You do not teach simply to impart information; you teach so that the Holy Spirit of God can use the truths of the Word of God to change the child of God into the image of the Son of God.

The Lesson Plan

Each *Life Design* lesson has three distinct parts. **GETTING STARTED** is the attention-getter. The questions and activities “set the table,” as it were, for the Bible study. **SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES** is the heart of the lesson. A series of inductive Bible study questions leads the teacher and learners through the Biblical text. **MAKING IT PERSONAL** applies the truth to life.

As is true of any teaching experience, you can adapt the parts of the lesson to fit your particular class. You may choose to alter the beginning activities or change

the focus of the application. You will find more material in the Bible study than you can cover in one class session. Ask God to help you as you tailor the lesson for your learners.

The Study Book

This leader’s guide is designed to accompany the Bible study book. As the teacher, you will want a copy of the Bible study. Commit to working through the questions before you plan your lesson. We encourage you to distribute Bible study books to your learners. Urge them to complete the study before class. The more your learners have studied on their own, the better the class discussions will be. When a question in the leader’s guide is picked up from the Bible study book, you will notice the question number in parentheses. The answers to the questions are usually in the lesson commentary. They are also grouped together in the back of this book.

Other Resources

If you want to use transparencies as you teach, a packet of sixteen full-color transparencies is available. If you prefer to use PowerPoint, the resource CD includes a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson.

Some teachers stay very close to the outline as they teach. If this is true of you, and if you want your learners to capture that outline, reproducible in-class worksheets are included on the CD. The same worksheets may be downloaded from the Web and photocopied for class members. Visit www.regularbaptistpress.org/downloads or www.rbpadultministries.org. Thank you for choosing *Life Design* teaching materials. May God richly bless you and your learners as you study and apply His Word.

Preface

Daniel, perhaps more than any other book in the Bible, presents the awesome fact that *Our God Reigns*. The book balances the simple, personal experiences of Daniel and his friends with grandiose, complex visions and prophetic images. Both serve to demonstrate that God rules over all.

As you study the familiar accounts as well as the prophecies, don't get lost in the simplicity of the one and the intricacies of the other. Focus on helping your learners understand the texts so that they will be able to grasp the meaning of God's reign in their lives.

Daniel bravely faced lions and lion-like kings as well as took in extraordinary scenes of future atrocities and triumphs. He did all this with an obedient, humble heart because he had learned to trust His reigning God. He didn't dare refuse his calling as God's prophet. He took God's rule personally and seriously.

Seek to foster in your learners the same seriousness for God's rule in their lives. Examine your own life as well as you prepare your lessons. Allow God's Word as to penetrate your heart and develop in you a humble awareness that *Our God Reigns*.

Resources for This Course

The transparency packet for this course (RBP0027) includes a transparency on which to record the summary statements from each lesson on Daniel. The transparency will help you track and review these lessons. Starting with lesson 1, use transparency 1 at the end of each lesson or at the beginning of the next lesson to record the summary statement for each lesson. You may use the suggestions in this leader's guide or ask your learners to suggest summary statements.

The Resource CD (RBP0028) for this course includes a PowerPoint presentation for each lesson. All of the transparencies are part of the PowerPoint presentation. The transparencies are also included on the CD as printable PDFs. If you would like to make your own transparencies or PowerPoint slides, the CD includes backgrounds ready for your own text.

To help in your promotion of this course, the CD includes a PowerPoint slide, posters, and a flyer. You can add your group's information to all of the promotional material.

The CD also provides in-class worksheets. Each in-class worksheet has a fill-in-the-blank outline that follows the corresponding outline in this leader's guide.

Other classroom resources on the CD include visuals and handouts. The leader's guide refers to each visual as a resource. Each resource is included in the corresponding PowerPoint presentation. Instructions on when to use the handouts are included in this leader's guide.

The CD also offers supplemental case studies. Each case study can be used as an in-class review, as material for a midweek Bible study, or as an e-mail attachment to your learners. E-mailing the case studies to your learners will emphasize living out the truth in daily life. You may want to enlist a learner to handle collecting e-mail addresses and e-mailing the case studies each week.

In addition, the CD includes a printable verse card for each lesson's key verse or verses. Blank verse cards are also included so you can enter different or additional verses for your learners to memorize. For your convenience, the verse cards are set for printing on Avery business cards. Use the Avery product number 8869 to avoid cutting apart the verse cards. You can find Avery business cards at avery.com. You could also simply print the verse cards on heavy paper and cut them apart using a paper cutter. Or you could e-mail the verse cards to your learners and have them print and cut their own.