

Daniel Introduction and Chapter 1 - John Karmelich

1. Of all the books in the Old Testament, there is only one I know of where Jesus *commands* us to learn. Well, technically, he asks us to learn parts of it.
 - a) "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. [emphasis added] [text in parenthesis added] (Mark 13:14 NKJV)
 - i) Granted, this is a bit trivial, but I can't think of any other time in the New Testament where we are specifically told to *understand* something from the Old Testament, *without any further explanation*.
 - b) Therefore, if Jesus tells me to "understand," I'll take that as my marching orders to learn what Daniel said, and teach Daniel.
2. Welcome to my study of the Book of Daniel. I picked Daniel mainly because my last three Bible studies were all on narrative-type books. It was time for me to do something different.
 - a) I divide the 66 books of the Christian Bible into 4 different "types" or styles.
 - b) The first is narrative. Most of the books are straight, continuous stories. The four gospels fall into this category, as does most of the first half of the Old Testament.
 - c) The second type is prophecy. This is where the book does not focus on a straight forward narrative story, but the primary focus is to tell predictive things about the future. The main purpose of prophecy books is to validate the Bible, as a whole, as the Word of God, as well as teach us things about the nature of God.
 - i) Most of the latter-half of the Old Testament is prophecy books. In the New Testament, the only book that falls into this category is Revelation.
 - d) The third type is instructional. This is a book in which the primary focus is a set of instructions to be followed. I think of Leviticus and Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, and Paul's letters in the New Testament, for this category.
 - e) The fourth type is poetry and wisdom. These are books that are written in Hebrew "prose" or poetry-style. In English, we think of poetry as having rhymes. In Hebrew, poetry is two or more phrases joined as a common thought. Books like Job, the Psalms, Proverbs, and others fall into this category.
 - f) Now that I've broken that down, note that these categories overlap.
 - i) There is some narrative in the instructional books.
 - ii) There is some poetry in the prophetic books.
 - iii) There are instructional lessons in the poetry books.
 - iv) Okay, you get the idea. ☺
 - g) So what's my point? Well, after spending the last few years teaching three of the narrative books (Exodus, John, and Acts), it was time for me to take on a prophetic book, and I chose Daniel. Next, I'll probably do an instructional book or a poetry/wisdom book, just so I cover all the types.
3. Okay, why Daniel? What is so special about this book?
 - a) I can't think of any other book that is more familiar, to most Christians, and yet there is *always* so much more to learn.
 - b) The stories in Daniel are familiar to most Sunday school children. I would estimate that a vast majority of American adults are at least vaguely familiar with some of the stories in Daniel, yet the majority of Christians in this country could not tell you the significance of the prophecies in the book.

- c) On the other hand, there are Christians who are obsessed with the prophecies, but don't spend a lot of time meditating on the benefits of the narrative portions.
 - d) More than any other book of the Bible, *including Revelation*, Daniel covers the scope of world history, from God's perspective.
 - i) One of my promises to you is that by the time we finish Daniel, you will have a new perspective on reading the morning news! Daniel teaches us how to see the world, and world history, from God's perspective.
 - ii) The great evils that take place in the world will make more sense to you once you've completed a detailed study of Daniel.
4. It is important to understand how to "break down" the book of Daniel.
- a) The most important thing to know about the design of the book of Daniel, is this:
 - b) There are 12 chapters in Daniel.
 - i) There are six chapters dealing with the life of Daniel; and
 - ii) There are six appendix chapters that fill in more detail *during* those first six chapters.
 - c) Chapters 1-6 are mostly narrative-type chapters, although they do deal with prophecy.
 - d) Chapters 7-12 fill in some missing details from Chapters 1-6.
 - e) Remember also, when Daniel was written, there were no chapter numbers. In the Bible, the original text was one continuous story. The chapter breaks were inserted in the 12th century to help *us* find verses. The verse numbers were added in the 13th Century.
 - f) In the Catholic Bible, there are two additional chapters, plus additional text in Chapter 3. You will not find these chapters in the King James Version, or any of the modern translations. I do believe these chapters represent heresies and were not written by Daniel. When we get to the last lesson in Daniel, I'll talk a little more about this additional text.
5. The Book of Daniel, as stated is in two parts. First, there are six stories about Daniel's life and then there are six chapters focusing on end-time prophecy. Why both?
- a) One of the great mistakes Christian Bible readers make is focusing too much on one aspect of Daniel and not enough on another.
 - b) There are many people who love the traditional stories of Daniel in the lion's den and of Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace, but they spend little time studying the great prophetic chapters.
 - c) On the other hand, there are many (I'm guilty of this) who focus too much on the prophetic chapters and their end-time implications *and not enough time* on the narrative chapters where God shows the faith and maturity of Daniel.
 - d) One of the really important things to get out of Daniel is how *both aspects* of the book of Daniel (*growth/faith and prophecy*) are necessary and work together.
 - i) God gave Daniel the privilege of revealing to him all these wonderful facts about world history. But Daniel was *only* given that privilege after his faith was tested, in various situations.
 - ii) That is the lesson for us. If we want God to bless our lives and reveal great and wonderful things to us, we first need to *grow* in faith and *trust* in Him.
 - a) The Bible is full of wonderful blessings and promises to those who trust in God. God is *constantly* working on growing our trust in him in order to bestow more blessings upon us. The lessons God teaches Daniel in the first six chapters are *necessary* as a prerequisite to the prophecies God gives Daniel.
6. There is a danger I need to warn Bible students about: The danger of *over-familiarity*. To me, the book of Daniel is an old friend. Chapter 9 of Daniel is one of my favorites in the whole

Bible, and I could probably preach Chapter 9 off the top of my head, without any preparation. That, of course, is the danger.

a) If you have a strong familiarity with any of the aspects of Daniel, let us *all* pray to God for insight and wisdom. God wants us to constantly grow and mature as believers. That means not to rely on past accomplishments. It does not necessarily mean learning new “truths” as much as learning new “applications” for our lives.

7. Before I begin, I also want to talk a little about Daniel, the author.

a) There are a *lot* of liberal Bible “scholars” (I am using that word sarcastically) who deny that Daniel wrote the book of Daniel.

i) The main reason they cannot accept the authorship is because the prophecies (which simply means predictions) are *so* accurate, to accept Daniel as written by Daniel would mean accepting the Bible as the word of God, which they won’t do. Thus, the critics will say some other writers wrote it later, or other writers inserted the biblical history later.

ii) First of all, the opening sentence of this lesson is Jesus *quoting* Daniel. When you read Mark 13:14, you get the impression Jesus believed Daniel wrote Daniel. For me, if I believe in Jesus and what he said is true, then I have to believe in Daniel. If you don’t believe in Jesus, you have much bigger problems than the authorship of Daniel!

iii) Second, there is the issue of the “Septuagint.” About 270 years before Jesus was born, the common language of the people of Israel was Greek. Therefore, 70 Rabbi scholars took it upon themselves to translate the entire Old Testament, into Greek. The word “Septuagint” means “70.” The translation included the book of Daniel. A lot of the prophecies that Daniel predicted, with great accuracy, had not happened when the Septuagint was completed.

iv) Further, six copies of Daniel were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls date back to the 1st and 2nd Century BC. The fragments match the oldest copies we have of Daniel.

8. Now that I’ve talked for a few pages about Daniel, as a whole, let’s talk a little about Daniel, Chapter 1.

a) In this chapter, we have the story of Daniel and three of his buddies being taken prisoner to Babylon. Babylon was a city, and the center of an empire. It is located in modern Iraq. (As a side note, Saddam Hussein worked on rebuilding the City of Babylon, on and off, for 10-15 years, but we’ll talk about that later!)

i) The Babylonians were conquering the territory of present day Israel, one city at a time. Jerusalem was “captured and destroyed” in three stages. In the final stage, the city itself was leveled to the ground. In the first stage, Daniel and his buddies were deported to Babylon.

ii) The King of Babylon, whose name was Nebuchadnezzar, decides to pick the best of the captives for training in his royal palace. Daniel and his three buddies are among the elite chosen for this role.

iii) Daniel tells his master to allow him and his three friends to “eat only vegetables” for a ten-day period. After ten days, these four guys are just as healthy as all the other captives are.

a) The story is a miracle of God preserving them, as a reward for their obedience to the Jewish law.

iv) Most commentators believe Daniel and his three friends were teenagers when Chapter 1 was written. The Book of Daniel spans about a 70-year history. Daniel was still alive at the end of this time span. Therefore, he could not have

been very old when this chapter takes place. Daniel was probably in his mid-teens in Chapter 1, and in his 80s by the end of Daniel.

9. Daniel 1 is a great chapter for parents to read to their children, as well as for adults to study and contemplate.
 - a) Daniel has great lessons in “standing up for what is right” and “not compromising your principles.” Daniel reminds us to choose between pleasing God and pleasing people.
10. Well, after three full pages of introduction, what do you say we break down and actually start *going through* Daniel? ☺
11. Chapter 1, Verse 1: In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.
 - a) Historians are fairly certain of the date of this event, which is 605 BC.
 - i) At the time, there was a war between the Babylonians and the Egyptian Empire. Realize that “Israel” for the past few centuries was divided into two kingdoms, the north and the south. The North Kingdom was destroyed and scattered a century earlier by the Assyrian Empire. The Southern Kingdom (a.k.a. Judah) was still there and was led by King Jehoiakim.
 - a) King Jehoiakim was aligned with Egypt. The Egyptians placed him in power. Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt in a major battle, and was now going after Judah, who was loyal to Egypt.
 - b) “Nebuchadnezzar” is a mouthful. Usually, it is pronounced “Neb-ee-cand-nez-er.”
 - i) Nebuchadnezzar is a Hebrew transliteration of the Babylonian name Nebukudduri-utzur, which means “Nebu protects the crown.” (David Guzik)
 - ii) I won’t even attempt to pronounce “Nebukudduriutzur.” ☺
 - c) Years in the Old Testament were marked by the reigns of kings. In the books of 1st and 2nd Kings, you will see references like “in the third year of King Ahaz.”
 - i) The modern Hebrew calendar, which estimates time based on Adam to the present, was not used until relatively recent times. The year 2002 (when this study was written) was the Hebrew year 5762.
 - d) The prophets Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel overlap each other’s ministries.
 - i) Jeremiah prophesied in Israel after Daniel was deported to Babylon. Remember that Babylon made three separate “attacks” on Jerusalem. In the first one, Daniel was taken away. By the third one, Jerusalem was leveled.
 - ii) Ezekiel was taken in the second deportation. He prophesied from “the streets of Babylon” while Daniel was in the court of the king. Ezekiel referenced Daniel in his book. (Ezekiel 14:14, 14:20 and 28:3)
 - iii) There is an interesting quote about King Nebuchadnezzar, by Jeremiah:
 - a) “Now I (God) will hand all your countries (Israel, surrounding nations) over to *my servant* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him. [emphasis added] (Jeremiah 27:6 NIV)
 - b) Notice God calls Nebuchadnezzar “my servant.” This is a Gentile king who destroyed Israel! And God calls him “my servant.”
 - c) Was Nebuchadnezzar aware of this “fact” when Jeremiah said this?
 - d) Was Nebuchadnezzar aware of this when Daniel was in his presence?
 - (1) The answer is neither. In a few chapters, which happens years later, we’ll learn that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that the “God of Israel” is above all other Gods.
 - e) The point is simply that God *uses* people for his will; the same way God “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” In Exodus.

- (1) "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." (Proverbs 21:1 NIV)
- f) Does this mean we are still accountable to God if he can "control" our thoughts? I would argue yes. God still holds us accountable for our actions, and has the capability of using our enemies for judgment.
- (1) I like to think of it as "God knows all things." God can plant thoughts in our heads, but it is up to us to act upon them. That is the best I can do to reconcile "free will" with God's eternal plan for our lives.
- e) Last thing, why did God allow Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem? What about all the innocent children that died because of the immorality of the adults?
- i) First of all, I do believe all children are saved, and God judges fairly.
- a) For support, study the story of David/Bathsheba, and the child born out of adultery in 2 Samuel, Chapter 12. When the child was dying, David fasted and prayed. When the child died, David ate again. In Verse 23, David said he would "go to him" (the child) in the resurrection.
- ii) "Sin" shares its consequences with innocent people. When God established the law, it was a "two-way" agreement. The Israelites agreed to keep the law. God promised to punish them and send them away if they failed to obey. Right before all this began, Judah (the Southern Kingdom) had sunk to its lowest point.
- f) Again, lets look at what was said about Nebuchadnezzar, in the book of Jeremiah.
- i) "Now I will hand all your countries over to *my servant* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; I will make even the wild animals subject to him." [emphasis added] (Jeremiah 27:6 NIV)
- ii) God refers to Nebuchadnezzar as "his servant" *three* times, in Jeremiah: (25:9, 27:6, and 43:10). Isn't it interesting that God refers to a Gentile king who, at this point in his life, doesn't even know God, as "his servant"?
- iii) The lesson to be learned is that God can (and does) use anybody he wants. Nebuchadnezzar may not have been aware God was using him, but he was. God works in this way, throughout history.
- a) History is often called "His-story," referring to the works of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament leads up to the appearance, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Time, since that event, has focused on the growth of the church and God working on growing "the body of Christ."
- b) All through history God has worked *through* people. God also uses the people we least expect, for his glory.
12. Verse 2: And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his (Nebuchadnezzar's) hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.
- a) Imagine what a defeat this had to be to the average Jew living in the Southern Kingdom. They believed in God. They had this great temple. They knew that the Bible promised that a Messiah would be set up and rule from this temple. Now they had to watch this evil, heathen empire carry away the temple "furniture" of the true and living God into the temple of a false god.
- i) The Jews are right, in that the Messiah will one day reign from the temple. All of that is true and will happen in the future. (To borrow a cliché that means I'm very sure of this, "bank on it!" ☺)

- ii) The problem with Israel, at the time, is that they were putting trust in *human abilities* rather than in God. Remember they had made an alliance with Egypt in order to protect themselves from the Babylonians, as opposed to trusting in God. They were trusting in the *existence* of the temple which stood until the final Babylonian conquest, as opposed to God, the *maker* of the temple.
 - iii) The great lesson to heed is always, beyond God, *what else* am I trusting in? The Old Testament prophets preached how the Jewish people went into idolatry over and over again, always turning their backs on God. With God destroying Judah here, albeit for 70 years before they returned, God was disciplining his people *for their own good*. God does the same with us, but usually not in as dramatic a fashion. God loves us too much *not* to discipline us!
13. Verse 3: "Then the king (Nebuchadnezzar) ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians."
- a) In this, the first attack on Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar deported a lot of the royal families to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar then gave the order to have the best young men of the group trained in all the ways of the Babylonians so they could be his servants.
 - i) Nebuchadnezzar was thinking, "why should I waste good prisoners in jail?" This is why he took the young, influential ones with lots of potential and sent them to "Babylonian University" for further training. They were to learn the culture and the language of the Babylonians.
 - b) Notice the qualifications for "Babylonian U." The king wanted men who had no physical defects or handicaps, were good looking, quick to understand (or have what we call a "high IQ" or intelligence quotient), and qualified to serve in the king's palace (referring to loyalty).
 - i) This is a perfect description of how men judge man. These qualifications sound like a combination of Harvard University and Hollywood actor casting call mixed together. The world judges people based on good looks, high IQs, and physical imperfections. This is glorifying the creature, rather than the creator.
 - a) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. *The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*" [emphasis added] (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV)
 - b) In Verse 6 we will be introduced to the heroes of this story, which are Daniel and his three friends. They were chosen among this group. The point is that God *gave* them these qualifications as God wanted to *use* them as witnesses to Nebuchadnezzar, and to us, as examples of how to behave in these situations. One does not need these qualifications in order to be used by God.
 - ii) I heard a great quote from Alistair Begg on this verse: "I'm sure when Daniel dreamed of going to college, Babylonia U did not make his top 20 choices."
 - a) What he meant by that is, sometimes God puts us in situations we don't expect. God expects us to adapt to whatever situation he puts us in without compromising our principles or our beliefs in God.
14. Verse 5: The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.
- a) There are "perks" to being trained at "Babylonian U," as I call it. The king was enticing these young men from all over his empire to abandon their previous lifestyle,

their previous religions, and previous cultures in order to adapt to the ways of the Babylonians. The enticement for them was that they would now be part of the Babylonian privileged class. If you don't know, that's what "brainwashing" is!

i) Most of you can see where I'm going with this. ☺ Satan does that to us. The devil offers "the best the world has to offer" in order to entice us away from the true and living God. Some of the most ungodly men I've ever met are very rich and/or very good-looking and/or very intelligent. (Intelligent, being the ability to think quickly; having nothing to do with wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to apply the knowledge you have.)

a) It doesn't mean God can't give you any of these skills, talents or gifts. The key is, are you using them to glorify yourself, or God?

15. Verse 6: Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

a) Here we meet the star of the book, Daniel, and his three supporting cast members, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

b) Remember that the Babylonians wanted these trainees to forget their pasts. To help in that regard, the captives were given new names. Thus:

i) Daniel was to be called "Belteshazzar"; Hananiah called Shadrach; Mishael called Meshach; and Azariah called Abednego.

ii) One of the neat little things to notice about Daniel, who wrote this book, is that he *always* refers to himself as Daniel. He only uses the Babylonian name, "Belteshazzar," when he is speaking in the third person. Daniel never forgets his original identity, which is associated with the true God of Israel!

a) Other people can call you what they want, but how you view yourself is what is important to God!

16. Verse 8: But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

a) We can see already Daniel standing up for his beliefs. Despite the temptation of the best food in the house, he desired to keep "kosher" and honor the God of Israel.

i) In Leviticus, Chapter 11, God lays out a list of certain types of animals that are okay and forbidden to eat. Daniel, from his childhood, knew this list.

ii) "Kosher" is actually a broader term than as specified in Leviticus, Chapter 11. It refers to how food is to be prepared as well as food combination choices.

b) Give some credit to Daniel's parents and his "youth ministers." Daniel was a teenage boy, hundreds of miles from home. He had been deported, and saw his homeland conquered. Despite the temptations of another culture and world, Daniel stood up for the principles that he had been taught as a boy.

i) Remember that when you train up your children. They may rebel against going to church, but there may come a day, when you least expect it (as with Daniel), where that training will pay off.

a) There is a great little half-a-verse in Proverbs 31. In this chapter, God talks about what the ideal Christian woman:

(1) "Her children arise and call her blessed..." (Proverbs 31:28a NIV)

(2) Let's face it. I don't know too many children who rise up in the morning and say, "bless you mom, thank you for all your hard work and training." Let's just say my daughters don't do that to me! ☺ *That* doesn't come until years later, during the hard times when they *recall and need* that training, that it is appreciated.

- (a) The same applies in sending your children off to school or off with their neighbors and friends. *Then* is when all the training pays off.
 - c) Last thing to point out: Why “take a stand” over food?
 - i) Of all the things to stand up and say “no” to, why this? Why not go all the way and say “no” to attending Babylon U? How about the opposite extreme of not doing anything at all and just “go with the flow” without even mentioning your religious convictions to anyone?
 - ii) Daniel is setting a great example of what God expects of *us*, as we are his witnesses to the world: Balance! God expects us to do enough that people notice we are different, that we live by a higher set of standards than the world.
 - a) On the other hand, he does *not* want us to go to either extreme. One extreme for Daniel would be to go into complete rebellion and run away. That same extreme applies for Christians. God does not want us to avoid the world and live in our turtle shell. He expects us to interact.
 - b) The other extreme is to not do anything. For Daniel, this would be to go along with *whatever* his instructors tell him to do. For us, today, this would be to adapt to society and never live differently.
 - (1) Here are some good questions and points to ponder:
 - (a) If someone asked your neighbor if you were a Christian, would their answer be yes?
 - (b) How would they know?
 - (c) Are you somehow different?
 - (d) If you are totally ignoring your neighbors because of your piousness or your neighbors have no idea you are a Christian, in either case, you are being a bad witness to them!
17. Verse 9: Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel.
- a) Daniel was defying the direct orders of his superior officers. For Daniel to take a stand and not eat what was commanded of him could mean not only the loss of privileges but, possibly, the loss of his life.
 - i) The same holds true for Daniel’s superior officer. If his boss allowed Daniel to eat only his foods, that officer’s life would be on the line, too. Remember that there’s no biblical law against say learning in a foreign place. It was a problem when Daniel had to eat food dedicated to idols. He is showing his loyalty to God by what he picked!
 - b) Now reread this verse. *God caused* the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel. *God rewarded* Daniel’s obedience by allowing his superior to grant Daniel’s request.
 - c) I can’t tell you how often I see God work this way. It is only *after* we take a stand for God and are *willing* to accept the consequences no matter what, that God does marvelous and miraculous work in our lives.
18. Verse 10: but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."
- a) There is a classic Sunday school line that goes with this verse: “Hey Daniel, I’m trying to *get* ahead, not *lose* a head. Go with the program!” The problem with Daniel’s teacher is he feared a man (Nebuchadnezzar) more of God.
 - b) Let’s face it, the “boss” was not a born-again Christian. He didn’t have the spirit of God or the Bible, to believe “God is in control.” It is okay to disobey authority if it violates the Word of God, realizing that we may have to face the consequences for that!

- c) Daniel was being a witness to the official. *This* is how we are witnesses to the world around us! It is through our actions, more than our statement of faith, that causes people to react. The official was focusing on the situation, not on God, and naturally, he was fearful for his life.
19. Verse 11: Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.
- a) Daniel took a step of faith. He said, "All right, here's an idea. Let me and my buddies go on a veggie diet for ten days, and after that, check our weight and energy levels."
- i) It takes guts to stand up to your teacher and say, "let me tell you how you can test us." Especially if that person has the power to throw you in jail, or worse!
- b) Daniel made enough of an impression on him, that he was willing to listen.
- c) Daniel also picked an issue (proper foods) that was not such an extreme request, but a reasonable one, to stand up for God. It wasn't like Daniel was asking for time off from school so he could go to a Jewish seminary! He agreed to all the studies, but chose the food issue as a way to show others that the God of Israel is the God of all gods.
- d) Remember Verse 9: "Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel." God softened the heart of Daniel's instructors so this guy would agree to Daniel's ten-day test.
- i) I find that God works on *both* ends of the equation. If God has placed it in your heart to accomplish his will, he will often clear the path and change people's hearts in order to make his will be accomplished.
- e) Notice in these verses how Daniel was a witness to his three buddies, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. I suspect Daniel was the leader of this group. It was Daniel's idea to do the food test. I can just see their three heads nodding up and down as they agreed, as Daniel was explaining his ten-day idea to their friends.
- i) In Daniel 3, we'll read a chapter about these three guys *without* any reference to Daniel himself. I suspect Daniel was an inspiration to them and their faith.
- ii) There is a classical Christian hymn, by Philip P. Bliss, called "Dare to be a Daniel." This verse is an excellent example of that principal. Because Daniel had the courage to stand up for his faith, I believe that courage spread to Daniel's three friends. It is a great example of leadership by example, as well as standing up for your principals.
20. Verse 15: At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.
- a) This is not a recommendation for a vegetable-only diet. ☺ I believe this was a miracle by God. God *used* Daniel's test as an example to show his glory. God is in control over all human nature, including your body!
- b) I kept thinking about the long-term temptation of this verse. Remember, in Verse 5, that Daniel and his three friends were to study at "Babylonian U" for three years. It is one thing to keep up a "veggies-only-no-dessert-for-me-thank-you" diet for ten days, but try going three years without your favorite dessert! That alone would keep me dependent upon God on a moment-by-moment basis! Now think back to your teenage years, when you wanted to explore and try new things. Here was Daniel and his three friends not having any drink or new foods to try. *That* is a testimony to Daniel's faith in God, as well as a testimony to those who raised Daniel.

21. Verse 17: 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.
- a) God blessed them for taking a stand. For being a witness to the other captives and teachers at “Babylonian U,” God gave all four of them the gift of understanding.
 - i) Ever met the kind of person who barely studies, yet gets As? That is the “gift of understanding.” It is simply the ability to comprehend a lot of stuff.
 - b) To all students out there, reading this notes, this verse is not a support for lack of study. Some people might read this and think that if they don’t quite “get” algebra (or whatever), then God just didn’t give them the ability to understand, like he did Daniel and his friends.
 - i) I’m sure these four guys still had to study. God gave them the ability to learn quickly, but they still had to *apply* that gift and put the study time in, however short.
 - c) Notice, the education is secular. This is good support that it is “okay” to study things other than the Bible. (You would be surprised what some Bible-thumpers preach!) The points we always need to ponder, are:
 - i) What is God calling me to do; and
 - ii) Is what I am doing glorifying God.
 - d) God works this way in our lives, too. I find when we seek God, he rewards us for our obedience. Not because we’re special for doing this, but because God *always* wants to take us to the “next level.” I always describe Christians or people who God wants to build and mold into his desire for our lives, as “construction projects.” As we mature and turn more and more aspects of our lives over to him, God blesses us with special gifts that we can continue to use for his benefit.
 - e) Daniel himself is given a gift over and above the others: The ability to interpret dreams. This is a spiritual gift that is only spoken of by Joseph and Daniel in the Bible.
 - f) So why did God give Daniel and his three friends these gifts?
 - i) The answer is always to glorify God. We’ll read, in Chapter 2, that God gave this gift to Daniel so he could tell Nebuchadnezzar that his God is the *true* God.
 - ii) The instructors over Daniel and his three friends *knew* that they were still loyal to their God, by proof of their diet choice. I’m sure the instructors became well aware of the gift of these men to comprehend knowledge quickly.
 - iii) The point is, God blesses us with special talents and gifts in order for us to use them to glorify God, not ourselves.
22. Verse 18: At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.
- a) We now fast-forward three years in time, to graduation day. King Nebuchadnezzar gives the final exam himself. He interviews the students to see who is qualified for what job after all of the education.
 - b) Daniel says that he and his three friends were “ten times better” than anyone else. I wonder how they determined that. Was there a written test, and did they actually get a score ten times greater than the others?
 - i) “Hey Bob, tough final exam. I didn’t do very well. I got 89. Tom over there got 99. That’s the highest score I’ve heard. What did you get? You got 1,000? Wow, that’s amazing.” ☺

- ii) I suspect the truth was more like King Nebuchadnezzar saying, “These four guys are ten times smarter than anyone else I’ve interviewed.” Knowing the king’s ego, as we’ll discover in the remainder of this chapter, I’m sure he stated this out loud for everyone to hear.
 - a) I know I’m speculating here, but to me, when King Nebuchadnezzar said found them “ten times better,” than anyone else, I bet Daniel had a “flashback” to three years earlier, when he had asked for the ten-day test. I believe God was reminding Daniel how proud he was of him for taking that stand with the “ten” reference.
 - c) There is an old biblical expression that “God will be a debtor to no man.”
 - i) What is meant by that is you cannot out-give God. I’ve never met a person in my life who has gone broke by giving too much of his money or his time to God. Daniel stood by his convictions for the three years in “graduate school,” and God made him ten times smarter than anyone else on his final exams.
 - ii) David said, “I have been young and now I am old. And in all my years I have never seen the Lord forsake a man who loves him; nor have I seen the children of the godly go hungry.” (Psalm 37:25, The Living Bible)
 - d) Another interesting question is that Daniel was found better than “all the magicians and enchanters.” The Old Testament strictly forbids a Jew to study enchantment due to its satanic origins.
 - i) The text says that Daniel was *wiser* than these guys, but not that Daniel actually studied these arts.
 - a) Hey, it’s a trivial point, but Bible critics will use that as an argument against the authority of scripture! ☺
23. Lastly, Verse 21: And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.
- a) This verse shows that Daniel either wrote this chapter near the end of his life or added this verse many years later. King Cyrus was a Persian King. The Persians conquered the Babylonians. At that time, Daniel probably went back to Jerusalem.
 - i) From the time Daniel was taken captive to the time of King Cyrus was close to 70 years.
 - b) I doubt Daniel suspected, when he had this little adventure at the King’s palace, that he would be spending the next 70 years or so in Babylon.
24. If I had to pick, my favorite applications from these first few chapters would be:
- a) First, Daniel’s leadership. Daniel took a stand for what is right. That stand became a good witness, not only to his captors, but to Daniel’s three friends, as well.
 - b) Second, Daniel’s use of his spiritual gifts to glorify God. God gives special gifts to *all* believers. They are discussed in 1st Corinthians 12-14, et al. Part of the joy of Christianity is discovering *what* your gift is, and using it for God’s glory.
 - c) Lastly, use of this chapter as a model for raising godly children, or being a witness to other children in your church. Here was Daniel, 700 miles away from his home and culture, using his early childhood training to stand up for what is right.
 - i) We, as Americans, send *our* children off “to Babylon” in the public school system or simply out in the world after they have grown up. Daniel’s parents and teachers deserve great rewards in heaven. Like Daniel’s unnamed parents, you never know if and when your children or the children you influence will stand up for God. This chapter is testament to the importance of raising your children right.
25. For those of you new to my studies, I hope you enjoyed this and are looking forward to lesson two. Remember to pray as you read these notes and let the Holy Spirit inspire your learning.

Let's pray: Father, we thank you for these lessons you have taught on Daniel. Give us the discipleship to stand up for our convictions. Give us the wisdom for the decisions we have to make as we walk in the world, but not be a part of it. Like Daniel, help us to be good examples to the world around us that committing your life to God is far greater than anything else the world has to offer. For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.