

6 Examples of Representing God in a Hostile Culture (Dan. 1-6)

I. THE FIRST SIX CHAPTERS OF DANIEL: EXAMPLES OF DEDICATION (DAN. 1–6)

- A. The first section of the book of Daniel is historical (chapters 1-6). In each of the first six chapters we read about episodes in Daniel’s life that give us a picture of the values and lifestyle that the Lord is calling forerunners to embrace. These include wholehearted dedication, endurance in persecution by taking a stand for Jesus and His Word, and boldness to speak prophetically, even to secular authorities, as Daniel did when he interpreted the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar.
- B. The Lord is raising up forerunners who will give others understanding of God’s purpose and plan to expose the deceptive strategies of the enemy. Understanding the truth is essential in equipping God’s people, so that they are not deceived, confused, offended, fearful, or seduced by sin in the midst of the unique dynamics that will occur in the generation in which the Lord returns. Rather, the Lord’s people are to walk in clarity, peace, gratitude, confidence, and holy love.

II. DANIEL 1: EMBRACING A FASTED LIFESTYLE – DANIEL’S YOUTH

- A. In Daniel’s early days in Babylon, while still in their teen years, he and his friends refused to compromise. They set their heart to not defile themselves (Dan. 1:8).
⁸But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank... (Dan. 1:8)
- B. They were wholehearted in their dedication to the Lord all their days, starting in their youth. They embraced a fasted lifestyle in the face of certain pleasures that were available in Babylon, and they refused to compromise by yielding to the ungodly culture that they lived in. Overcoming peer pressure to conform is a challenge in every generation.
- C. Biblical fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual reasons. It is not merely a diet. It involves reducing the types and amount of food that we eat and increasing our time with the Lord.
- D. By fasting food, we position ourselves before the Lord ***so that our heart may be tenderized and become more sensitive***; thus, we are able to receive more from Him.
- E. Daniel’s lifestyle is a picture of the unusual dedication that God will call people to in this hour, even as the values and doctrine associated with the harlot Babylon (Rev. 17-18) are emerging in the midst of this pleasure-seeking generation. The resolve to live a fasted lifestyle positions us to grow faster and deeper in God and to receive more as the darkest hour of history approaches.
- F. Daniel fasted to position himself to encounter God more by continuing to pray (9:3), humble himself (10:12), renounce compromise (9:20), seek for greater insight into God’s love (9:23; 10:11, 19) and His end-time plan (7:16; 8:15-19; 9:2-3, 22-23; 10:1, 11-14; 11:33, 35; 12:4, 9-10), and to pray for a greater breakthrough in God’s purposes, including for Jerusalem (9:1-3).

- G. ***Practical:*** God calls some to a fasted lifestyle that affects how they approach food and pleasure.

III. DANIEL 2: RECEIVING THE WORD OF THE LORD IN CRISIS – THE KING’S STATUE

- A. As in Daniel’s day, God still desires to establish young prophetic voices to speak even to secular leaders. In Nebuchadnezzar’s second year, while Daniel was still a teen, the king had a prophetic dream that no one could interpret. Daniel and his friends sought the Lord and received the answer.

¹⁷Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret...¹⁹The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. (Dan. 2:17-19)

- B. The crisis of that hour was that King Nebuchadnezzar *demand*ed the interpretation of the dream from his leaders under the threat of death. The situation was very difficult, because the king refused to disclose the dream, so that no man could interpret it without God’s help (2:4-11).

- C. Only someone with an intimate relationship with God, someone who was close to His heart and attuned to His Spirit, could do what Nebuchadnezzar was asking.

¹⁴The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. (Ps. 25:14)

- D. Daniel and his godly friends sought the Lord, and He gave Daniel the interpretation (2:17-19).

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- E. There are some life and death situations that can only be answered by receiving the prophetic word of the Lord. In our day, the crisis may sometimes be economic, where situations arise that will result in many losing their jobs unless someone receives a word from God to answer the crisis. Or it may be a social crisis with tensions in the community, or riots in the streets that can only be answered by someone who receives a word from God.

- F. ***Practical:*** We are to seek the Lord for His answer in times of crisis and then be being willing to speak what the Lord says to secular leaders.

IV. DANIEL 3: BEING FAITHFUL WITNESSES – FACING A FIERY FURNACE

- A. We see the dedication of young people who were tested by fire when they refused to compromise. Daniel’s three friends refused to worship before Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, even when threatened with death. God delivered them from the fiery furnace.

- B. These men were no longer teens. They now held places of authority in the government. In other words, they took a stand for Jesus in the marketplace knowing it might cost them their jobs, their careers, or even their lives. God supernaturally intervened on their behalf, delivering them from the crisis—a fiery furnace. You may never face a literal furnace with fire, but you may face a fiery furnace of very difficult situations caused by taking a stand as a faithful witness for Jesus.

- C. The Lord is calling His people to be faithful witnesses, with great allegiance to Jesus' heart for the Church, Israel, and the nations. Our witness for truth must be clear, bold, fearless, and tender. God is raising up those who will be faithful witnesses to the truth (Rev. 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4).

¹¹“They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”... ¹⁷The dragon...went to make war with... [those] who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. 12:11, 17)

- D. The three men declared that while God was able to deliver them, yet even if He chose not to deliver them, they would stay loyal and faithful to Him. Unlike the three who were delivered from the fiery furnace, many end-time believers will die for standing for Jesus (Rev. 6:9-11).

¹⁷“...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” (Dan. 3:17-18)

- E. This story depicts the intensity of resolution that will be seen in the end-time Church when the Antichrist will demand the nations to worship his image or be killed (Rev. 13:12-18).

- F. **Practical:** To be willing to stand for Jesus in society and the workplace before secular authorities.

V. DANIEL 4: CALLING LEADERS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS – THE HUMBLED KING

- A. We see the sudden humbling of powerful world leaders related to prophetic words given directly to them. This fourth episode of Daniel's life occurred about 25 years after his friends were delivered from the fiery furnace (Dan. 3). Daniel was now in his forties.

- B. Daniel interpreted the king's dream and prophesied that the king would endure seven years of insanity, leading him to acknowledge the one true God before being returned to kingly authority.

- C. God will humble the world's most powerful leaders in the end times so that they might acknowledge His sovereignty over them and establish His purpose in their sphere of authority.

- D. Daniel warned the king that he must break off from his sins or he would be humbled. Nebuchadnezzar did not repent. About a year later he surveyed his accomplishment and concluded that his success was all due to his own great power. This resulted in a season of seven years in which God humbled him. In His mercy, God had given him a full year to repent (4:29).

- E. In the end times God will use His servants to prophesy to various leaders concerning His ways. He will intervene suddenly in their lives and humble them. It will require courage on the part of the Lord's messengers to call leaders to repentance.

- F. Jesus will humble the leaders of the nations who do not repent (Isa. 2:11-18; 10:12; 25:6).

- G. **Practical:** To be willing to speak to secular leaders about personal issues in their life.

VI. DANIEL 5: THE SUDDEN FALL OF GOVERNMENTS – BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

- A. This fifth event occurred while Daniel was in his early eighties. It began with a supernatural event during King Belshazzar's royal feast, in which he was desecrating the vessels once used in Solomon's temple.
- B. When Babylon was the most powerful nation on the earth, Daniel prophesied that it would fall suddenly. He warned the national leaders of Babylon that their nation was finished, and that it would soon be divided and given to the Persians.
²³And You have lifted yourself up against the Lord...²⁶God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it...²⁸Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. (Dan. 5:23-28)
- C. God released sudden judgment on the king and his nation by writing supernaturally on the palace wall. That very night, in October 539 BC, Babylon fell to Persia, and Belshazzar died.
- D. Not only were Belshazzar and his nobles profaning the vessels stolen from the temple by using them in a common setting, they were at the same time declaring the superiority of the gods they served (5:4). Yet it was not the strength of their gods that had delivered Jerusalem into their hands; it was God judging His people by giving them into the hands of the Babylonians.
- E. **Practical:** To be willing to speak to secular leaders about national issues.

VII. DANIEL 6: PERSECUTION AND DELIVERANCE – FACING A LION'S DEN

- A. Daniel 6 demonstrates costly obedience in the face of persecution and the threat of prison and death. This extraordinary obedience and faith was followed by supernatural deliverance. Daniel was delivered from the lion's den, from the very mouths of hungry lions.
- B. At this point Daniel was in his eighties, shortly after the fall of Belshazzar and during the reign of Darius (who was under King Cyrus). Darius had made Daniel one of his three primary leaders over the kingdom, inciting the jealousy of other Persian leaders. Thus they proposed a new law that the king authorized, which resulted in Daniel being forbidden to pray to the God of Israel.
- C. They planned a way to trap Daniel, knowing that he would never draw back on his personal devotion and commitment to prayer. Daniel stayed true to his prayer life, knowing that the new law was a scheme established because of their jealousy. Daniel's consecration in this situation expressed his lifelong commitment to prayer (6:10).
¹⁰Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. (Dan. 6:10)
- D. David warned rulers and lawmakers in the end times not to make decrees against God or refuse to pay homage to His king (Ps. 2:10-12). Believers in the end times will face official decrees and laws intended to prevent them from worshiping the Lord.
- E. **Practical:** To be willing to stand for Jesus in the workplace before secular authorities.