

Daniel

God's Countdown to Eternity

Sample Lesson #1
and
Leader's Guide Answers

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ONE

KINGDOM CONFLICT

Read Introduction, Daniel 1;
other references as given.

Would you renounce your faith in God if your life depended on it? That's a tough question. Daniel faced this challenging question when he was only a teen, but he remained faithful to the Lord. Whether it's at work, at home, at school, or even in some churches, every believer will eventually be tempted to sacrifice his loyalty to Christ on the unholy altar of social acceptance.

In Daniel chapter 1, Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonian Empire, conquered Jerusalem (Daniel 1:1–2) and deported Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to Babylon where they were chosen to prepare to serve the king (Daniel 1:3–7). In this first lesson you'll be inspired by Daniel's faith, and you will learn how to develop true spiritual convictions. You will also learn that man's greatest exploits, mighty as they may appear, are merely the unfolding of God's sovereign plan. Now before you begin each lesson in this study, ask God to help you understand the truths you'll be learning and to conform you into the image of His Son. May God bless your diligent study of His Word.

1. In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Jerusalem marked two significant biblical turning points: (1) the beginning of the seventy-year Babylonian Captivity and (2) the beginning of **the times of the Gentiles** (Luke 21:24). More than 800 years earlier God had warned His people that they would be expelled from the land He promised Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15:1–7) if they disobeyed Him



Lombardi Time
Rule:

If the leader
arrives early, he
or she has time to
pray, prepare the
room, and greet
others personally.

ADD GROUP
INSIGHTS BELOW

(Deuteronomy 28:45-49). In the intervening years, God's prophets warned the people of His coming judgment if they continued in sin, but they refused to listen. Now it was too late. God's judgment had fallen (Daniel 1:1).

- a. About a hundred years before Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah warned King Hezekiah and the Israelites about God's coming judgment. What did Isaiah say would happen (Isaiah 39:6-7)?

- b. Hezekiah was one of the good kings of the southern kingdom of Judah, but his response to Isaiah revealed a spiritual apathy that was common among the people at that time. What did Hezekiah say to Isaiah that revealed a calloused view toward sin—a sinful attitude that is often prevalent in the church today (Isaiah 39:8)?

2. The Israelites rejected God's warnings and paid a terrible price for their rebellion—physical death, families torn apart, and seventy years of exile (the Babylonian Captivity). But why seventy years? Why did God choose this specific length of time for the Babylonian Captivity (Leviticus 26:27, 31-35; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21)?

3. **Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Jerusalem into his hand** (Daniel 1:1-2). Why does the Bible say that

Kingdom Conflict

Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city, but it credits God with the victory (Jeremiah 27:6; Lamentations 2:4-7; Daniel 4:17)?

4. What two things did Nebuchadnezzar do after he had successfully defeated Jerusalem (Daniel 1:2-4)?

1. _____
_____ (v. ____).

2. _____
_____ (v. ____).

5. a. Daniel lost his family, his home, and the realization of his childhood dreams, but he did not lose his spiritual courage to follow the Lord (Daniel 1:8). What *do you think* is meant by the phrase **Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself** (Daniel 1:8)?

b. Bible scholars believe Daniel was only 14-18 years old when he was taken captive, but he had already developed a strong faith with God. In the left column, list three possible reasons or excuses Daniel could have used to justify the eating of the king's food.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



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ADDITIONAL
INSIGHTS

- c. Review the excuses Daniel could have used in question 5b. Now place a checkmark in the right-hand column (short line) next to the reasons you have used to justify doing something that you knew was wrong.

- d. When and where are you most tempted to compromise your loyalty and devotion to Christ?
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____

- 6. Daniel's decision not to defile himself with the king's food and wine reveals five characteristics or truths about developing personal convictions (Daniel 1:8). The first one is provided as an example. List four more.
 - 1. The individual must base his decision on what God wants, not on what benefits him personally.
 - 2. _____

 - 3. _____

 - 4. _____

 - 5. _____

- 7. Jesus commands Christians to be "salt and light" in a world that seems to be rotting in its sin (Matthew 5:13–15). But salt (Christians) can easily lose its flavor (saltiness), and believers can hide the light (truth) under a basket (Matthew 5:15). What *do you think* it means for a Christian to lose his saltiness and hide the light under a basket?



If you use table tents or name tags, it will help visitors feel more comfortable and new members will be assimilated more easily into your group.

ADDITIONAL
INSIGHTS

- _____
8. Sometimes Christians take a stand for righteousness, but they can easily forget their actions affect other people. How did Daniel demonstrate wisdom, grace, and compassion for those affected by his decision (Daniel 1:11–13)?

9. In chapter 1 it's easy to focus on Daniel and his bold stand for the Lord, but the central figure in Scripture is God, and not man. List six things God did to accomplish His will and honor the faith of Daniel and his three friends. Include the verse references with your answers.

1. _____
_____ (v. ____)

2. _____
_____ (v. ____)

3. _____
_____ (v. ____)

4. _____
_____ (v. ____)

5. _____
_____ (v. ____)

6. _____
_____ (v. ____)

10. If a Christian studies the Bible regularly, he's able to see what God is doing to accomplish His will and care for His followers. He learns to trust Him more fully, and he learns how to live by faith. Conversely, if a Christian doesn't study the Bible regularly, he often has trouble seeing God working in his life and remembering that He is in control.

ADDITIONAL
INSIGHTS

- a. What *do you think* are some additional reasons why some Christians have difficulty trusting God and seeing life from an eternal perspective?

- b. What *do you think* are some things you could do to become more aware of God's working in your life?

11. The Bible says **but the word** (God's Word) **which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it** (Hebrews 4:2). Identify one truth you learned from this lesson and indicate how you are going to apply it to your life.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Lesson 1: Kingdom Conflict

1.
 - a. Isaiah prophesied that the articles (silver cups and bowls used for sacred purposes) in the temple in Jerusalem would be taken to Babylon and some of the Jewish offspring would become eunuchs and serve in the palace of the king of Babylon.
 - b. Hezekiah believed that the Lord had spoken (Isaiah 39:8, **The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good**), but he was relieved to know that the events would not happen in his lifetime.

2. The Israelites violated the Law of God, which included setting aside one day a week (Sabbath) to honor and worship the Lord (Leviticus 26:27). God promised to scatter them among the nations if they disobeyed Him (Leviticus 26:31–35). Since the Israelites violated the Sabbath, God punished them by scattering them among the nations, and they remained in captivity until the number of years that they had violated the Sabbath (Leviticus 26:34–35; 2 Chronicles 36:20–21) had been completed. Interestingly, the word *Sabbath* refers to a “rest,” and God allowed the land of Israel to experience a “rest” while the Israelites were in captivity (2 Chronicles 36:20–21).

3. God is sovereign, which means that nothing can happen in this world apart from His decreative will. From Nebuchadnezzar's perspective, he and his Babylonian army defeated the Israelites. The victory, however, was a fulfillment of God's punishment of the Israelites for their unwillingness to obey His law (Lamentations 2:4–7). Moses delivered God's law, including the blessings and warnings, hundreds of years earlier, and God sent the prophets to warn the people of coming judgment. On one hand, the Israelites' defeat at the hands of the Babylonians appeared to be a military defeat of one nation by another. It was, however, the fulfillment of God's promised judgment and the fulfilling of His word. Nebuchadnezzar defeated Israel because God allowed it. **The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand** (Daniel 1:2).

4. 1. Nebuchadnezzar carried the articles from the temple in Jerusalem back to Babylon (Daniel 1:2). In ancient times the act of taking of some or all of the religious articles from a conquered nation served as proof of the victory when the conqueror returned home and indicated that the “gods” of the conquering nation were more powerful than those of the defeated nation. Notice that the act of taking the articles of the house of God in Jerusalem is repeated (Daniel 1:2), indicating Nebuchadnezzar’s deliberate act of humiliating Israel and its God.
 2. Nebuchadnezzar took some of the sons of the Israelites’ nobles back to Babylon to be trained to serve him (Daniel 1:3–4).
 5. a. Even though Daniel was alienated from his family as a teen and suffered deportation to another country, he didn’t turn his back on God. He was willing to risk his life to remain faithful to God. Daniel’s decision was made out of deep conviction and devotion to God, and it was based on loyalty to His Word.
 - b. 1. God didn’t help me so why should I serve Him?
 2. I am a long way from home. No one will know if I obey God or not.
 3. No one else is talking about being faithful to God so why should I.
 4. If I obey the authority God has placed over me, I may have a greater opportunity to be a witness for God in the future.
 5. If I sacrifice my life for this cause, what good will that be? Other answers could apply.
 - c. Answers will vary.
 - d. Answers will vary.
6. 1. The individual must base his decision on what God wants, not on what benefits him individual personally.
 2. The individual must base his decision on what God has impressed on him personally. Daniel didn’t ask others if they thought it was a good idea to obey God. He had the courage of his own conviction.
 3. The individual must be willing to act alone if necessary. Daniel didn’t expect others to do what God was leading him to do even though they followed him in the decision.
 4. The individual must be sensitive to how his decision affects others.
 5. The individual must maintain a godly and humble spirit during his act of obedience. Daniel **requested**.
Other answers could apply.

7. A Christian loses his saltiness when his desire to be accepted by the world is stronger than his desire to please the Lord and obey His Word. When this happens, he will inevitably make choices that enable him to be accepted by the world rather than being faithful to Jesus Christ. The Bible refers to this as spiritual adultery (James 4:4). Other answers could apply.
8.
 1. Daniel made the decision, but he didn't expect his friends to join him. All believers are at different levels of spiritual maturity, and Daniel demonstrated grace by not expecting them to do what God had placed on his heart.
 2. Daniel appealed to the chief of the eunuchs rather than pridefully informing him of his decision (Daniel 1:9).
 3. Daniel's offer of a 10-day test reveals that he was thinking about how his decision might affect others (Daniel 1:12–13).
9.
 1. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Judah and fulfilled His promise to judge their sin (Daniel 1:2).
 2. God allowed Daniel and his three friends to be included in the captives who were taken to Babylon (Daniel 1:3).
 3. God gave Daniel and his three friends physical attractiveness and sharp minds so that they could be chosen to serve the king and eventually move into places of spiritual and political influence (Daniel 1:4).
 4. God gave Daniel the spiritual courage to risk his life and remain true to Him in a foreign land (Daniel 1:8).
 5. God brought Daniel into favor with the chief of the eunuchs (Daniel 1:9).
 6. God allowed the chief of the eunuchs to accept Daniel's plan to eat vegetables for 10 days (Daniel 1:14).
 7. God allowed Daniel and his three friends' appearance to be better than if they had eaten the king's diet (Daniel 1:15).
 8. God gave Daniel and his friends knowledge, skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in visions and dreams (Daniel 1:17).
 9. God allowed Daniel and his friends to be selected to serve the king (Daniel 1:19–20).
 10. God allowed Daniel to be in an influential government position for many years (Daniel 1:20).

10. a.
 1. Some Christians are not in regular fellowship with other believers who are seeking to honor and obey God.
 2. Some Christians are not an active part of a local church where they can be taught God's Word (Hebrews 10:24–25).
 3. Many Christians do not engage in daily Bible study and prayer (Hebrews 2:1).
 4. Some Christians have unconfessed sin in their lives that hinders their ability to experience God and His goodness.
 5. Some Christians have never learned to live by faith, so they have never learned to truly walk with God.
 6. Some Christians allow themselves to be preoccupied with the cares of the world rather than the things of God (Mark 4:18–19).
 7. Some Christians have allowed unbelief in God's Word to rule their lives and hinder their walk with God (Hebrews 4:1–2). Other answers could apply.
 - b. Answers will vary.
11. Answers will vary.

~~b. The king's counselors said there was not a man on earth that was capable of telling him the content of his dream. In many ways they were testifying in advance of Daniel's supernatural relationship with God.~~