

How to be a man of God in a world of sin

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[0:00] Dare to be a Daniel, a man of God. It says of him in Daniel chapter 6 and verse 3, '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.'

Excellence. Daniel was a man of excellence. Excellence speaks of quality, of worth, of value. Daniel had an excellent spirit. He's a model of excellence, of being first class, of being the best.

Do we have an excellence of spirit? How can we live a life of excellence? We're going to take a walk through some of the life of Daniel and see how he showed an excellent spirit.

Daniel had an excellent spirit in his purpose. We see that if you'd like to turn with me to Daniel chapter 1. Right from his youth. The book opens with Daniel taken captive to Babylon, a foreign nation, Babylon, an ungodly nation, along with his Israelite friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Daniel was taken captive to Babylon with its strange culture, a land full of idols. Lots of pressure and temptation were to face him there. King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Ashpenaz, one of his officials, to take these intelligent young men, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

[1:46] In this area, these intelligent four young men were taken through a three year training program. They were just teenagers chosen to serve the king. Only teenagers, young men, offered the best education of their day, offered to eat from the king's table.

And Daniel 1 verse 4 tells us there, describing these men, 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.

The king saw their potential. These guys had talent. They had potential. And he wanted to teach them. He wanted them to learn the lingo and the lifestyle of the Babylonians.

He wanted them to be trained up, to switch them over to his way of thinking and living. He changed the boys' names to the names of pagan gods, and he assigned daily food and wine from his table. Daniel 1 verse 8, 'But Daniel, But Daniel, He had all this happening, But Daniel, instead of joining in that, Daniel purposed in his heart, He decided, He made up his mind, He determined to obey the word of God.'

[3:30] He couldn't drink wine, Or eat certain foods, Against God's law. He made up his mind, That he would not defile himself. He would not dirty himself.

He wouldn't defile himself. Daniel treasured God's word in his heart, So that he would not sin. And here they were, 300 miles away from their homeland, 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 going to do what's right before God, Not what's wrong. I don't care what it costs.

It was a costly step. It was a tremendous step of faith and courage, That he and the others took. He was determined to obey God, No matter what.

That's the courage that we need today, In a culture that's hell bent, Against God. He purposed in his heart. He stood firm. He made up his mind.

[4:34] He said, I'm going to do what's right. Daniel and his friends, Had a spirit of excellence. They did not waver. They did not follow the crowd.

They did not go along, With popular culture. How about you? Am I willing to be different, From the pagan world? God honoured Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, And their faith as they obeyed the Lord.

These young men, Later it talks of an instance where, The king set up a big idol, And he commanded everybody, When he struck his band, And the music played, They all had to bow down, To this great big golden idol.

A huge statue of the king. And they all had to bow down, With their faces to the ground, And worship this big golden image, Of the king.

But these young men, They chose rather to please God, Than to obey the king, And bow down to an idol. And it's interesting when you think, Perhaps their parents had instilled, This faith in them.

[5:44] We see this character, In their names, Their Hebrew names. Daniel means God is judge. Hananiah means God is gracious. Mishael means, Who or what is like the Lord, And Azariah, The Lord is my help.

Our names have a meaning. The parents, Must have named these boys, With that commitment, With that faith. They were strong and courageous. They acted with commitment, And integrity. In Daniel chapter 1 verse 17, God gave them knowledge, And skill, In all learning, And wisdom. And Daniel had understanding, In all visions and dreams.

Through the book of Daniel, We see that he was used, In wonderful, Miraculous ways, As he interpreted, Signs and visions, And was led by the Lord, To do wonderful things.

And Proverbs 17 says, He that hath knowledge, Spareth his words, And a man of understanding, Is of an excellent spirit. Daniel was a man, With understanding.

[6:50] We all need understanding, And knowledge. And Daniel was such a man. In chapter 1 verse 20 of Daniel, It says that, The king found, None equal to them.

Daniel and the others, In their wisdom, And understanding. And he appointed them, To his service. So Daniel, He had a purpose. He had an excellent spirit. And he had a purpose.

He purposed. He decided, To do right. And Daniel had an excellent spirit, In his public testimony too. In his public testimony, As we look, Towards the end of his life, Towards the latter years of his life.

It says of Daniel, Through the book of Daniel, He had many important, Responsibilities. He reached high office, In the governments of his day. As the governor of Babylon, For Nebuchadnezzar, As ruler of a third, Of Belshazzar's kingdom.

And Darius the meek too, Made him one of his three presidents. And even thought to set him, Over his whole kingdom. And at this time, While serving Darius, The other presidents and leaders, Turned, And plotted against Daniel.

[7:57] In Daniel's later years, Here he was, Some say he was probably, About 90 years old. He's still God's choice, He's still the king's choice, To be prime minister.

And though we later in life, We've still got much, That we can do to serve the Lord. There's no retirement, In the kingdom of God. Older ones, God has still got much, For you to do.

There's still, While you're alive, While you've got breath, You've got something, That you can do. Men and women, Who are older today, To serve the Lord, And to be a fruitful witness for him.

And Daniel was, A person, With an excellent spirit, In his public testimony. Here they were, He'd been in public office, He was well known, People knew who he was.

As he walked about, And as he administered, His responsibilities, In the responsible positions, That he had. If anybody could have, Been a target, For scandal, For gossip, For criticism, Daniel must have been in.

[9:00] And he had, Some enemies now. In Daniel chapter 6, Verse 4, Then the presidents, And princes, Sought to find occasion, Against Daniel. They sought to find, They wanted to find, Some dirt on him.

They wanted to catch him out, And find something to, Make a scandal about him, Concerning the kingdom. But they could find, None occasion, Nor fault.

For as much as he was faithful, Neither was there, Any error, Or fault, Found in him. Even Daniel's enemies, Knew that he was faithful. They couldn't find, An error, Or a fault.

Now that's got the sense, That they couldn't find, Something that he'd done wrong, And they couldn't find, Something that he should have done, That he didn't do. He did everything, That he should have done right too. Because there's, As some have put it, The sins of commission, Like the bad things that we do, And the sins of omission, The things that we should do, That we don't do.

But Daniel had neither of those, He had an excellent spirit, A man of honour, And integrity, Honest and noble. They found no fault, No corruption, No error.

[10:04] He'd done everything right. They couldn't find, Anything that he did, That he shouldn't have done, Nor anything that he didn't do, That he should have done. They couldn't find anything. The only thing that they thought, They could use against him, Was his total commitment, To God.

They couldn't find anything else. If there was anything, They would have found it, And they couldn't. His accusers swayed the king, And they said, King, Let's make a law, That people can't, Make a request of anyone, For 30 days, Except of you.

They wanted to, Puff up, King Nebuchadnezzar, Make him feel good, And say, Nobody can ask anybody anything, They've got to ask you. And the whole point of that law, Was aimed at getting Daniel, Into trouble.

Because Daniel, Was a praying man. He was a praying man. He prayed. He publicly prayed, Three times a day. And Daniel's enemies, Caught him in the act. They found him guilty, Of breaking the law, By praying.

And made prayer, Against the law basically, And Daniel was caught out. He was condemned, In accordance with the decree, With the royal decree, The royal law, To be cast, Into the den of lions.

[11:15] To become lunch, For the lions. And these are real lions. Hungry lions. Lots of them. Commentators put it, There must have been lots of these lions, Because later on you see, How quickly they ate up the other people.

And in verse 22, We see what happened. Here he was, Daniel, In this den of, Hungry, Slobbering, Slaving lions. You know, Starving, Hungry lions, And wanted to have some food to eat.

Here was Daniel, Thrown into the midst of them. Verse 22, At the end result we see, Daniel says, My God, Has sent his angel, And has shut the lions' mouths.

When they lifted him out, There was not a scratch on him. No manner of hurt, Because he believed in his God. He believed God, And God honoured his faith.

God was with him, And helped him through that great trial. And then it was Daniel's accuser's turn, To visit the lions. And the lions were so hungry and ferocious, They shredded them before they ever hit the ground.

[12:23] But Daniel was miraculously protected. And then the king made a decree in Daniel 6, 26, That in every dominion of my kingdom, Men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, For he is the living God, And steadfast forever, And his kingdom, That which shall not be destroyed, And his dominion shall be even unto the end.

Daniel had an excellent spirit. An excellent spirit. He had, as I said, An excellent spirit in his purpose, In his decision, In his determination, To not defile himself, To not dirty himself, But to be right and true.

He had an excellent spirit In his public testimony, In his public testimony, That the world around him, Could not find any fault with him, Despite him being a public figure.

His public testimony, He was fair dinkum. He was true blue. He was real and genuine. In front of people, And at home. And out of church.

In church, He was the same man. He was true. And real. And that's what we need to be too, Isn't it? Have an excellent spirit, That someone who, They get their spies out, And they, You know, They watch you with their binoculars, And they take their, You know, Their zoom lens, And hide behind the bushes, And watch you, As you go down the street.

[13:46] Or as they, They might have, You know, They might put listening devices, Listening devices, Into the, Into the furniture at home, To see if you're going to swear.

Maybe they're going to, Maybe they might put a little bug on you. So when, When you're not watching, Just quickly click a little bug, A little listening device on your clothes. So that when you're walking around, They can't hear you say something, You shouldn't say.

Maybe you, They won't hear you gossip about someone. They won't hear you say anything, That you shouldn't say as a Christian. He had, An excellent spirit, In his public testimony.

And thirdly, Daniel in verse 3 of chapter 6, It says, An excellent spirit was in him. He was, Had an excellent spirit, In terms of his prayerfulness.

As we saw, The only thing they could find wrong with him, Was what he was doing right. He was praying. And even when he faced, Difficult circumstances, He had an excellent spirit. He was in the spirit, He was not in the flesh.

[14:50] He was prayerful. He was praying in the spirit. He was prayerful in the spirit. Daniel's life was a prayerful life. A life of prayer. In close communion with his God. Will we have, The spirit of excellence?

It was evident in Daniel's life, Wasn't it? To be excellent. To be excellent means to, Excel. To go above and beyond. For Daniel, He prayed through, The situations of his life.

Will you pray through? Will you excel for God? Or, Friends today, Let's take stock. Have you got, Have I got, An excellent spirit? Have we got that kind of spirit that Daniel had?

Do we want to excel? Or do we want to give God, Our second best? Do we have the attitude, That that's good enough? Oh, She'll be right. That's good enough. That'll do.

Or do we put our effort, And strength into it? And aim for the best. So aim prayerfully, For what is best, For what is right, For what is most excellent. As it says in 1 Corinthians 12, Most excellent, The more excellent way, The way of love.

[15:54] Bring God your best. Friends, Just to wrap up this morning, Bring God your best, Your best. Be the best that you can be, For God, In your Christian life. In Colossians 3, 23, It tells us, And whatsoever you do, Whatever you do, Whatever it is, He says, Do it heartily, Do it from your heart, As to the Lord, Not unto men, Knowing that of the Lord, You shall receive, The reward of the inheritance, For you serve, The Lord Christ.

And that's, That's true for us, As Christians, As we go in the workplace, We do the best job, That we can. When we study, We do our best. We want to be the best, That we can be. We don't settle, For second rate, Second best.

Because we serve, The Lord Christ. Our employer, Our master, Really and truly, Is the saviour. And what did God do? Did God give his second best? He gave his very best, Didn't he?

God gave his very best, His only begotten son, To die for us. He is our everything, And he deserves our best, That we can show to him.

God demands our best, We need to show, Excellence in everything, That we do, For the Lord. In the Old Testament, As the people came, To bring a sacrifice, They gave of their best, They gave of their substance, They gave, That which was the best, That they could give, That they could do, They didn't give, Substandard offerings, Not the lame sheep, Or the spoilt grain, They gave the best, The best that they have, To honour the Lord, With their best, And it's important, That we as a church, Represent excellence, Now we know, As a church, As a smaller church, Sometimes it's hard, There's only so many of us, To be, That excellent church, To aspire, To endeavour, To be that excellent church, That excellent sanctuary, That excellent place, Of worship, And people of worship, But God is, Here, God is here, And he deserves, To be worshipped, In the best way, That we can, In the most excellent way, God demands excellence, As we look, For example,

[17:58] In Mark 14, The record of the woman, As she broke the jar, And poured the perfume, Upon his head, Showing excellence to God, Is a matter of love, And this woman, Showed the Lord Jesus, How much, She loved him, So much, That she brought, A jar, Of the, Very expensive perfume, This perfume, This bottle, That she broke, That she smashed, And gave, It all to God, She gave it all, To the Lord Jesus, Was worth, One year's wages, This was no small sacrifice, It was, Her whole, Her life's, Earnings for one year, And the most expensive, Thing she owned perhaps, She could have used, Cheaper perfume, She could have got, A cheaper version, Of what it was, That she gave, But she wanted to give, The Lord her best, Her best, Her best, She could have just, Taken a little bit, Maybe she could have just, Dabbed a finger in it, Or just a few drops, Of the perfume,

On his head, But no, She broke it, And she gave it all, Excellence, She poured all the contents, On the head of the Lord Jesus, Good enough, Wasn't good enough for her, To show her love, For the Lord Jesus, He deserved all that she had, And that's what he got, He got excellence, From this woman, And that's how we need to view, Our commitment, To Christ, Will he get, The best of us,

The best of what we have, With our life, Our use of time, Our prayer, Our service in church, Do we say, Oh, That's good enough, That's good enough, Nothing of the good works, That we can do, Can ever do, Anything for us, To gain heaven, It's everything, That he has done, And our receiving of his gift, And he gave the most excellent gift, Didn't he, He gave the very best, The most excellent gift, His very son, And our Lord tells us in Matthew 22, Love the Lord, Your God, With all your heart, With all your soul,

With all your mind, With all your strength, He wants our whole, He wants our all, He wants you to enter into that, Most excellent relationship, With him, A relationship, That begins when you give your life to him, Daniel, He purposed in his heart, To make the right choice, To follow God, To obey his word, He had a public testimony, A consistent life, A consistent life, From start to finish, From beginning to end, From his youth, To his older age, A life of faithfulness, Of integrity, Of prayer, Of walking with God, Am I, A person of excellence, Can it be said of you, I pray that, For each one, Your life, And your choices, Will show that, Excellence, They'll show that, Excellent spirit, Who you belong to, Your faith in Christ, These men, They stood out, Head and shoulders, From all the rest, None was found equal, To Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, And Azariah, As we know there, Hebrew names were changed to,

Shadrach, Meshach, And Abednego, They stood for the Lord, Even through going through, The fiery furnace, These three, The three that went through, The furnace, And Daniel stood, From the beginning, Right through, To the end of his life, When, You are, A person of excellence, God will use you, God wants you to be an excellent, A person of excellence, With an excellent spirit, To purpose in your heart, To follow God's word, To not defile yourself, With the, Worldly culture, That opposes the things of God, Am I a person of integrity, And I've got to watch myself, I want to be, A consistent Christian, 24 hours a day, Excellent spirit, Standing strong, No matter what, Turning to God, Will you choose today, Will I choose today, To dare to be a Daniel, To be a person of excellence, We want to be an excellent church, Don't we, We want to be people, With an excellent spirit, Don't we, Let's be that, Let's aspire to that,

Let's volunteer, Let's be a part, Of God's work in this place, And be, Willing to serve, To live, But not just in the church time, In your everyday life, In your school life, Home life, Work life, Have an excellent spirit, Purpose, Like Daniel, Public testimony, Like Daniel, Prayerfulness, Like Daniel, Let us pray, Lord we thank you again, For this time of fellowship, Help us Lord, To follow Daniel's example, As we live and walk, In this life, And for anyone present, Who knows you not yet, Lord that they'll see, How great a life it is, To live, In your presence, To live, In your will, And to take that step, Of trusting you, In what you did on Christ, At the cross for us, In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

[22:51] Thank you.