

Being Bold in Babylon

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

We're starting a new series. We just finished up last weekend a series on some of the promises of God. Some of you were like, you could have like continued that on for several weeks. And certainly we could have, but we tend to here at Faith Family like to study through books of the Bible.

I think that's the best way for us to learn from God's Word. And so now that we're into February, we're kind of starting our first book study of the year here in the book of Daniel.

The title of the series is Faithfulness in Exile. And I don't know if you know a lot about the book of Daniel. Maybe some of you have studied this book before.

[1 : 39] But if you haven't really studied it, you probably have a couple of different experiences with it. Maybe you remember this story as a kid growing up in maybe Sunday school or something like that.

You know, you learned about Daniel and the lion's den. And it's kind of just a bunch of Sunday school stories. Or your experience with the book of Daniel is a whole bunch of prophecy charts and really confusing diagrams about the end of the world and when the Antichrist is going to arrive, which really is not at all what the book of Daniel is about.

So I'm going to ask you to kind of put both of those misunderstandings aside and kind of come in with a clean slate on what this book really is about.

And it's a story about a handful of Israelites that are taken into exile in the biggest, baddest nation of the time, which was the nation of Babylon.

And they're struggling with how do we maintain hope? How do we remain faithful in a culture that's continuing to ask us to bow down to false gods?

[2 : 52] Can anybody relate to that? I mean, that's a situation that we find ourselves in today with so many of the things that we deal with in the world around us. And so this book is going to help us understand how to be faithful to God in a faithless world.

And so we're going to dive into chapter 1. I don't even know why I'm trying to cover all of chapter 1 tonight, but we're going to do our best. So I hope you made no plans this evening.

So Daniel chapter 1, we're going to begin reading at verse 1. I'll invite you to please stand as we honor the reading of God's Word. Daniel chapter 1 begins, In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his God, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his God.

And the king commanded Ashpenaz, the chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel from the royal family and of nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance, skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge and understanding and learning, competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans, which is the Babylonians.

[4 : 20] And the king assigned them a daily portion of food that the king ate, the wine that he drank. And they were to be educated for three years. And at the end of that time, they would stand before the king.

Now, among these exiles were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs gave them different names.

Daniel becomes Belshazzar, Hananiah becomes Shadrach, Mishael becomes Meshach, and Azariah becomes Abednego. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for the opportunity to start this new series, to work through this wonderful book of Daniel. And Lord, I pray you will, even beginning tonight, teach us what we need to learn to be your people in this world, to be exiles that are faithful to you in the midst of a very, very difficult world. And Lord, we know that your spirit is with us tonight to guide us into the truth of your word. And we pray this in Jesus' name. And God's people said, amen. You can be seated.

[5 : 28] Bahia Bakaria was 12 years old when she boarded the plane with her mother. And like most 12-year-olds, she was so excited to be on vacation and to be able to go somewhere new.

But somewhere over the Indian Ocean, the calm of that cabin turned into chaos. Voices that had been silent for the entire flight began to scream.

Fear quickly spread throughout the entire aircraft. And without warning, the flight began to shake. Everything went dark.

And the plane violently crashed into the ocean with engines running at full throttle. Bahia blacked out. And when she came to, she was no longer in her seat.

She was in the ocean, alone, having no idea how she got there. With nothing but the night sky above and water all around her, she had to figure out a way to survive.

[6 : 38] She wasn't a good swimmer. She didn't have a life jacket or a raft. And so she grabbed a piece of floating debris and held on with all the strength that she could.

The ocean that night was relentless on the surface. Cold waves would crash upon her. There was a current underneath that kept trying to pull her out to the sea.

Her hands were trembling. Her body was aching because of the cold water. And with every single wave that would crash upon her, the temptation that she faced over and over again was just let go.

Just let go. And sink down. But something inside her refused. And so she clung to that piece of debris all alone, all night, in the cold ocean waves for more than nine hours.

Until finally in the morning, rescue came. When they found her, she was still clinging tight to that piece of debris.

[7 : 57] She was the only survivor of the crash. And she survived not because she was a great swimmer. She survived because she refused to let go.

I wonder if any of you have ever been in a situation like that. Of course, I don't mean stranded in the ocean. I mean, have you ever been in a situation where it was everything that you could do to just hold on?

Between the waves externally and the current internally, everything in you just wanted to let go and give in.

Maybe your marriage or relationship was at rock bottom, and it was everything that you could do to hold on. Maybe your business was just about to shut the doors, and it was everything that you could do to hold on.

Maybe your health was deteriorating in such a way, and you were doing everything you could every day to hold on. Your values were being challenged by the culture.

[9 : 03] Your temper was beginning to build. Your faith was being tested. And the only thing you could do in those moments was just hold on.

Have you been there? Have you ever faced a situation like that? Well, that is exactly the situation that Daniel and his friends are in at the beginning of the book of Daniel.

And before we dive into chapter 1, as I always do when I start a new series, though I don't have to do as much for this one, because last fall we studied the book of Nehemiah, which was a very similar time frame as Daniel.

But the context here is that the year is 586 B.C., and the power, as I've already mentioned, is Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar has destroyed Jerusalem.

And 20 years prior to him destroying Jerusalem in 606 B.C., he begins to deport thousands of Jews from Jerusalem into Babylon.

[10 : 05] And there they will spend 70 years as exiles. And part of those exiles that were brought in were four teenagers.

They're probably around the age of 15. And these four teenagers were Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael. Now, again, if you remember from the book of Nehemiah, the Babylon, and I know you remember that because you remember everything about these series, right?

Just play along. But one of the things that we talked about in Nehemiah was that the Babylonians would capture nations different than other nations would.

For example, like the Assyrians. The Assyrians would beat you up. The Babylonians, rather, would blend you in. They wouldn't be cruel to you.

They would bring you into their culture and begin to acclimate you. In fact, being brought into Babylon was like being brought into the ancient Near Eastern version of the magic kingdom.

[11:09] In fact, Babylon had what was known as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. It was one of the seven wonders of the world at that time. This was a city.

This was a place full of beauty, of elegance. It was all kinds of abundance and majesty. And the Babylonians would bring you in and they would let you eat their food and let you enjoy their homes and start a family.

I mean, they would literally say, make yourself at home. And here's why they would do that. Is they knew the best way to take you captive was to make you comfortable.

And so, the tension that Daniel, and when I say Daniel, he's going to represent the others as well. Daniel is in a situation. These teenagers are facing this question.

That is, how do we live in Babylon without Babylon living in us? Are you with me? Like, that's the tension. Like, here we are. We're in Babylon.

[12:12] We're surrounded by all these new things, but how do we be distinct? How do we remain faithful to God as exiles in a foreign land?

And that is why this book is so relevant for us, because we face the same question today, do we not? We face the question, how do we live in the world without being of the world, right?

That's the challenge. And can we be honest this evening? Being a Christian is hard. Amen? Being a Christian in this world is really difficult.

And if you don't feel that tension at all, you're probably not following Jesus. If you have not had to take any persecution ever for being a follower of Christ, you're probably not a follower of Christ, or at least not a very faithful one.

Because didn't Jesus promise that in this world we will face persecution? And so we wrestle with this tension. Also, the Bible even calls us exiles.

[13:21] Look at 1 Peter 2, verse 11. Beloved, I urge you as, say it, sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

But keep your conduct among the nations, the Gentiles, the unbelievers, honorable. So listen, whether it was Egypt or Assyria or Babylon or Rome or America, the cultural current has always sought to pull the people of God away from their faith in God and away from their faithfulness to God.

Are you with me? This has been a constant current all throughout the history of the world for Christians. And the easy thing to do when we're in this kind of situation is just let go.

Just give in. Just go with the flow. Just do everything as the world is doing it. It's a lot easier to live that way as a Christian, but it is not faithful to God.

And so here in Daniel 1, we're going to see some of the waves, if you will, continuing with that metaphor, the waves that come at us as Christians that we have to stand against.

[14:43] Verse 1. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand and some of the vessels of the house of God.

And he brought them to the land of Shinar and to the house of his God and placed the vessels in the treasury of his God. And the king commanded Ashpenaz, the chief eunuch, to also bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of nobility.

So here's the first wave, and that's the wave of isolation. The wave of isolation. Almost every one of these points tonight is an entire sermon in and of itself.

This is, I don't usually say this. I mean, I think it's always important, but there are just some things tonight we really need to think about and discern. Are you with me? And the first one here is isolation.

As I've referenced earlier, the strategy of Babylon was to take the Israelites from their home. It wasn't just to leave them there and set up different authority.

[15:51] It was to take them out of their land and bring them into their land. They want to create separation from their support system, particularly from the temple.

And here's why. This is important. Because the best way to get them to worship false gods was to distract them from the true God. To isolate them from the temple.

To isolate them from Jerusalem. And that way, they'll be all alone and isolated from everything that they know. Now, we know this is true in so many different areas of life.

Take, for example, in the animal world. Like, in the animal world, if you want to attack your prey, you don't go and attack the entire pack. You try to single one out and get them away from the pack, right?

They're far more easily defeated when you can get them by themselves. Amen? Now, we're not going to watch all of this clip because it ends really badly for that animal, right?

[16:51] But you see the point, right? What? Let's isolate them from the pack because then they'll be easier prey. And we see this even in less violent ways, right?

You know, if you spend time away from a friend, there can be distance in that friendship. My parents say that because I've lived in Minnesota so long that I no longer have a southern accent. Do you think I still have a southern accent? I hope so. But the point is this, right? We know that separation can lead to deterioration. Separation can lead to deterioration.

And isn't this so true for our faith? Let me think about it. How many of you know Christians that went to college? And when they went off to college, they left their family, they left their youth group, they left their close Christian friends, and they walked into a situation where spiritually they felt alone.

Now listen, I am all for having to go through seasons where you have to think through your faith and it becomes your own, and you get challenged with hard things.

[18:03] I'm all for that. The point here, though, is that there have been many professing Christians that have walked away from their faith because they were separated from those things that encourage their faith.

Amen? C.S. Lewis really portrays this well in *Screwtape Letters*. In *Screwtape Letters*, he writes, The patient, that is the Christian, is now getting to know more Christians every day, and intelligent Christians too.

For a long time, it will be quite impossible to remove spirituality from his life. Now look around your patient's new friends and find the best point of attack.

I think it would be the borderline between theology and politics. Do you see what Lewis is saying there?

The first part of that quote is, Listen, we're in trouble because we're trying to pull the patient, the Christian, away from their faith in God, but they're gaining in Christian friends.

[19:16] That's a problem because the more Christian support they have, the harder it will be to get them to walk away from their faith. So then what should our strategy do?

Our strategy should be try to cause disunity among that friend group because if we can separate them, think about that video, if we can separate them back from their pack, then they'll be easier prey.

Are you with me? This is the strategy of the enemy. Listen to me, faith family. The enemy's goal is to put separation between you and God, and one of the best ways to do that is isolate you from the places where your faith will be strengthened.

And I'm certain that you can think of examples like that. Church would be one of those, right? Let's just make them busy. You know, your kid really needs to be in every traveling sports team imaginable.

Oh, now I've hurt feelings, right? Now I'm in trouble. I mean, think about all the things that you would, well, I've got to have my kids in this, and my weekends only allow time for that, and yet you fail to realize how essential it is for the strengthening of your faith to worship within the community of God.

[20:41] That was a good place for an amen. This isn't a goal to just boost church attendance. Our gathering together is an important part of strengthening our faith, and the enemy wants to pull you from that.

Maybe it's your personal study, your daily time in the Word of, I've just got too many things to do.

This is why the author of Hebrews in Hebrews 10 verse 24 says, Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to what, faith family?

Meet together, as is the habit of some, but rather encouraging one another, because hopefully that's what you do when you meet together, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

So one of the waves, one of the strategies of Babylon was get them away from Jerusalem. To isolate them from the things that will encourage their worship of God so that we can get them to

worship false gods.

Here's the second wave, verse 4. Youths without blemish of good appearance and skillful and wisdom, endowed in knowledge and understanding, learning, competent to stand in the king's palace, to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

[21 : 56] The king assigned them a daily portion of food that the king ate, and the wine that he drank, and they were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they would stand before the king.

Here's the second wave, and that is indoctrination. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar not only wanted to separate them from their home, he wanted to indoctrinate their minds.

He enrolls them in a three-year degree program at the University of Babylon. Why? He wants them to speak Babylonian.

He wants them to think like a Babylonian. He wants them to then act like a Babylonian. He wants them to be fully immersed in the culture of Babylon.

Is this relevant or what? Amen? Listen, notice it on the screen. Education is often how you capture the minds of the next generation.

[22 : 53] Education is often how you capture the minds of the next generation. Now, don't misunderstand. Gee whiz, I have more degrees than a thermometer, and most of them aren't even that useful.

My point is I am pro-education. Education is a good thing. Did everybody hear me say that? I am not suggesting don't go to college. I'm certainly not even suggesting don't go to public school.

What I am suggesting is you need to discern what education you're getting. And not just education in a formal sense like at a school, but just what knowledge is coming into your mind.

What learning are you doing in your life? Because some knowledge is good for education, but some knowledge is only good for indoctrination.

I'm already in trouble. By the time I get to the end of this message, 90% of you will be offended, but that's okay. There is a difference between being taught geometry and being taught gender ideology.

[24 : 01] It's a huge difference. There's a big difference between taught geometry and being taught gender ideology. One is education. The other is indoctrination.

But make no mistake, the Babylonian mindset is still happening today. One way to capture the man is to capture the mind. If we can capture the way they think, if we can capture their mind, then we capture them.

And I know this is kind of an extreme example, but it just works. It's exactly what Hitler did in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Thousands of young people were indoctrinated with a rewritten history and distorted biology about a superior race.

This is Hitler's own words. Quote, through clever and constant application of propaganda, people can be made to see paradise as hell and the other way around.

You just have to control the mind. You have to control the way they think. And you thought Daniel was a book that isn't relevant to today? Are you kidding me? Babylon is still trying to occupy your mind.

[25 : 19] And that is why it is so important that we be wise about the various ways that we take in information that gets circulated today. And if you don't think you're vulnerable to this, then all the more vulnerable you are.

But the news media that you listen to, the movies that you watch, the social media that you're engaged in, the universities that you might attend.

Again, there's a reason why Paul, and he's not the only one. It's all throughout the Bible. Even Psalm 1 talks about meditating on God's law day and night. But listen to the emphasis that Paul makes.

You know many of these verses. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the, say it, renewal of your mind, that by the testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Look here in Philipians 4. Listen, brothers, whatever is true and honorable and just and pure and lovely and commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, say it with me.

[26 : 23] Think about these things. Look at what he says in Colossians 3.2. Set your minds on the things that are what? Above, not on the things that are on earth.

I wonder if a modern translation would that like, spend more time in the Word and less time on Twitter. Right? Preach, preacher. How many more have I offended, right?

Like, you spend hours on social media and little time in the Word. Like, set your mind on the things that are above, not the things of earth.

Colossians 2.8, so that no one takes you captive by what? Philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Faith family, here it is right here. We must counter a Babylonian worldview with a biblical worldview. We are being indoctrinated all the time.

[27 : 27] We have been enrolled in the University of America, of Western culture. And if you are not careful, you will begin to take on a Babylonian mindset rather than a biblical mindset.

It's why here at Faith Family, and we are not perfect in any way, it's why we preach the Bible. It's why we offer classes on the Bible. We want you to commit yourself to learning the Word of God. Because there are so many mainline denominations that started out following the Gospel, preaching the Gospel, but gave in to secularism.

And now the Bible to them is no longer the Word of God, Jesus is no longer the Son of God, and the Bible at best is a book for life lessons. It is the indoctrination of the world.

So one wave is isolation. The second wave is indoctrination. Here's the third wave, verse 6. Here's the third one, is the wave of identification.

[28 : 47] This is so good. I don't mean the sermon. I mean the content here. Listen, listen, listen. Here's the flow of the text. What Nebuchadnezzar wants to do is he wants to take these people out of Jerusalem, separate them from the temple, then indoctrinate them with a Babylonian worldview, and then watch.

Give them new identities. Give them new identities. Now he does this in two ways. First, he changes their names. That's the obvious one in the text.

Like all you have to do is just read it and you'll see that. Now I'm not going to go through all of these for the sake of time, but Daniel's name means God is my judge or Yahweh is my judge.

His name, Belshazzar, means Bel, a Babylonian god, protects my life. That's quite a bit of difference between Yahweh is my judge to Bel protects my life.

In other words, what Nebuchadnezzar wants to do is redefine who they are to give them Babylonian identities. Now there's a less obvious one.

[29 : 55] The obvious one has changed their names. The less obvious one that you wouldn't necessarily get from the surface of the text. I mean, the word eunuch is used there.

It's obviously referring to kind of like the chief of staff, so to speak, that Daniel deals with. But the text does give us indication that Daniel and them were brought to serve in the king's palace.

Are you with me? And here's what we know historically is if you were brought from another land, if you were from a different bloodline, and you were brought to serve in the king's palace, guess what would happen to you?

You'd be castrated. It was the way that they would protect the pure line of the Babylonian blood. Do you see? And so they not only give them new names, they literally take their manhood away.

Right? I was going to put something on the screen, but I think I'd probably get in more trouble than I probably already am. I'd love to preach a sermon just on this about how our culture today has robbed men of true manhood.

[31 : 05] That's a whole other sermon, but I'll just throw it out there that that's what happens here. I'm going to stick to the point for the sake of time, and here's the point, and this is so profound, it's so important.

Are you with me? One of the easiest ways to get us to give in and let go is to redefine our identity. Or let me say it another way.

When you forget who you are in Christ, when you forget your identity with God, it's very easy to give in to the world. And I could give you a hundred examples of the way the world does this.

The world wants your identity to be your beauty, to be your performance, to be your success, to be your job, to be your network, to be your social media followers, to be your age, to be your political party, to be your grades, to be your academic achievement, to be your feelings.

How do you feel? However you feel is what you are. And on and on we could go. And here's why, say preach preacher. Here's why this is so important. I want to spend so much more time on this.

[32 : 16] Is that once you take on a cultural identity, you will worship at the feet of a cultural deity. Do you see that connection?

When my identity becomes how I look, then I begin to worship at the feet of beauty. And that's my God. When my identity, when I let the world say that, like we talked about last week, that my identity is my performance, then I will worship at the God of athletics.

If you knew how much I was leaving out, you would appreciate more what I'm actually saying. Stop and think about the connection in Genesis 1 of how we were created to worship God and were also created in the image of God.

Because you become like what you worship most. So when you let the world define who you are, you'll worship at their gods.

But when you really remember who you are in Jesus, you'll be able, as we'll see in a moment like Daniel, to say, no, I won't bow. That is not who I am.

[33 : 41] I will not be defined by my social media followers. I will not be defined by my success. I will not be defined by my friendship network. I am defined by Jesus and Jesus alone.

So we must find our identity in Christ, not culture. Are you seeing how relevant this is? Isolate them, because they're easier prey when they're alone.

Indoctrinate them. If we can capture the mind, we'll capture them. Give them new names. Give them new identities, because whatever identity they get becomes the deity they serve.

And then thirdly, or fourthly, the wave of idolatry. The wave of idolatry. I've already kind of referenced this, and I'm not going to say a lot at this point on this, because it's going to be a major theme throughout the book of Daniel.

If you know much about the book, you know that bowing before false gods is something that he's faced with continuously. But what I do want to point out, at least at this point, as we begin the series, is this is something I've taught you many, many times, and you see it keep coming up in our time together, both in the Exodus series, as well as in the Armor of God series.

[35 : 05] And here's the point I want to make. Behind the physical isolation and the educational indoctrination and the cultural identification is a spiritual manifestation.

What I mean is that false gods, this is so important, if you've zoned out, what do you do? This would be a good point to zone back in. Are you listening? False gods, I've taught you this before, unless you're new.

False gods are not false because they do not exist. False gods are false because they're not the one true God. We looked at this in Exodus.

The Egyptian gods were actual gods, not eternal gods. They were created gods. There's only one true eternal God. There is one God.

Amen? But there are created gods. And if you're new and you're like, that just seems like the first time I've ever heard that, talk to me afterwards and I'll point you to resources where you can study this more in depth.

[36 : 07] But these false gods are real gods. They're real entities. And they were behind the gods of Egypt. And they're behind everything we struggle with and wrestle with in the world.

Right? There are, remember what we talked about in Ephesians in the Armor of God series. We wrestle not with flesh and blood. We wrestle with what? Powers and principalities.

Evil spiritual forces that are in the world. So the point I'm making is this, family. Daniel is not in a physical war. He is in a spiritual war.

What is behind all of this are evil spiritual powers trying to pull us away from the one true God.

And for us, and it breaks my heart because I don't discern it enough and it breaks my heart when I see others that don't discern it enough.

[37 : 08] But behind the political issues of our day, the financial and material issues, the relational issues, our spiritual issues, there are gods every day trying to get you to bow down to them.

And that's what's behind all of this. And we're going to see that even more clear as we work through the book of Daniel. So, everybody with me so far? The waves that Daniel and others are facing, it is isolate them, indoctrinate them, give them new identities, and try to get them to worship Babylonian gods.

So, how does Daniel respond? Verse 8. Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank.

Therefore, he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. Now, you might be, if you're kind of new to the Bible, if you haven't really studied the Old Testament, your response might be, what's the big deal about eating food?

Like, I don't understand the big deal behind saying no to the king's request to eat at the Babylonian buffet. And I have no doubt, given what I know historically about Babylon, it would have been a buffet.

[38 : 26] And it would have been a glorious buffet. And I bet the Babylonian barbecue was fantastic. Thank you, Jesus. Right? So, what's the big deal about food?

But as you know, if you've studied any of the Old Testament, the dietary laws that were given to Israel were given to Israel to set them apart from the nations.

It's one of the main ways that they were distinct from the world. And Daniel here, by eating the king's food, is being asked to compromise what God has clearly commanded.

Are you with me? Now, don't worry. We're not under the dietary laws anymore. Enjoy barbecue. Jesus said so. Well, probably Jesus didn't say so. But whatever, right? The point, the bigger principle is what?

Daniel is being asked to violate what God has commanded, to compromise where God has commanded. And notice Daniel's response, four of them quickly and we're done. First, his conviction.

[39 : 29] His conviction. Daniel will not go against what the Lord has commanded. He knows that God has been very clear about the dietary laws and he will not eat the king's food.

And why will he not eat the king's food? It's not just because he doesn't like barbecue or just because there's a law against it. It's that he has different appetites. Preach, preacher.

Here it is. Notice it on the screen. Daniel found more delight in God's Word than the delicacies of the world. That's really the fundamental issue for Daniel is I'm far more interested in the buffet of obedience than I am the fast food of disobedience.

And it would be very easy to give in and just eat the king's food and just go with the flow, but I can't do it. I delight in the Word of God. Now, is that true for us when the boss asks us to cut corners at work, when you log on the computer at night, when you're invited into the gossip chain?

Daniel is convicted about what God's Word has said and he wants to be faithful to God more than fit in with Babylon.

[40 : 44] Preach, preacher. Second, this is so important, but he handles this conviction with kindness. If you notice when you read through the text, Daniel gives this request to not eat the king's food with gentleness.

In other words, he doesn't protest. I know that's a popular thing right now. He's not arrogant towards this. He doesn't make demands. Daniel's approach, come on, I need you with me on this.

I need you to lean in, Christian. I need you to listen up, even if this convicts. He is humble in his approach to authority, even though it's ungodly authority.

Listen, Christians often make this mistake that ungodly authority justifies our ungodly action.

No, it doesn't. No, it doesn't. Even ungodly authority is ordained by God. Go back and read verse 2 of chapter 1.

[42 : 01] The Lord allowed all of this to happen anyways. None of this is happening outside of the providence and sovereignty of God. God has ordained all authority, even ungodly authority.

The only time you don't go against ungodly authority is when they ask you to compromise the Word of God. Don't let ungodly authority justify ungodly action because it couldn't be further from the Scripture.

Look at 2 Timothy 2, verse 24. The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone. Say everyone.

I wanted to insert, but I'm not going to. I've already offended 90% of you. Kind to everyone. Able to teach. Patiently enduring evil.

Correcting his opponents. We don't have any problems with that. It's the next part you've got to read. Correcting his opponents with, say it, gentleness.

[43 : 03] God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth. Listen, Daniel wouldn't compromise his convictions, nor am I suggesting you should.

What I'm suggesting is that how you stand is as important as that you stand. Amen.

Think of it this way. If we're going to win some, we must be winsome. If we're going to win some, we must be winsome.

Now, for the few of you that I haven't offended, I'll take care of the rest of you now. I want to address something here. I want to do this, I hope, with grace. I hear a lot sometimes from Christian circles, we need to take America back.

I've already got your attention. And what I say to that is, I am absolutely for Christians standing up for their values. I believe Christians must vote based on their convictions and biblical convictions.

[44 : 11] I believe that Christians should be engaged in the culture for the sake of our faith. Are you with me? I am for all of that. But watch.

It is more important that you move the church forward than that you take America back. It is more important that you move the church forward than to take America back.

And if you disagree with that statement, it simply means you have the wrong citizenship. Because the Bible is clear in Philippians 3.20, our citizenship is where?

In heaven. And from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. I will often get pushback from people. I know that's a shocker that people like to tell me what to preach.

I will often get pushback that I should preach more politics. And listen, I'm very political. I have a lot of political convictions. My guess is they're probably very similar to many of yours.

[45 : 18] But I'm just going to make this clear. I preach to point people to a king, not a president. Hear me.

Why? Because I want people to join a kingdom, not a political party. And if that's a problem, you have forgotten the mission of the church of Jesus Christ.

The issue is not take America back. The issue is move the church forward. Because we belong to the kingdom of God.

And trust me, no one more than I wants America to enjoy the kingdom of God's blessings here in our own land. Are you with me?

So, now that we got that out of the way and three of you will be back next week, let's keep going. And then we'll wrap it up. Verse 12. Verse 12. We're almost done.

[46 : 19] Test your servants for ten days and let us be given vegetables to eat and eat water to drink. And then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you.

And deal with your servants according to what you see. Here's the third thing about Daniel's response is his courage. I don't think we quite understand. Maybe you do the level at which Daniel's not just putting his faith on the line.

Daniel is putting his life on the line. Do you realize that Daniel risked everything by making this request and this suggestion? In fact, the guard knew as much.

Look at what the guard said back in verse 10. The chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king. I fear him, the one that assigns you the food and drink.

That's why that you are in worse condition than the youths who are your own age. So you would endanger my head with the king? Daniel, do you realize what your request is implying?

[47 : 26] If this does not go well, our heads are removed. And Daniel is putting himself in this same situation by defying the king's order.

But as we're going to see, Daniel is not afraid to put his life on the line because his life belongs to God. You can't do anything to me, God can't restore.

I've said this before. Chop my head off, he'll put it back on. In the resurrection, I will be fully bodied. Right? There is nothing you can take from me that God will not restore.

Let me say it this way. Daniel served a greater king than the king. That's why he was able to be courageous. That's why he was able to put it all on the line. And then lastly, notice that God honors Daniel's courage.

We're done with this. Is in verse 9 first, you see that God gave Daniel favor and compassion. In verse 17, God gave them learning and skill and all literature and wisdom and understanding and dreams.

[48 : 36] And then verse 20, in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired, he found them what? Ten times better than the magicians and the enchanters that were in his kingdom.

And then I just thought we'd note this. Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. You're like, big deal. You know how long it was from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus? Sixty years. My point is, God gave Daniel favor to remain in this position because he refused to bow. He refused to compromise. He honored the king but worshiped Yahweh. There's a huge difference there.

And so Daniel is given influence. He's given insight. Evidently, he was given six-pack abs. And I just want to thank you, Pat, for letting us use that picture of you.

[49 : 39] I think I just heard Wendy laugh. Anyways, notice Proverbs 16, 7. When a man's way pleases the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Amen? Now, keep in mind, Proverbs is not a one-size-fits-all. It doesn't mean if you are faithful to God, everybody's going to love you. No, I don't think so.

That is clearly not the case. But there are times, you think about Esther, you think about Joseph in Genesis, who are given favor even in the secular world because they refuse to compromise God's Word.

So, what is Daniel 1 all about? Are you with me? We're just starting. Not the sermon, the series, okay? Some of you are like, what if I just said, that was my introduction. Here we go, right? So, what is Daniel 1?

What is Daniel 1? It's all the waves of Babylon. Do you see that? Isolation. Indoctrination. Give them new identities.

[50 : 46] Make them bow down and worship idols. And it's met with an unwavering boldness. An unwavering faith in God.

Does that remind you of anyone? Does Daniel's story in Daniel 1 remind you of someone else's story?

Maybe a little foreshadowing here. I'm just curious if you might think of someone who left his home and entered into a Babylonian world. A man that had to stand up against the indoctrination of his day.

A man that refused to let others define him because he knew who he was. A man who was asked to bow down to the gods of this world, but he would not eat the food of idolatry.

A man who had the courage as well as the kindness to put his life on the line. And in doing so, was granted favor from the Father.

[52 : 02] Faith family, the way you become a Daniel is not holding, is not just trying to be like Daniel.

The way you become like Daniel is holding tight to the greater Daniel. For in a world where there is one wave after another, trying to pull you, trying to pull us away from our faith.

Jesus can give us the strength to never let go. And all God's people said, amen. Let's pray. So Lord, thank you for this beginning.

Wow, how relevant your word is to us even today. I mean, we are facing these same waves one after another. It is so easy as Christians to let go.

And if we're honest, there are many times that we do. That we compromise, that we give in, that we fall short. And I know while Daniel is a great example for us, he was not a perfect man.

[53 : 14] There is only one perfect, and that's our King Jesus. And we come now to a time where we remember how he took all the waves for us.

And he never let go. He remained faithful through the cross and through the grave. And Lord, we find in this the forgiveness for all those times when we have fallen short, when we have let go and just gone along with the flow of the culture.

And tonight we come back to the cross of Christ. He is our greater Daniel. Lord, thank you for this time now.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.