

Purpose

Daniel 1: 18 At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

INTRODUCTION:

It's 605 BC – Babylon is new world superpower—King Nebuchadnezzar – Comes to Jerusalem, capital of Israel and defeats it but...lets it alone – except taxes and takes a few select young men of royal blood.

Puts them through intense deprogramming ... designed to wipe out any trace of past... Judaism... nationalistic fervor.

New education, new philosophies, Babylonian dress, Babylonian language, Babylonian everything.

Even new names.

Now I want you to get this whole situation in your mind.

These boys are about 16, have never been away from home more than 20 miles, have never lived anywhere but at home, have never “been to town” so to speak and are as green as a turnip that just fell off the wagon.

They don't know the first thing about the big city.

Here they are in this mega city, filled with all types of people, stuff happening round the clock, all kinds of activities and businesses like they have never seen. And EVIL!!!! Prostitutes, con men, pickpockets, businesses that offer everything the flesh can desire

And as a part of their deprogramming and reprogramming... they are allowed... no encouraged to “eat, drink and be merry.”

Imagine four sixteen-year-old boys from the backwoods all of the sudden plopped down in Las Vegas with pockets full of money and told “Go for it.”

These four boys were not the only captives taken and put through the deprogramming... you can be sure the others were going for it, with a gusto!!!

To top it all off... these boy's families were far away and had no idea what they were doing. They were denied contact.

These boys were told, "What happens in Babylon...and When in Babylon..."

The other boys were surely saying, "Everybody's doing it."

THEN... as part of their deprogramming and reprogramming... they were put on a very special diet of food and wine straight from the King's table.

And the royal dieticians... the experts... said it was good for them and what is a 16 year of boy supposed to do... be impressed and intimidated.

And probably the other boys did.

It was good... only the best! It looked good, it smelled good and it tasted good.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE PROBLEM -- IT WAS UNCLEAN... NOT KOSHER

So, what were these wet behind the ears teenagers going to do?

Listen to what they did...maybe one of the greatest verses in the whole bible...

"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..." Daniel 1:8

I don't know if you have learned any bible verses lately but today is a good day to learn this one.

Now Daniel was raised right by his parents and you can see it here. He respected his elders and those in authority over him, so he politely went to the dietician and explained his dilemma and proposed a ten-day test.

They would eat only veggies and drink water and after 10 days, if they did not look and perform as well as the others, there was plenty of time for the dietician to get them back on the royal diet before they were to face final exams.

They passed with flying colors.



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Rest of the story;

God blessed Daniel and his friends because of their faithfulness and obedience, and they rose in the government. Daniel especially rose because God especially blessed him because of his dedication.

The king reorganized his government with 120 governors and over them he placed three presidents... each overseeing 40 governors.

Daniel, however, distinguished himself even above the other two presidents and the King planned to create a new cabinet position which would place Daniel above all of the other politicians... over the 120 governors and the three presidents.

The other two governors were afraid. They hated Daniel because he was a foreigner, and they were jealous of how the King respected Daniel.

They decided something had to be done about Daniel. They began to look for some chink in his armor, some fault, some weakness they could point out and cause Daniel to lose some of his sparkle in the king's eyes. They wanted to have him removed... or at least not raised up over them.

But they could find no fault... God was blessing him.

So, they decided to entrap Daniel. They would set up a sting operation, some situation where Daniel would be found guilty. But they went past just tarnishing his image... now they wanted to kill him.

So they devised a plan to have the King sign a royal decree (under the law of the Medes and Persians if the King made a decree it could not be changed by anyone... not even the King) that it was a capital crime for anyone to pray to any god except Nebuchadnezzar for 30 days. Anyone who did, would be thrown in the lion's den.



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They knew that Daniel prayed three times a day in his house with the windows opened towards Jerusalem. They planned to catch him in the act of praying and that would be the end of Daniel.

Sure enough, right on schedule, Daniel opened the windows and knelt in prayer to God.

Sure enough, they burst in, arrested Daniel and drug him before the King to be sentenced. The King was saddened to see how the others had entrapped him. He wanted to change the law, but the others pointed out that they had him over a barrel. Nebuchadnezzar resented the political trappers... but he was trapped.

He sent Daniel to the lion's den and sealed the door. First though, he spoke with Daniel and expressed his hope that Daniel's God was strong enough to save Daniel.

He was and He did!!

The lions did not harm him.

The King was up all night, walking the floor and refusing any comfort. Before it was light, he had waited as long as he could and went to the lion's den and called out to Daniel. It was a desperate call not the call of faith.

To his great delight, Daniel answered, "Long live the King, I am alive and well."

The King had the door opened and Daniel brought out. Then he embraced him.

Now... his resentment over being tricked and forced to do this...boiled over and he had the plotters, and their families, cast in the den and they were all killed.

Now, quickly... what is the lesson?

PURPOSING

QUESTION: Why did Daniel have the courage and strength to do the right thing when the consequences were so great?

Not even his three friends, who had already shown they had great faith by facing the fiery furnace, are in the lion's den... did they not pray???

The answer is found not in this story... but way back in **1:8**

“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself...”

Let me give you a life principle and you need to write this down and burn it into your mind

Commitments are not made in the heat of battle but before the battle begins.

The decision not to defile yourself sexually is not made in the back seat of a car in the heat of passion... they are made before, when you can think clearly.

The decision not to defile yourself with alcohol is not made in the middle of a party when all of your friends are drinking and pressure is on you to drink... they are made before you go to the party, when you are alone with God and you draw the line there

The decision not to defile yourself is not made once you have gotten with your gossiping friends and have a piece of gossip that you know is too good to keep ... it is made in the prayer closet where you confess your sin and purpose in your heart to be pure

The decision not to defile yourself is not made while you surf the web and the pictures are already on your screen or in your mind... it is made long before you get there when you purpose in your heart not to defile yourself with the internet's filth

The farther away from the temptation you are... the easier it is to draw the line

The closer you get to the temptation, the harder it is to avoid stepping over the line

Here is what I believe happened.

BACK IN JERUSALEM... before the fall, before the kidnapping... Daniel's parents helped to instill in him right and wrong... godliness and sin

They helped him to see that the heat was coming when it would be hard to draw the line



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And in that positively charged environment of Godliness... Daniel made a decision, drew the line of what he would and would not do... He would be true to God and his laws.

He made that decision while he was in the safety and security of his parent's home, he made that commitment when he was in a place that would lead him to think rightly.

POINT: He made the decision, drew the line BEFORE he was faced with the situation... then it would be too late... like for the other Hebrew boys.

That is important... draw the line while the ground is soft

But that is not all we can learn from Daniel. Another reason he made the right decision, the God honoring decision is...

He looked at the situation through the lens of God's Word

He knew God's Word and he knew what it said about eating those foods and what it said about praying to God

His friends looked through the lens of situational ethics... when in Rome, everyone is doing it, what is wrong with a little compromise, who is going to know

He looked through the lens of the bible and he could not be deceived.

And there is yet one more thing to learn from Daniel and I think this is the most important point.

POINT: Daniel purposed in his heart.

Some versions of the bible don't say, "He purposed"

The use words like Determined, decided, made up his mind, or resolved

Those are good words and give us the same message.

But I prefer "He purposed" because I think it gives a new understanding which the others do not.

What does “to purpose” mean?

Dictionary.com says it means... that as a noun, purpose means “end, aim or goal”

And as a verb “to purpose” means “to set as an end, aim or goal

DANIEL HAD A PURPOSE... and that purpose was to please God

With all respect to Nancy Reagan, “JUST SAY NO” is a terrible strategy for success

Against drugs, sex, violence, pornography, or anything else

You cannot just say no... eventually you will say yes

What we need to learn from Daniel is that you cannot just say NO... you must say YES

True, you have to say NO to sin if we want to please God

But the strategy to Just Say No is one that is doomed to failure

Let me illustrate:

The JUST SAY NO approach to temptation is like the one-legged approach to tug-of-war

Sure, you can say no (resist) but it is a weak fight.

What do I need to put up a good fight? THE OTHER LEG!!!!

In our struggle against temptation what is the other leg? SAYING YES

Saying yes means having a purpose... a goal or an aim... something bigger to which you are committed.

I can try the just say no approach and I may win against small competition, but if I am going to win in the big struggle, I need to add the other leg... saying YES.

Which gives me more strength???

NO (standing on one foot)

1 Determine in your heart not to defile yourself

Decide where to draw the line

2 Look at the situation through the lens of God's Word

3 PURPOSE in your heart... have a purpose in your heart

To what will you say YES?