

Dare to be a Daniel

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[0 : 00] Daniel in the lion's den.

Daniel end up in the lion's den. We're going to take a look at what took Daniel to the lion's den and sustained him there. I'd like to revisit that with you today to introduce you to the man Daniel.

The Daniel of the Bible and take a look at what made him tick. Right from his youth, Daniel endured some hard things. As a lad, he was ripped out, taken captive out of his homeland and taken over to Babylon.

Along with three of his friends, Hananoah, Mishael and Azaria. They were just teenagers. They were just teenagers, taken from their homeland to Babylon.

With its strange culture, a land full of idols, lots of pressure and temptation. Even the king, King Nebuchadnezzar, recognised something in these men, in Daniel and his three friends.

[1 : 32] And he personally handpicked them out of the crowd to serve him. And he offered them the very best education of his day. He wanted Daniel and his three friends to learn the lingo and the lifestyle of the Babylonians.

To switch them over from being children of Israel to the lifestyle of the Babylonians.

To the Babylonians' way of thinking. The Babylonians' way of living. And the king appointed a man, Ashpenaz, to take charge of these intelligent young men.

And put them through a three-year training program. The University of Babylon, you couldn't think of it. And here was Daniel and his three friends. They stood out. There was something about them. How they handled themselves. We could do well to learn from them today. King Nebuchadnezzar, you could call him, saw them in this fashion.

[2 : 41] He described or thought of them in this fashion. Daniel chapter 1 verse 4. Children 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. And whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

They had character, wisdom and ability. King Nebuchadnezzar saw that. And he wanted to change them. He started by changing their names. Changing these boys' names into the names of pagan gods.

And King Nebuchadnezzar assigned daily food and wine from his own table. But we notice one thing right here from the start that stood out about Daniel.

Right here. Daniel's separation. The Bible shows us how, as God's dear people, we are to be a separated people.

[3 : 47] A separate people made useful for him. Separated to God's will and God's way for our lives. And Daniel 1 verse 8 says how, 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.

There was something there. He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. He purposed in his heart.

He decided. He made up his mind. He determined to obey the word of God. He made up his mind. He would not defile himself. He couldn't drink wine.

Or eat certain foods against God's law. Here they were, 300 miles away. 300 miles away from their homeland. 300 miles away from godly influences.

Exposed to all that the world had to offer. But as a teenager, Daniel said, I'm not going to defile myself. I'm not going to do what's wrong before God.

[4 : 57] I don't care what it costs. I don't care how hard it is. He was determined to obey God no matter what. He wanted to keep clean. You know, the Bible talks about being unspotted from the world.

Now, if you look carefully at my shirt, I'm not going to point it out, but my shirt's got a spot on it. It's me spotted. That's not perfect anymore. It's one of the shirts I really like. But if you look close enough, there's a spot on it.

But how about you? About us? God wants you to be unspotted. Unspotted from the world. Separated. And of course, we know we've all got baggage back there where we came from. But from here on, can't we aspire to that? Amen. And so we see, here was these ones. Daniel and his friends.

As a teenager, he was determined to keep clean. Now, the world is defiled. Think of the world. Dirty language. Dirty minds.

[6 : 05] Dirty habits. It's all around us, isn't it? Daniel treasured God's word in his heart so that he would not sin. It says we can hide it in our hearts, the word of God.

It'll keep us from sin. Daniel wanted a clean heart. He wanted that. And he made some choices there. And that's the courage we need, isn't it? In this world, as Peter's been telling us earlier, this world, in this chaotic, Christless condition, more than ever before.

Just as they did then, really. We're living in a culture that's held bent against God. Daniel said, I'm going to do what is right.

He purposed in his heart. He made up his mind. He stood firm. Daniel and his friends had the spirit of excellence, if you like. They did not waver. They did not follow the crowd.

They didn't go with what was popular and trendy. They didn't go along with the popular culture. Biblical separation makes a stand.

[7 : 13] It doesn't bow down to worldly pressure. It says, I'm not going to go along so I can get along. I'm not going to join in with the worldly crowd.

I'm going to separate from what is error, what is compromise. I'm not going to soil myself and my testimony with what is questionable, with what the pagan world is doing.

I'm willing to be different. And so God honoured Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and their faith as they obeyed the Lord. These young men chose rather to please God than to bow down to an idol.

They would rather honour God. They were strong and courageous. We're not going to go into that particular story. But we know the three men went through the furnace and they came out glowing for God.

They were strong and courageous. They acted with commitment and integrity. They'd rather burn than bow down. And God honoured their faith. As they stood firm as a separated people.

[8 : 23] Daniel had an excellent spirit. And it showed true in the spiritual discernment and wisdom that he had. Daniel 5 verse 12, we read of that. Daniel was a man of courage.

A man of conviction. We'll pick up the story again now. Some later time. We're going to visit Daniel as he approaches the lion's den.

And hear about what happened. Here is Daniel. He's in his later years now. He's aged some say about 90. So just a little bit older than me. And he's still God's choice.

He's still the king's choice to be prime minister of the land. And now he is serving under a new king. King Darius. And King Darius sets him in a high office.

Notice here what it stands out about Daniel. We've seen Daniel's separation. Now we're going to look at Daniel's spirit. Daniel's spirit.

[9 : 21] The king saw something about Daniel. He saw that Daniel had an excellent spirit. Verse 3 of chapter 6. And this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes because an excellent spirit was in him.

And the king thought to set him over the whole realm. As someone has noted, I've got to quote the passage here, Daniel served in high positions of the pagan government for more than 60 years of his life.

This was an incredible achievement for a Jew. And in the ancient times, a new king would often kill all the advisors of the previous king to reduce the chance of upheavals and revolts.

In spite of that, though, Daniel was chosen to serve four successive kings. He was recognised by four kings. The Bible even recorded that at least three of these four kings promoted Daniel to one of the highest positions of authority and trust.

Why? Simply because Daniel had excellence and lasting quality. As Daniel grew older, he did not become useless and ineffective.

[10:36] He maintained his cutting edge by renewing his mind in the spirit and not conforming himself to the worldly standards. His thoughts and ideas were not obsolete and outdated.

He remained faithful to God and man. There was no error or fault found in him. And when his bosses wanted something done, they could count on Daniel to deliver the goods.

They knew who to go to. Daniel did all things with excellence. Not a trace of sloppiness could be found in any of his works. He had lasting quality.

Lasting quality. Lasting quality. I know someone was asking me lately for some tips for a job interview. Some tips for a job interview. And I happened not long after that to read something about what gets people a job.

And it's not so much experience. You can have tons and tons and tons of experience. It's about the quality of your character. It's about whether people can rely on you.

[11:39] It's whether you've got that excellent spirit. That's what Daniel had. Amen. And that will get you a job. When people know what you're made of. And it's got a quality to it.

There's an excellence to it. And people will notice that. That's happened in some ways to me. I'm virtually doing the job of what was to me.

I'm doing that job. Because it was recognised in me. And likewise too. Strive for that excellent spirit. So we go on in Daniel 11.32.

Let us be as these people. Daniel wrote of them. The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.

If we do, we will stand out from the crowd. Like it was when Nebuchadnezzar found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They stood out from all the others.

[12:37] Head and shoulders above them. There was an excellence there. They had a different spirit. And when you are a person of excellence, God will use you. Consider this word excellence now.

It speaks of going beyond expectations. Going beyond the norm. Going beyond the standard. To exceed the average. To be first rate. A1. Top quality.

Being your best. That's excellence, isn't it? Not to settle for second rate. He calls us to excellence. To honour and please him. With the best.

With all that we have. Back to Daniel. Here's the lead up to how faithful Daniel ended up in the lion's den. The presidents and princes got jealous. They wanted to bring him down.

Chapter 6 verse 4. Daniel was faithful.

[13:41] And King Darius saw that. He commented on that later in verse 16. How Daniel served God continuously. He wasn't a part time Christian.

There's no such thing. You don't clock on and clock off your Christianity. You don't hang up your Christianity at the door when you go out. Into the world. Monday morning.

You're a Christian. Right through. Amen. And King Darius saw Daniel's faithfulness. There was a constancy about him. About his life.

Verse 16. Which is not here but. Verse 5. I then said these men. We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel. Except we find it against him. Concerning the law. Of his God.

They searched and searched. And they couldn't find anything. They were turning the place upside down. With all their knowledge of Daniel. But they found him blameless. Faithful.

[14:36] Even Daniel's enemies knew. He was faithful. Full of faith. They couldn't find an error or a fault in him. He was above reproach. That's how we should be isn't it?

So that when someone tells me about Peter. They don't say. Guess what about Peter? He's a bit of a con artist. He puts on a front of the church. And you should see what he's like amongst the boys. Amongst the blokes. No. He's a 24 by 7 Christian. That's what we want to be isn't it? We want to be like Daniel don't we? That's what we should be like.

He was not corrupt or careless. Daniel's separation. Daniel's spirit. Stood him in good stead. He didn't have any skeletons in his cupboard. Or maybe before he was saved.

As we all do. Of course. But when he was saved. He was saved. Gloriously saved. He was not corrupt or careless. He was dependable. And what he did for God.

[15:31] Whatever he did. Everything he did. He did it with excellence. He had an excellent spirit. We should aspire to that. To be a man. A woman. Of honour.

Of integrity. Honest. Noble. They found no fault with Daniel. No corruption. They couldn't find anything to pin on him. That he'd done. That he shouldn't have done.

Nor anything that he should have done. That he didn't do. They couldn't find anything. Nothing. And the only thing they thought they could use against Daniel. Was his very commitment to God. His total commitment. We've seen Daniel's separation. We've seen Daniel's spirit. An excellent spirit was in him. An excellent spirit was in him. Now we see Daniel's steadfastness. Daniel's steadfastness. And they couldn't find anything against Daniel. Nothing. There was nothing. The only hope they had was to use something about Daniel to their own advantage.
[16:33] Because they knew that Daniel held fast to the word of God. Daniel's life was lived steadfast. He was steadfast. He was steadfast in the scriptures.

He would not defile himself. He wanted to stand strong and squarely for God. He was steadfast in prayer. As we'll come to. In that close communion with God.

And the jealous officials saw Daniel. And they talked to Darius the king. And they conned the king into making a law banning prayer.

Other than to Darius. Of course you can pray to Darius. This man. But to pray to anyone else.

That's how we're going to catch Daniel. They said. This is going to be a binding decree.

A law. And it's totally aimed at getting Daniel into trouble. That no one should make a request of anyone. For 30 days. Only of the king.

[17:28] So verse 10 we read on. Now when Daniel knew the writing was signed. The decree was out there. He went into his house. And his windows being open in his chamber.

Towards Jerusalem. He knelt down upon his knees. Three times a day. And prayed. And gave thanks before his God. As he always had. He was steadfast in prayer.

He wasn't putting it on. He was steadfast. It was his practice. It was his habit. To pray. He was a praying man. And he publicly prayed. Three times a day. Daniel wasn't about to lessen his devotion for Noah.

Even to save his own neck. And his accusers used Daniel's steadfast faith against him. So here were these enemies.

They plotted against Daniel. They found him guilty. He was a blessing. Of breaking the law. By praying. And he was condemned. In accordance with the decree. To be cast into.

[18:25] A den of. Roar. Lions. He was going to be cast into the den of lions. To become lunch for the lions. Here were these lions salivating.

Just the thought. Of some. Fresh food. And these are real lions. Hungry lions. Some of you have seen some lions. I'm sure. These were lions.

Lots of lions. And King Darius was torn here. He had to carry through with his edict. But he loved Daniel. Daniel's steadfast faith.

Had impacted even. This pagan king. Verse 16. Then the king commanded. And they brought Daniel. And cast him into the den of lions.

Now the king spoke. And said unto Daniel. Thy God. Whom thou servest continually. He will deliver thee. Amen. And a stone was brought.

[19:22] And laid upon the mouth of the den. And the king sealed it with his own signet. And with the signet of his lords. That the purpose might not be changed. Concerning Daniel. So here he was.

Shut in this den. A stone across the entry. Verse 18. Then the king went to his palace. And passed the night fasting. Neither were instruments of music brought before him.

And his sleep went from him. He just had a restless sleep. Just thinking. What's going on with Daniel? Verse 19. Then the king arose very early in the morning. And went in haste unto the den of lions.

And when he came to the den. He cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel. And the king spoke and said to Daniel. O Daniel. Servant of the living God. Is thy God whom thou servest continually. Able to deliver thee from the lions. And in verse 20. The king calls out this call. And he calls Daniel a servant of the living God.

[20:22] Amen. Daniel. Daniel. Servant of the living God. This king knew that Daniel had a higher loyalty. And when it came down to who he was going to obey.

God or man. Daniel squarely put his loyalty to God first. And so should we. Shouldn't we? Amen. No matter what it takes.

That's an excellent spirit at work brothers and sisters. Right there. Our allegiance is to the higher power. The highest power. And when you have an excellent spirit. Brother.

Sister. When you have an excellent spirit. It will be evident in your loyalty. And will people recognise that in you? Maybe they haven't in the past.

Maybe you can make a decision. From this point. I'm going to live it. Not pretend it. I'm going to live it. I'm going to live it. Daniel lived it.

[21 : 18] And people recognised who he belonged to. He was a servant of the living God. Daniel. Servant of the living God. That's what the king called him.

Verse 21. Then said Daniel unto the king. O king live forever. My God has sent his angel and has shut the lions mouths. Though they have not hurt me. You know these slobbering slaving lions with their fangs.

God shut their mouths. They could just go. That is the best they could do. They couldn't even roar anymore. And so.

God shut the lions mouths. So that they have not hurt me. He says. And for as much as before him. Innocency was found in me. And also before thee. O king. Have I done no hurt.

He wasn't out to wrong the king. He just wanted to honour the Lord. So he believed God. And God honoured his steadfast faith. That's the point here. Verse 23. There was the king exceeding glad for him.

[22 : 16] And commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den. And no manner of hurt was found upon him. Because he believed in his God. I don't know if those lions came up and slathered all over him.

But they couldn't get their mouths open. So he was unhurt. And when they lifted him out. There was no manner of hurt. Because he believed in his God. Now it would be the accuser's turn.

To visit the. Lions. So verse 24. And the king commanded. And they brought those men which had accused Daniel. And they cast them into the den of lions.

Them. Their children. And their wives. And the lions had the mastery of them. And broke all their bones in pieces. Or ever they ever came at the bottom of the den.

These lions were so hungry. And ferocious. They shredded them. Before they even hit the ground. Pretty horrific isn't it?

[23 : 16] Next the king makes another decree. Daniel's excellent spirit had an impact now. On the whole nation. Verse 25. Then the king Darius. Writes unto all people.

Nations and languages that dwell. In all the earth. Peace be multiplied unto you. He's written us a letter here. To all people. So even.

We wrote this to even to Aussies. Even before we were. Yeah. But. He says. I will make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom. Men tremble in fear before the God of Daniel.

Amen. For he is the living God. And steadfast forever. Amen. And his kingdom. That which shall not be destroyed. And his dominion. Shall be even unto the end.

He delivereth and rescueth. And he worketh signs and wonders in heaven. And in earth. Who had delivered Daniel. From the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius.

[24 : 13] And in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. Daniel was unbending. Even as he faced the real threat. Of these real lions. In the lion's den. Daniel's separation came from.

His heart's purpose. Why? Daniel purposed. In. His heart. Daniel's spirit. Was excellent. Daniel's faith.

Was steadfast. Character matters. Brothers and sisters. And that's what God wants for us. He wants that for us. To bless us with our integrity. You know.

Wednesday nights. We've been talking about character. Last time. And it's important. To have that. Aspiration. Daniel had an excellent spirit. He was obedient to God. Faithful.

Without fault. People will notice that in you. You're not going to have to put it on. You're going to have to pray for strength. To maintain it. But you will excel.

[25 : 09] As a Christian man. As a Christian woman. Where you live. And work. And go about your business. So. Your actions will speak louder than words. And if you're going to look for someone.

To take on for a job. What would you look for? Again. Most important is character. And attitude. It's the spirit of a man. Would you recruit someone.

With a bad attitude. Even if they had a doctorate. Someone who's lazy. A liar. A drunk. What if you needed a doctor. Would you go to someone like that.

They might be the most highly qualified around. They might be the bee's knees. Or what if you wanted a mechanic. You had someone who was. Cursing and swearing. Foul mouthed.

And unreliable. Bad attitude. Would you go to them? What would you look for. When you're looking for someone. Somebody who's fair.

[26 : 03] And honest. Somebody who's got to tell you the truth. Daniel was recognised for his excellence. For his faith. For his faithfulness. And the king set him. In high office. Daniel 6 verse 3. He was preferred.

Above the presidents and princes. Because an excellent spirit. Was in him. Daniel was wise. Faithful. Blameless. People are going to recognise that in you. And God will help you. To have that unwavering faith. To determine to do right. Even when it's hard. Even if it's a den of lions. That awaits you. Even if you might lose your job. A person with an excellent spirit. Someone who can be trusted. He will do right. There's a saying that is. It's better to have a handshake. From a man of integrity. Than a signed contract. From a man lacking integrity. It's not worth the paper it's written on. Is it? Daniel had an unbending desire. To obey the word of God. Without reservation. So friends.

[27 : 00] Think of this now. We've heard about Daniel. In the lion's den. Let's make it personal now. Will you purpose. In your home. In your heart. In your heart.

Not to defile yourself. Will you strive to have an excellent spirit. Will you have a heart that's true and steadfast. In your commitment to Christ. In your heart life. In your thought life.

In your home life. One day we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Not for our salvation. But an acknowledgement of what we've done with our salvation.

What we've done with it. When we aim for excellence. Because of who we serve. He's got our loyalty.

Of who we represent. We're on this planet for him. People are watching you. And they judge Christ and Christianity. By what you do. And don't do.

[27 : 57] There's no higher realm than this. There's no higher calling. There's no higher responsibility. No higher reward. And so let's care about the excellence. Of our spiritual lives.

Of our growth. That God gets all the praise. He deserves our best. So we dare not give him less. So let's be the best we can be. For our Lord.

I know Julie has got this phrase that she's picked up from somewhere. Functioning in excellence. She was in some women's group. And they had this slogan. That everything they did would be just perfect.

Not a chair out of place. And the tablecloths all nicely flattened. Everything just little flowers here and there. Like women do. You know.

Everything was just right. Functioning. In excellence. I'd like to see. I'd like to see me being a bit more excellent.

[28 : 57] You know. We started 10 minutes late this morning. I know that we could do better as a church. And friends. Let's aim for that. Can't we? To do all to the glory of God. Daniel chose it.

He chose to obey God. To follow. To not defile himself. He aspired to that purity. To maintain it. His faithfulness. He stood firm. In pagan Babylon.

In prayerfulness. He got godly friends around him. That's what we need too. Brothers and sisters. Get some godly friends around you. To help you. And you can help them.

You can pat them on the back. And you can give them a bit of a tug. To pull them along. Let's give God our best. Not our second best. To have that attitude. We're going to function in excellence. Not. That's good enough. Not. She'll be right man. Oh. It's near enough. Good enough. I've said that a few times. But let's not be like that man. Amen. We should aspire to better than that.

[29 : 54] Shouldn't we? For what is right. For what is excellent. Paul compared the Christian life to the determination of an athlete. A champion athlete. Philipians 3. 14.

I press toward the mark. For the prize of the calling of God in Christ Jesus. He said I'm going to press forward. I'm going to steadily, determinedly, steadfastly press forward.

And to push every muscle to the limit. To strain every nerve and fibre of my being. To reach that finish line. And he that has begun a good work in you shall complete.

Yes. He will help you get across that line. Amen. Even if you crawl across the line. Amen. He's going to help you get across that line. But let's be ones who will aspire to reach that goal.

He says this one thing I do. This one thing I do. He had a one track attitude didn't he? He had that one purpose. That one critical factor of his life.

[30 : 53] I press toward the mark. For the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He had that commitment to excellence. And so there's much more we could say. If you look back in the Old Testament times.

They gave their best didn't they? Not a substandard lame sheep. But the best of the flock. To honour the Lord with the best that we have. So choose our best.

Think of Mark 14. There's a story of a woman who gave her best. She had an excellent spirit too. She broke the jar. Poured the perfume on our Lord's head. She wanted to show the Lord Jesus how much she loved him.

Amen. This very expensive perfume. Some have reckoned it's worth a year's wages. This was no little token effort. It was the most expensive thing that she owned.

She could have used cheaper perfume. She could have watered it down maybe. Found something cheaper. But no she wanted to give her very best. She wanted to be excellent.

[31 : 51] Women of God here today. God wants you to be excellent. To give of your best. She could have just taken a little bit and dabbed it on Jesus' feet and kept the rest for herself.

But she wanted to give her everything to him. And so she broke that valuable jar. Broke it and poured it. All of it on the head of Jesus.

Good enough. Wasn't good enough for her. To show her love to her Saviour. And so should we. We should know that excellence that Daniel had.

That this woman had. In Mark 14. Daniel shows us how to give of our very best.

He lived a consistent life. From start to finish. As a teenager. He chose not to defile himself. He purposed in his heart.

[32 : 45] And then in his old age. 90. He lived and breathed excellence. A life of faithfulness. Of prayerfulness. Of integrity. Of walking with God. Ask yourself.

Again. I can say for myself. There's things I look back on. I think. I blew it. I fouled up. I made a mess of my Christian life. I could have done better.

But we could all think. I'm going to press towards the mark. Amen. Can you say that? I'm going to press towards the mark. You're going to give your best. You're going to have purpose in your heart. Even in a culture that's godless. And so easy to get spotted. It's like spots fly all over us. We walk down the world. And our thinking gets spotted.

As we see some sign or some media. And let's aspire to have a clean heart before God. And choose every day to be such a one.

[33 : 45] As Daniel did. He risked his very life. The lion's den. It will cost you to take up your cross and follow Jesus. To be such a person of conviction.

What kind of a church will we be? Are we going to function in excellence? I'd like us to. I'd like to think we can lift the bar. Not so we're going to put people down.

But so we can build each other up. Amen. Not so we can act holier than thou. But because we love our Lord. We want to be our very best for him. We want to bless him.

We want to give our utmost for him. And not be slack. These are days that call for people to be firm and resolute. You see as Paul wound up 1 Corinthians.

He said therefore my beloved brethren. Be steadfast. Unmovable. Always abounding. In the work of the Lord. For as much as you know that.

[34 : 41] Your labour is not in vain. In the Lord. Always abounding. It's got a sense of excelling. Over and above. Always be outstanding. Be excellent.

So we can learn from Daniel. In the lion's den. Before the lion's den. And after the lion's den. He shows us how we can brave the lions in our lives. And we can learn from Daniel.

We can learn. Just to recap real quick. Daniel's separation. He purposed in his heart. Not to defile himself. We can learn from Daniel's spirit. An excellent spirit was in him.

And thirdly we can see his steadfastness. He prayed. And he kept on praying. He was faithful. So friends today. Just to wrap up. And we've closed with this. Dare to be a Daniel.

Dare to be a Daniel. Dare to stand alone. Dare to have a purpose firm. Dare to make it known. Dare to be a Daniel. Let us pray. Let us pray.