

# The Development of God's Children

## The Life of Daniel

### Objective

Accounting for the development of Daniel is difficult. He first appears on the pages of scripture perceivably full-grown: poised, wise, and courageous, Daniel faces adversity with remarkable resilience. And because the scriptures are silent about his formative years, it is difficult to assess how he matured without resorting to conjecture. What we can do, however, is analyze the profound spiritual maturity Daniel displayed throughout his life, especially in his early life; compare that to how we are developing the current generation of young people, and judge whether, with God's help, we are en route to producing such men and women of God among us.

### Introduction

In Daniel's early years, he was forced to leave Israel and was taken to the pagan nation of Babylon where God would use him rather profoundly. We find ourselves in a similar but notably different situation. Rather than being literally captured and carried away into a godless culture, *our culture* has been captured and is being forcibly taken into the abyss of a dangerous and godless hedonism. Every major institution of our nation seems to be unraveling and spiraling deeper and deeper into a state of chaos and moral decay.

Grieved by this reality, it has left many Christians feeling increasingly bereft of a once strongly felt patriotism. Some Christians, stirred by this radical departure from our once Christian heritage and afraid for the future welfare of our nation, have begun aggressively voicing their disdain, and are contributing to an impassioned conversation that unintentionally alienates us from the very lost souls we are called to reach. Troubled and perplexed, it has left the silent majority of Christians wondering, "What do we do?"

Thankfully, this bewilderment places us in good company. The Bible and history are teeming with "...a great cloud of witnesses..." who, like us, faced what seemed like insurmountable odds. But rather than running scared or collapsing in despair, they "*walked by faith*" and "*ran with patience the race that was set before them.*" They resolved to trust God and His sovereign plan, come what may. We *must* do the same. We *must* teach our children to do the same. Because if the tempestuous waves of our culture continue to worsen, the development of this generation of young people will ultimately determine whether this precious faith we love so dearly exists in the United States of America any longer. And is there anything in this life worth fighting for more than the "...*joy of seeing our children walk in the truth*"?

### **Current State of Development**

We live in a culture today that discourages the spiritual development of young people and instead enables them to be as juvenile as possible for as long as possible. Childish and selfish, our nation is producing a generation of grown men obsessed with superheroes and video game fantasies; grown women striving for social media status and prom-queen-like popularity and acceptance; and a culture which excuses irresponsibility and encourages dependence into an embarrassingly later and later age.

All the while, the world is in need! Desperate need! In need of grown men and mature women to put away “childish things” and willingly tackle the complex spiritual and carnal issues of our day; giving their utmost devotion to causes infinitely more important than their own fleeting happiness. These are the types of people that should be produced among God’s people - *among us!* That when the world has a *real* problem, they know they can rely on God’s people to diligently seek and find a *real* solution.

In this lesson, we are going to dive into the book of Daniel chapter by chapter and point out a variety of Godly character traits and behaviors Daniel exhibited during his life. Qualities and behaviors which are needed among God’s people today, and which desperately need to be taught to our younger generation. Throughout each chapter I encourage you to ask yourself:

1. *What am I doing specifically to cultivate these character qualities in my children and grandchildren?*
2. *What is my church doing to cultivate these qualities among our young people?*

### **Context of the Book of Daniel**

- Daniel enters the biblical text presumably a teenager as he was forced to move to Babylon with other Jews at this time
- Babylon is a pagan nation at the height of its power and influence when the book of Daniel begins
- The book of Daniel is not in chronological order, but this lesson will attempt to place the chapters in chronological order (all dates and ages are approximate but very close)

### **Chapter 1 (605 B.C.- Daniel is approximately 15/16 years old)**

**Summary of Chapter:** After conquering Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar commands the master of the eunuchs (Ashpenaz) to select children of the nobles, “...*in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace...* (Daniel 1:4)” Upon doing so, the king renames them, insists they be given a 3 years Babylonian education and diet, and then be brought to serve in the king’s chambers.

**The Problem:** Conforming to the king's diet was in direct conflict with Jewish law. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah would have to either conform and break God's law or risk causing a disturbance and whatever punishment might follow.

- V. 8- *"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."*

**Character Qualities of Daniel:** Daniel shows excellence in learning and wisdom, faith in God's laws, resolve in the face of compromise, wisdom in issuing a solution, and leadership among his friends.

## **Chapter 2 (602 B.C.- Daniel is approximately 18/19 years old)**

**Summary of Chapter:** Legal injustice. If that sounds like a paradox, it is.

Nebuchadnezzar gave the wise men of Babylon (including Daniel and his friends) an ultimatum: tell me what I dreamed and interpret its meaning, or you will all die. Since he had absolute authority in Babylon, he had the legal right to make such a proclamation, despite how unjust it was to those to whom it was directed. Daniel requests the prayers of his peers, and seeks God for the answers *only God could give*, and is shown the dream and it's meaning while in prayer. He reveals this revelation to the king and is promoted in the kingdom.

**The 'Natural' Response:** *"The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, 'There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh (Daniel 2:10-11).'"*

**Daniel's Response:** *"... 'Why is the decree so hasty from the king?' Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: **That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 2:15-17).**"*

*"Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. **Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. Daniel answered and said, 'Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge***

*to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter (Daniel 2:19-22)."*

Daniel does not want credit or attention for answering the king, but puts a disclaimer on his interpretation by saying, "...*The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days...But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart (Daniel 2:28-30)."*

**Character Qualities of Daniel:** Daniel shows composure when he doesn't panic like the others, humility when he credits God in prayer and when he goes before the king, faith in prayer when he asks his friends to pray for him, and confidence that God would ultimately provide what he needed. Less noticeable but an important additional consideration is that Daniel did not use this opportunity to condemn the king or his other practices, but instead brought attention to the mightiness of His God. This plants a seed in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar which, after being watered in chapter 3 by Daniel's companions, and again by Daniel in chapter 4, eventually wins Nebuchadnezzar's heart and leads to his conversion.

### **Chapter 3 (587 B.C./Mid 30s)**

**Summary of Chapter-** Nebuchadnezzar builds an idol and commands everyone under his authority to bow down and worship the image. If anyone fails to comply, he will cast them into a fiery furnace. A group of Chaldeans inform the king that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship the image and so the king summons them before him.

**Three Hebrew Children's Response:** "*Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?...[they] answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up (Daniel 3:14;16-18)."*

**Character Qualities of Daniel:** *These* are Daniel's friends. Not enough can be said about having good, Godly, faith-filled friends. After God delivered these three men from the fiery furnace, for a second time, King Nebuchadnezzar is exposed to the integrity and faith of the Hebrew people, and the superiority of the Hebrew God.

#### **Chapter 4 (565 B.C./50s?)**

**Summary of Chapter:** Nebuchadnezzar recounts his experience of coming to God, and how Daniel played such an integral role in it. Nebuchadnezzar describes a dream that he doesn't understand and summons Daniel to interpret it. Daniel, troubled by the meaning of the dream, reluctantly reveals the meaning to the king and prophesies that Nebuchadnezzar will go insane, act like an animal, and have his mind restored at the end of 7 years. All of this would be done so Nebuchadnezzar would realize that God rules in the kingdoms of men. All of the prophecies Daniel makes happens as he predicted.

**Daniel's Response:** Because Daniel spoke the truth, King Nebuchadnezzar has seen at least three powerful displays of God's people speaking and standing firm on the truth and their God fulfilling His promises (Daniel interpreting the dreams, the Fiery Furnace, and this prophecy). A combination of these experiences so affect the king that he states the following:

*"And at the end of days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?...Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase (Daniel 4:34-35; 37)."*

#### **Chapters 7&8 (553-551 B.C./late 60s)**

**Summary of Chapter:** These two chapters take place over the course of three years and involve God revealing to Daniel certain prophecies about His future Kingdom (the church) and the nations which will have powerful rules in the future.

**Character Qualities of Daniel:** Daniel does not exalt himself due to God's revelation but instead kept the matter to himself (7:28) and continued faithfully serving the king as he was assigned (8:27). Daniel's humility after having such tremendous truths revealed is notable, and worth our emulation when God gifts us with His grace and understanding.

### Chapter 5 (539 B.C./80s)

**Summary of Chapter:** After the passage of many kings, Belshazzar reigns in Babylon and dishonors the vessels which were taken from the temple in Jerusalem. As a result, fingers appear in the midst of his drunken party and write a message which is indecipherable by the wise men of Babylon. The queen is eventually summoned and remembers a generation earlier how Daniel helped King Nebuchadnezzar discern the messages God was attempting to speak. She says the following:

*“O king, live forever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation (Daniel 5:10-12).”*

**Character Qualities of Daniel:** Daniel was not invited to the party! God used Daniel’s integrity and reputed character from earlier years to provide an opportunity to speak God’s Word to the king and all that were in attendance. Daniel was not “greedy of filthy lucre” but wanted to speak the truth for the sake of the truth, not personal gain. In a different time and setting, Daniel reappears as faithful and reliable as he was his entire life.

### Chapter 6 (539 B.C./80s)

**Summary of Chapter:** Under the new reign of the Medes and the Persians, the old man Daniel is seen as an excellent leader and counselor and is placed in a high position of authority under the reign of the new king, Darius. This creates envy and jealousy in the hearts of the other advisors and so they seek to catch Daniel in wrongdoing. Unable to catch him in sin, they premeditate a plan to unknowingly turn the king against Daniel by passing a law that states, “...whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions (Daniel 6:7).” Daniel refuses to obey the orders of the king and is cast into the den of lions where God rescues him.

**Character Qualities of Daniel:** Daniel is industrious and intelligent in his decision making (vs. 1-3). He is upright and a man of integrity insomuch that when people strove

to find an offense against him they couldn't (vs. 4-5). Do we live those types of lives? You can find imperfections, but can you find gross immoralities if people started snooping? "...As he had aforesaid..." (v. 10): If this was outlawed today would we begin a new defiant process or continue an already devoted practice? What about attending church? Being honest? Evangelizing? Praying? Reading a "censored" Bible? People who begin practicing religion in response to government or other forms of religious persecution are not doing it because they love God and communing with Him, but because they recoil at their rights being taken away. This stand isn't indicative of deeply held convictions, but defiance of authority. Daniel is not resentful toward the king (v. 21) Due to Daniel's faithfulness, a second king recognizes the God of the Jews as the true God of the world (vs. 25-28)

### **Chapter 9:1-23 (539 B.C./80s)**

**Summary of Chapter:** Daniel reads the book of Jeremiah and realizes that the 70 years of judgment God had decreed were finished and He was going to restore Jerusalem in some capacity. In verses 3-19 we read one of the Bible's most heart-wrenching prayers of repentance when Daniel seeks forgiveness for himself, his family, his deceased forefathers, and his nation.

**Character Qualities of Daniel:** This to me is the picture of a mature Christian who has run their course on Earth but still loves God and His people so much that He intercedes for them in the final days of his life. He would not personally benefit as a result of this prayer, but selflessly prayed it anyway. Humility, love, passion, and so many other admirable qualities are dripping from the pages of this chapter and ought to be qualities that our older Christians strive to display before our younger generations.

### **Chapters 9:24-12:13 (536 B.C./late 80s)**

**Summary of Chapter:** This portion of scripture is full of prophecies which are not directly related to the subject of our lesson.

### **Conclusion**

Daniel strove for excellence and was given a platform in the king's court (Chapter 1), he refused to compromise and was given the right to uphold the Jewish dietary regulations and keep the law of God (Chapter 1), he deferred the glory of men and instead gave credit to God for helping interpret the king's dreams (Chapter 2), he surrounded himself with godly friends whose faith matched his own and undoubtedly encouraged him to remain faithful to God (Chapter 3), he courageously and consistently spoke hard truth to the seat of power and after proclaiming this truth helped convert the king to the one true God (Chapter 4), He refused to glory in God's revelation and instead continued to be self-abasing and faithfully carried out the routine duties of the king (Chapter 7 and 8), he remained consistent over the course of a long life by not being

invited to a sinful party (Chapter 5), he spoke even harder truth to a new king and declared judgment on Belshazzar's sin (Chapter 5), he demonstrated an excellent spirit under new authority and was given another platform (Chapter 6), he again refused to compromise in his older age and demonstrated to the Median King Darius the superiority of the Jewish God (Daniel 6), and finally, he walked with God close enough in His late age to give us some of the most wonderful prophecies about the church, the end times, and the coming of the Messiah that can be read in all of scripture.

*“Lord, raise up among us more men and women like faithful Daniel!”*