

Knowing When and How to Take a Stand

A Study of Daniel 1

Characteristic of Completeness: Relationship with the World

Big Idea: Take a stand with grounded, gracious grit.

Related Scriptures: Proverbs 16:7; Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 12:2, 18; 1 Corinthians 9:22; 15:58; Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Titus 3:1-8; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:15-16

Introduction:

- A. When and how do you take a stand for God in the midst of an ungodly culture? That's the question I'd like to address this morning. Romans 12:2 tells us,

^{NAU} **Romans 12:2** . . . do not be conformed to this world . . .

But how do we be the kind of nonconformists that God has in mind? What does that look like? How are we supposed to relate to the nonChristian world? Our ► Characteristic of Completeness for the week is our Relationship with the World.

Today we begin a series of studies through the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. In the first chapter, we find Daniel in the midst of an ungodly culture, having to make tough decisions about when and how to take a stand.

- B. Let me give you a little historical background.
1. Evidence strongly indicates that Daniel himself wrote this book that bears his name. This is significant because some liberal scholars with an anti-supernatural bias claim that the book of Daniel must be a forgery written long after Daniel died. They conclude that it must have been written by an imposter who looks back on the history he pretends to predict, because some of the prophecies in the book are just too accurate.¹

In contrast, more conservative scholars argue that the prophecies are accurate because they were supernaturally revealed by God, and the support for Daniel as the author is too compelling to overrule.

- a. Early church fathers such as Jerome considered Daniel to be the author.²
- b. The ancient Jewish historian, Josephus considers Daniel to be the author.³

¹ Leon J. Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1973), 19.

² John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 16-17.

³ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10:267, 272, 276-277; 11:337.

- c. Jewish and conservative Christian scholars through the years have almost universally considered Daniel to be the author.⁴
- d. The book is written as though Daniel is the author. For example, ► Daniel 8:1 is written in the first person:

^{NAU} **Daniel 8:1** . . . a vision appeared to me, Daniel . . .

This may seem confusing because, in earlier parts, the book is written in the third person. For example, Daniel ► 1:8 says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:8** But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself . . .

Daniel's use of the third person in describing himself earlier in the book is not unusual. It was customary for ancient authors to use the third person in describing themselves, and even to shift from third-person to first-person in writing the same piece.⁵

- e. Finally, ► the most persuasive evidence that Daniel is the author of the book is that Jesus Himself seems to consider Daniel the author. You see, in the book of Daniel, the author repeatedly writes about something called the "abomination of desolation."⁶ Daniel is the only Old Testament book that contains this term.

Hundreds of years later, in ► Matthew 24:15-16, Jesus refers back to this "abomination of desolation," and then clearly identifies Daniel as the prophet who spoke about it. Jesus says,

^{NAU} **Matthew 24:15** "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains."

So it seems quite clear that Daniel is the author of Daniel.

- 2. In the ► very first verse of Daniel, we get a lot of historical information, telling us when, where, who, and what's going on. It says,

⁴ Kem Oberholtzer, "Daniel Introduction, page 1" from Class notes, Phoenix Seminary, BI503 "Prophets to Gospels;" Walvoord, 11.

⁵ Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "Daniel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1985), 4.

⁶ Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:1** In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

a. ► (When)

The third year of the reign of Jehoiakim is widely recognized as 605 BC—a little over 600 years before Christ came.⁷

b. ► (Where)

There are three places named: Judah, Babylon, and Jerusalem.

- 1) ► Judah was the name given to the Southern Kingdom of Israel, which was home to the Jewish tribes of Judah and Benjamin.⁸
- 2) ► Jerusalem was the capital city within land of Judah.
- 3) ► Babylon was the main city and capital of Babylonia, about 50 miles south of modern Baghdad.⁹ Babylon was ► about 539 miles east of Jerusalem, as the crow flies.¹⁰

c. ► (Who)

- 1) Jehoiakim was one of the last kings of Judah. The land of Judah had 19 kings in history; 8 were good and 11 evil.¹¹ Jehoiakim was one of the evil ones. In ► 2 Chronicles 36:5, we are told,

^{NAU} **2 Chronicles 36:5** Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD his God.

⁷ Archer, 31; Gene A. Getz, *Daniel: Standing Firm for God, Men of Character Series*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 13; Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel, Apollos Old Testament Commentary*, David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, eds., vol. 20, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press and Leicester, England: Apollos, 2002) 51; Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel, The New American Commentary*, E. Ray Clendenen, ed., vol. 18, (Memphis, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 57; Oberholtzer, 3; J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1326; Walvoord, 11, 29.

⁸ Wood, 29.

⁹ Wood, 31.

¹⁰ *Logos Bible Atlas 1.0b*, (Logos Research Systems, 1994, 1999); the distance from Babylon to Jerusalem is 539 miles.

¹¹ Wood, 29.

Elsewhere, the Bible tells us that Jehoiakim was the eldest son of Josiah.¹² Josiah happens to be the last king of Judah who was good. Children do not always follow the good example of their parents.

- 2) ► Nebuchadnezzar was the newly crowned king of Babylon. His name means “Nabu has protected my inheritance.”¹³ Nabu was the Babylonian god of writing and vegetation.¹⁴

Nebuchadnezzar was to become a shrewd leader who was responsible for transforming Babylon into the greatest city in the ancient world. Today, its ruins spread over 2,000 acres. It had magnificent walls with eight gates, each named after a god.¹⁵

d. (What)

- 1) In a move to expand the Babylonian empire, Nebuchadnezzar ► besieged Jerusalem.¹⁶
- 2) God was also at work through the geo-political motives of Nebuchadnezzar.

According to the covenant between God and the Israelites given through Moses many hundreds of years before, in the face of stubborn rebellion, God would bring destruction and exile to the Israelites in the land of Judah.¹⁷

And the Israelites had indeed been stubbornly rebellious. From ► 2 Chronicles 36:16, listen to a description of the people of Israel during the time when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem:

^{NAU} **2 Chronicles 36:16** but they *continually* mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.

¹² 2 Kings 23:34.

¹³ Pentecost, 1329

¹⁴ Pentecost, 1330.

¹⁵ Bill T. Arnold, “Babylonians,” *Peoples of the Old Testament Word*, Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, eds., (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 63.

¹⁶ Parallel accounts are found in 2 Kings 24:1-2 and 2 Chronicles 36:5-7.

¹⁷ See Deuteronomy 28:1f; Leviticus 26:14-39.

In fact, the prophet Jeremiah had warned in writing that, barring repentance, the king of Babylon would invade Judah. But upon reading the prophecy, Jehoiakim defiantly had the scroll burned.¹⁸

And so, through Nebuchadnezzar, God disciplined the people of Judah, in keeping with the terms of the Mosaic Covenant.

2. Verse ► 2 says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:2** The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along 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 he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

- a. The phrase, ► “The Lord gave” confirms this was the Lord’s doing. The Hebrew term for Lord used here (Adonai) emphasizes the sovereignty of God over the affairs of men.¹⁹
- b. The ► vessels of the house of God were probably the sacred, golden vessels made by Solomon for the Jewish temple.²⁰ Taking these vessels symbolized the apparent conquest of the God of Israel by the gods Babylon.²¹
- c. The ► land of Shinar is another name for the land of Babylonia, located in lower Mesopotamia. Nebuchadnezzar probably returned to the city of Babylon.²² Many years earlier it had been the sight of the tower of Babel.²³ It symbolized opposition to the God of the Bible.²⁴
- d. Who is ► the god of Nebuchadnezzar? The Hebrew word for “his god” is actually plural, indicating there were multiple gods. Within Babylon there were more than fifty temples to various deities; the main one was to the god Marduk, which was probably the “house of his god” in which Nebuchadnezzar put the vessels.²⁵

¹⁸ Jeremiah 36:28-29.

¹⁹ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v.

“יְהוָה,” (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands, 1994-2000), hereinafter referred to as HALOT.

²⁰ 1 Kings 7:48-51.

²¹ Pentecost, 1330; Wood, 30.

²² Wood, 31.

²³ Genesis 11:2-3.

²⁴ Miller, 59.

²⁵ Wood, 31.

3. In ► Verses 3-4, it says that the king of Babylon ordered that the best and brightest young Jewish men from the royal family in Jerusalem be captured and enrolled in a kind of Babylonian university. It says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:3** Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, ► ⁴ youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every *branch of* wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and *he ordered him* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

- a) Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar wanted to take these young Jewish hostages from the royal family to warn Judah against rebellion; or perhaps he wanted to train some Jews for administrative positions back in Judah.²⁶
- b) In any case, the educational program probably included the study of agriculture, architecture, astrology, astronomy, law, mathematics, religion, and the Akkadian language.²⁷
- c) The term ► “Chaldeans” here simply refers to the people living in Babylonia.

4. Verse ► 5 says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:5** The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and *appointed* that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

This means that the best and the brightest young men captured from Judah were to eat and drink from the king's menu.²⁸ This ► constituted a command from the king, not a suggestion.²⁹

And we see that the educational program was ► to last three years before Daniel was to get his B.A.—his “Babylonia of Arts” degree.

5. It is in ► Verse 6 that we are first introduced to Daniel. It says,

²⁶ Pentecost, 1326; Walvoord, 34.

²⁷ Pentecost, 1330.

²⁸ Getz, 25.

²⁹ Wood, 34.

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:6** Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

- a. Daniel and his friends were probably of royal birth.³⁰ Josephus says Daniel and his friends were members of Zedekiah's family.³¹
 - b. Daniel is probably in his early teens at this time—maybe fifteen.³²
 - c. The Hebrew names of these teenagers all reflect the God of Israel. Daniel means “my Judge is God;” Hananiah means “Yahweh has shown grace;” Mishael means “Who is what God is?;” and Azariah means “Yahweh has helped.”³³
6. But in ► Verse 7, we find that their names were changed. It says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:7** Then the commander of the officials assigned *new* names to them; and to Daniel he assigned *the name* Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

These were most likely names incorporating Babylonian gods.³⁴ This may have been intended to symbolize the apparent victory of Babylonian gods over the God of the Bible.³⁵ It may also have been a part of a strategy to brainwash the young men, encouraging them to forget the Lord their God and to adopt false gods.

- C. Daniel ► had been thrust into a culture antagonistic toward the Lord—a culture that presented him with basically ► three options—options facing every Christian living in a nonChristian culture:³⁶
1. He could simply ► give in to the culture and conform to it.
 2. He could ► shun the culture, isolate himself, and fight against it.
 3. Or he could ► transform the culture by taking a stand with grounded, gracious grit. That's what Daniel seems to do. And that's the ► big idea of my message: Take a stand with grounded, gracious grit. I want to spend the rest of our time looking at how Daniel was grounded, gracious, and gritty.

³⁰ Miller, 60.

³¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 10.188. If it is true that Daniel was from Zedekiah's family, then Daniel's righteousness is even more remarkable because Zedekiah was an evil king (2 Chronicles 36:11-14).

³² Getz, 2; Walvoord, 35; Wood, 15.

³³ Archer, 34; Getz, 26; Walvoord, 36.

³⁴ Getz, 26; Walvoord, 36.

³⁵ Walvoord, 36.

³⁶ Lucas, 58.

- I. First, ► I want you to see how Daniel took a stand that was grounded. Daniel decided to take a stand in declining to eat the king's food. Verse ► 8 says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:8** But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank . . .

- A. The phrase, ► “made up his mind” could literally be translated “put on his heart.” It is an expression of thoughtfully regarding or paying attention to something.³⁷
- B. It is interesting that there were at least two other opportunities to take a stand that Daniel apparently chose not to take.
1. Recall that Daniel was being educated in pagan thought and ways. In fact, Daniel was being trained to become one of the “wise men” or advisors to the Babylonian king. These “wise men” included what Daniel refers to as magicians and conjurers³⁸—guys involved in the occult.
 - a. The term, “magician” describes “one possessed of occult knowledge”³⁹ who is an “interpreter of dreams.”⁴⁰
 - b. The term, “conjurer” describes a “necromancer,” someone who communicates with the dead,⁴¹ or someone skilled in interpreting supernatural signs in people who are ill.⁴²

Occult practices are clearly forbidden in the Old Testament.⁴³ But there is no proof that Daniel himself dabbled in the occult. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that Daniel was not considered a magician or a conjurer or a sorcerer.⁴⁴ It seems clear, however, that Daniel rubbed shoulders with occult practitioners and was taught their ways. Apparently, Daniel did not refuse to be educated in this way.

2. Also there is no evidence to suggest that Daniel took a stand against the pagan names that he and his friends had been given. He probably didn't like the

³⁷ HALOT, s.v. “שִׁים.”

³⁸ Daniel 1:20; 2:2, 10.

³⁹ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, s.v. “חֲרָטִים,” (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), hereinafter referred to as BDB.

⁴⁰ HALOT s.v. “חֲרָטִים;” Lucas, 69.

⁴¹ BDB s.v. “אֲשָׁף.”

⁴² Lucas, 69.

⁴³ Exodus 7:11; 22:18; Deuteronomy 18:10; Isaiah 47:9, 12; Jeremiah 27:9; Malachi 3:5.

⁴⁴ In Daniel 2:2, the “magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans” were summoned but Daniel is not among them. Nevertheless, in Daniel 2:12-13, Daniel seems to be considered one of the “wise men” along with them.

names. Maybe the names were offensive, but Daniel doesn't seem to take a stand against them.

- C. So why was the king's food such a problem for Daniel? In fact, at first blush, it seems like eating the king's food is not as big of a deal as being educated in the occult and receiving names extolling false gods. So what gives?

A clue is provided by the word, ► “defile.” “Defile” describes self corruption or impurity that comes from “any breach of moral or ceremonial law.”⁴⁵ To defile yourself is to break a law you know is wrong. It appears, therefore, that to eat the king's food would have been somehow unlawful for Daniel. How so?

1. Perhaps the king's food wasn't kosher. You see, there were dietary laws in the Old Testament which forbade Jews to eat foods that were unclean or improperly prepared.⁴⁶
2. In addition, the king's meat was likely taken from animals sacrificed to Babylonian gods, and the wine was probably also dedicated to Babylonian gods.⁴⁷ To eat and drink this food and wine would therefore be in violation of the spirit of ► Exodus 34:14-15, which says,

^{NAU} **Exodus 34:14** –for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God— ►¹⁵ otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,

To eat and drink the items dedicated to these gods was to acknowledge their deity.⁴⁸ The Babylonians also believed that, by offering their food and drink to their gods, the gods would prosper those who ate and drank.⁴⁹ One Bible scholar explains,

Food first dedicated to gods was thought to insure to the eaters the favor of those gods. Nebuchadnezzar, like other kings, would have insisted that all food coming from the royal kitchen be so dedicated, that his government might be benefited. Everyone eating it, then, would have been considered as also desiring favor and thus giving recognition and obeisance to the Babylonian deities. [Obeisance means bowing down to honor.] In fact, the main reason for Nebuchadnezzar's ordering that the imported youths eat this

⁴⁵ TWOT, s.v. “גָּאֵל.”

⁴⁶ Archer, 33; Getz, 26; cf. Leviticus 11:1-47; Deuteronomy 14:3-20.

⁴⁷ Archer, 33; Getz, 26; Walvoord, 36.

⁴⁸ Walvoord, 37.

⁴⁹ Getz, 27.

prescribed food may have been thus to elicit this recognition and obeisance. They were first given Babylonian names in the overall desire to make them good Babylonians, and now they were to give this degree of acquiescence to the Babylonian religion. Daniel and his friends clearly saw through these implications and recognized that they had a decision to make.⁵⁰

- D. So ► Daniel took a stand against eating the king's food. It's a stand that was grounded in the Word of God. Failure to take a stand would have caused Daniel to go directly against what the Bible says.

This gives us an answer to the question of *when* we are to take a stand. We are to take a stand when we are being pushed or pulled into doing something that goes against the Bible. When the Bible says, "no," we say, "no."

I believe this grounding in the Word of God is what distinguishes eating the king's food from getting a pagan education and receiving pagan names. There is no biblical prohibition against learning about the occult or false religions, as long as they are not practiced. There is no biblical prohibition against being given a pagan name, as long as you don't worship a pagan deity.

Daniel took a stand that was grounded in the personal application of God's Word to his life.

- E. Certainly we can all follow Daniel's example in deciding when to take a stand. But a particularly close modern parallel to Daniel's situation is the young man or woman neck-deep in studies at a secular school. Invitations to "defile" yourself abound.

Premarital sex. Binge drinking. Plagiarism. Materialistic occupational ambitions. Sacrificing morals for the sake of belonging. Disrespecting authority. Trusting yourself instead of God to meet your needs.

A Christian professor at the University of Texas says,

Modern institutions of higher learning have changed dramatically in the last half-century, and from the moment students set foot on the contemporary campus their Christian convictions and discipline are assaulted. "Faith is just a crutch," they hear from friends and teachers. "The Bible is just mythology." "Christianity is judgmental and intolerant." "Morality is different everywhere." "Everyone must find his own truth." "I can be good without God." "Jesus was just a man who died." No wonder so many lose their faith! Soon after my own entrance into college I lost my faith myself, and I didn't find my way back to Jesus Christ until ten years later.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Wood, 37.

⁵¹ J. Budziszewski, *How to Stay Christian in College*, (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1999), 15.

My daughter-in-law, Sarah, recently had a class at ASU in which the professor wanted to show that pornography is not all that harmful, and gave the students an extra-credit assignment to go to an adult bookstore. The Bible is very clear on this. First Thessalonians 4:3 says,

^{NAU} **1 Thessalonians 4:3** For this is the will of God . . . that you abstain from sexual immorality

So Sarah took a stand—a stand grounded in God’s Word. She respectfully declined to do the assignment, and asked for an alternative extra-credit assignment.

II. Daniel not only took a stand that was grounded, ► he also took a stand that was gracious.

A. Notice how respectfully he approaches the commander who has charge over him. Verse ► 8 says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:8** . . . so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

You might say, “Of course he was respectful. He didn’t want to get himself killed.” Good point.

B. But in ► Verse 9 we see something that seems to confirm that Daniel was genuinely gracious and not just kissing up to save his own bacon. It says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:9** Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,

The Hebrew words translated ► “favor and compassion” are elsewhere descriptions of God Himself and the way God wants His people to treat each other.⁵²

While our text indicates that this favor and compassion was shown to Daniel by the commander, it is probable that the means God used to influence the commander was the godliness of Daniel himself. It’s hard to imagine the commander granting favor

⁵² In Psalm 103, beginning in Verse 2, it says, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits . . .⁴ . . . Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion” [emphasis mine]. The Hebrew words translated, “lovingkindness and compassion” are the same words translated “favor and compassion” in our text. In Zechariah 7:9, it says, “Thus has the LORD of hosts said, ‘Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother’” [emphasis mine]. The Hebrew words translated, “kindness and compassion” are the same words translated “favor and compassion” in our text.

and compassion to Daniel without Daniel first granting it to him.⁵³ There must have been mutual respect.

There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that Daniel is ever degrading toward the commander or any other of his captors. On the contrary, he consistently and graciously shows them respect, kindness, and compassion. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Daniel had a self-righteous attitude toward them or that he expected his unbelieving captors to act like believing Jews.

- C. In light of the grace God has shown us, above all others, Christians ought to be gracious. Frankly, I'm embarrassed by the shrill, self-righteous, finger-pointing, shame-on-you attitude some Christians demonstrate toward unbelievers.

Sometimes I've embarrassed myself. I remember when I was in my twenties and working at a new job. In doing some research for a client, I discovered that my boss had falsified some data on a previous study. I was indignant and told my boss that I knew about the falsification and that I would never be involved with that kind of thing. I rubbed her nose in the wrongdoing. I took a stand that was grounded, but not gracious. An ungracious, self-righteous attitude can smell just as bad as the wrong it opposes. We need to take a stand that is grounded *and* gracious.

The Christian professor at the University of Texas offers some suggestions for how to hold your own without being a jerk. Limit yourself to a single point. Don't lecture. Give simple, clear reasons. Don't Bible bash. Model courtesy. Stay calm. And recognize you don't have to win.⁵⁴

- III. Not only did Daniel take a stand that was grounded and gracious, ► he also took a stand that showed grit.

- A. Daniel faced some obstacles to taking a stand, but he persisted. At first the commander balked at Daniel's request. Verse ► 10 says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:10** and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

The commander presented an obstacle to be overcome: How can this be done without the youths looking haggard and, thus, costing the commander his head? So Daniel persisted by approaching the overseer, a subordinate of the commander, with a proposal that overcomes the obstacle. Let's pick it up in ► Verse 11:

⁵³ At first blush, it may seem that Daniel had too little time to make such an impression. But we don't know exactly how long after their arrival in Babylon that the king ordered them to eat his food. Moreover, the trip itself from Judah to Babylon (539 miles) could have taken a substantial amount of time.

⁵⁴ Budziszewski, 124.

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:11** But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² “Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. ► ¹³ Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see.”

1. The plan protected the overseer with a low-risk proposition. Ten days could not reasonably be expected to produce appreciable change.
2. The risk was assumed by Daniel. He apparently had faith that God would improve his appearance.
3. Some suspect that Daniel received a special revelation from God to offer this test, but we have no proof.⁵⁵

B. Many factors would have made Daniel’s decision difficult, thus requiring grit:⁵⁶

1. In effect, it would violate the command of Nebuchadnezzar.
2. As such, it might incur severe punishment. Nebuchadnezzar was not a nice guy—later we’ll see that he is willing to dismember people and throw them into a furnace for noncompliance.
3. It would forfeit their advancement toward a privileged government position.
4. It would forsake some really good food in favor of vegetables and water.
5. There was probably little accountability for choosing to eat the king’s food. Perhaps they faced the rationalization of someone alone on a business trip, enticed by some immorality: Who would know?
6. Daniel and his three friends weren’t the only young Jews in this situation. Verse 6 says they were merely “*among* them from the sons of Judah.” As such, it appears that some of Daniel’s peers may have been taking the king’s food and wine.⁵⁷
7. Finally, it would have been easy to become bitter toward God for being exiled. And bitterness toward God makes it easy to disobey when the going gets tough.

⁵⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, 2 vols., trans. Thomas Myers, (Edinburgh: Calvin Trans. Soc., 1852), 1:105, cited by Walvoord, 40.

⁵⁶ Wood, 37-38.

⁵⁷ Miller, 67.

- C. Like Daniel, we must be determined. We must persevere in doing what we know is right even if we're the only ones, even if it puts a friendship at risk, even if your boyfriend dumps you, even if it costs us money, even if it jeopardizes our job, even if it's painful.

A key to taking a stand with grit is making up your mind on important things ahead of time, before you're faced with the temptation to compromise. Remember back in ► Verse 8 it says Daniel, "made up his mind." I take it that means Daniel had made up his mind not to defile himself long before he was hungry and then presented with the king's juicy pork tenderloin and velvety Chardonnay. He had arrived at biblically grounded convictions beforehand. He "made up his mind."

The back seat is not best the place to be wondering what the Bible says about sexual purity. A party is not the best place to be wondering what the Bible says about drunkenness. The third date is not the best time to be wondering what the Bible says about who you should look for in a mate. At the final exam is not the best time to be wondering what the Bible says about integrity. Daniel "made up his mind," beforehand and so should we, so that we can take a stand with grounded, gracious grit.

- IV. So ► what happened when Daniel took a stand with grounded, gracious grit?

- A. In this case, God brought about a win-win situation. Verses ► 14-16 say,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:14** So he [the overseer] listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. ¹⁶ So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

1. Daniel and friends looked better. As a result, the commander and overseer would look good in the eyes of the king, and they probably got the added benefit of eating the king's food that was intended for Daniel and his friends.⁵⁸
2. Was it miraculous? Some say not necessarily because the vegetables and water would have been better for them anyway.⁵⁹ Others say definitely yes because ten days is too soon to expect a noticeable change.⁶⁰

- B. In any case, God prospered Daniel and his friends. Verses ► 17-20 say,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:17** As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of literature* and wisdom; Daniel even understood all *kinds of visions and dreams*. ► ¹⁸ Then at the end of the days which the

⁵⁸ Getz, 40.

⁵⁹ Miller 70; Walvoord, 40.

⁶⁰ Getz, 40; Wood, 42.

king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. ►¹⁹ The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. ►²⁰ As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm.

- C. Moreover, the last verse in our text shows that Daniel served long and well. Verse ► 21 says,

^{NAU} **Daniel 1:21** And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

The first year of Cyrus was probably 537-536 BC.⁶¹ Daniel would have been over 80 years old.⁶²

- D. Will taking a stand always work out this well in this life? Not always. Most of the twelve apostles were martyred for taking a stand. Sometimes the scales of justice don't seem to balance in this life. But they do in eternity.

Paul speaks to us in ► 1 Corinthians 15:58, saying,

^{NLT} **1 Corinthians 15:58** So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

That's another way of saying that it's always worth it to take a stand for the Lord with grounded, gracious grit.

⁶¹ Archer, 37.

⁶² Getz, 42.