

BE  
RESOLUTE



# BE

RESOLUTE

DETERMINING TO GO GOD'S DIRECTION

OT COMMENTARY

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DANIEL

Warren W. Wiersbe

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BE RESOLUTE  
Published by David C. Cook  
4050 Lee Vance View  
Colorado Springs, CO 80918 U.S.A.

David C. Cook Distribution Canada  
55 Woodslee Avenue, Paris, Ontario, Canada N3L 3E5

David C. Cook U.K., Kingsway Communications  
Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6NT, England

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LCCN 2008924755  
ISBN 978-1-4347-6781-3

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First edition of *Be Resolute* published by Victor Books®  
in 2000 © Warren W. Wiersbe, ISBN 0-78143-305-3

The Team: Gudmund Lee, Amy Kiechlin, Jack Campbell, and Susan Vannaman  
Cover Design: John Hamilton Design  
Cover Photo: Veer Inc.

Printed in the United States of America  
Second Edition 2008

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# THE BIG IDEA

An Introduction to *Be Resolute*  
by Ken Baugh

I've heard it said that there are two tests in life: the test of adversity and the test of prosperity. The challenge, of course, during the test of adversity is not to give in to despair, not to doubt God's love, power, and presence in our lives. The challenge during the test of prosperity is not to forget God, not to become self-sufficient and proud. I have discovered that my life seems to be in a constant state of flux between these two challenges.

For example, I believe that God is sovereign in my life, which simply means that nothing can happen to me that He does not allow for my good and His glory. I believe that God is a God of love, and as my loving Father I believe that God is always looking out for my best interests. I believe that God is with me all the time, that there is never a moment when I am alone. I believe these and the other attributes of God are true, and yet during times of adversity, I find my faith diluted by doubt. Sometimes I'm even tempted to despair. And then at other times in my life, when things are going good, I feel an ever-so-subtle shift in my heart away from depending on God, toward a sense of self-sufficiency. And then I wonder, *Why is it that God has my undivided attention during the times of adversity yet barely gets a nod from during the times of prosperity?* Can you relate to any of this? Is it possible to

go through life without the major swings from doubt to self-sufficiency? Is it possible to be steady, stable, and resolute during these tests of adversity and prosperity? The answer is *YES!* Let me explain by using the life of Daniel as an example.

Daniel was a normal person just like us. He was tested by adversity and prosperity, yet he was able to remain resolute in his faith and relationship with God. Take the incident of the lions' den, for example. Prior to this incident, King Darius was thinking of making Daniel ruler over his entire kingdom due to his exceptional qualities and personal integrity. However, the other administrators and satraps were jealous of Daniel's favored position in the eyes of the King and sought to find something—anything in Daniel's life that they could use to discredit him. Yet, Daniel was such a man of godly character that according to 6:4–5 (NIV):

They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

Daniel's character and work ethic were indisputable, and these deceitful men knew that the only way to hurt his credibility with the King would be to devise some type of trap that would force him into a moral dilemma with his God. Their plan was brilliant. They convinced King Darius to sign a law that required everyone in the land to worship him as God, and any who chose to rebel against this decree would be thrown into the lions' den. Knowing that Daniel would never bow down to anyone else but his God, these administrators and satraps thought they had devised the perfect plan to rid themselves of Daniel, and King Darius played right into their hands. Daniel quickly found himself in a moral dilemma. Should he continue with



his daily prayer routine to the one true God, or should he submit to the decree of King Darius? Daniel knew the consequences that would ensue if he rebelled, but he stood firm in his convictions, and the Bible says that immediately after hearing of this decree Daniel went home to pray with the windows wide open so everyone could see (6:10). You gotta love that! Well, as the story goes, King Darius, bound by his own law, was required to throw Daniel into the den—the place where Daniel would face his greatest test of adversity.

The Bible doesn't tell us what was going through Daniel's mind during that long, dark night, but I sometimes wonder if he was tempted to doubt what he believed about God. Did he think to himself, *God, I have been faithful to you and now I find myself here in this forsaken place. God, I thought You loved me. God, I thought You would take care of me. What have I done to deserve this? Why me, God?* Well, we'll never know if Daniel struggled with doubt during this difficult time, but we can see from his answer to the king that his faith remained strong in the morning:

At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight." (6:19–22 NIV)

Daniel passed the test of adversity with flying colors! After this incident, the Bible tells us that Daniel was raised to a position of prominence and prospered during the reign of both King Darius and Cyrus the Persian. As you read through the rest of the story about the life of Daniel, you will

discover that he remained a humble, godly man of character throughout his years of prosperity as well.

The story of Daniel is a great example of a man who was able to navigate through the waters of both adversity and prosperity. But how did he do it? I believe that Daniel was able to stay resolute throughout the times of adversity and prosperity because his faith was anchored in the sovereignty of God. Daniel believed that God had everything in control, and that He was orchestrating all the events in the world around him to accomplish His purposes and to declare His glory. Here lies the big idea of the book of Daniel: God is sovereign over all things. I hope this book will give you a greater sense of confidence and hope in your own life as you navigate the tests of adversity and prosperity. Just remember that God has everything in control, and nothing can happen to you that He does not allow for your good and His glory.

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Dr. Wiersbe's commentaries have been a source of guidance and strength to me over the many years that I have been a pastor. His unique style is not overly academic, but theologically sound. He explains the deep truths of Scripture in a way that everyone can understand and apply. Whether you're a Bible scholar or a brand-new believer in Christ, you will benefit, as I have, from Warren's insights. With your Bible in one hand and Dr. Wiersbe's commentary in the other, you will be able to accurately unpack the deep truths of God's Word and learn how to apply them to your life.

Drink deeply, my friend, of the truths of God's Word, for in them you will find Jesus Christ, and there is freedom, peace, assurance, and joy.

—Ken Baugh  
Pastor of Coast Hills Community Church  
Aliso Viejo, California

# A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

What Jesus said about the prophet John the Baptist, we could say about the prophet Daniel: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet” (Matt. 11:7, 9 NKJV).

Forced into circumstances that made it easy for him to become a reed in the wind, Daniel stood firm in the faith and dared to be different. Instead of bending and blending like a reed, he stood like a mighty oak, rooted in the Lord and defying the storms of change that raged about him.

Today’s society is a good deal like the one Daniel lived in centuries ago. The world still wants God’s people to conform to its standards and follow its practices. “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold” is the way J. B. Phillips translates Romans 12:2, and Daniel and his friends obeyed that admonition. We should obey it today. We need Christians who have the faith and courage to be resolute—not odd, but resolute.

As we study the book Daniel wrote for us, we’ll meet Daniel’s God, the Sovereign Lord who rules in the kingdom of men (4:32) and who confidently announces things to come. In Daniel’s life and ministry we will see how true believers live in the light of biblical prophecy—how they

relate to the Sovereign Lord and accomplish His good, acceptable, and perfect will.

In a world in which people find it easy to do what is right in their own eyes, the Lord is searching for men and women who will do what's right in His eyes and dare to be resolute. Will you be among them?

—Warren W. Wiersbe

## A SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR DANIEL

- 605 BC Jerusalem taken by Nebuchadnezzar.  
Daniel and his three friends taken to Babylon.
- 602 BC Daniel and his friends complete their three years of training.  
Nebuchadnezzar has his dream and Daniel explains it (Dan. 2).
- 586 BC Jerusalem and the temple destroyed by the Babylonians.
- 539 BC Belshazzar's feast (Dan. 5).  
Cyrus, king of Persia, conquers Babylon and reigns until 530.
- 538 BC Cyrus decrees that the Jews can return to Judea and rebuild the temple.
- 537 BC About 50,000 Jews return, led by Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest.  
Daniel has his prophetic vision about the end times (10:1).
- 530–522 BC Cambyses reigns. The rebuilding of the temple is stopped.
- 522–486 BC Darius I reigns and the rebuilding is renewed in 520  
The temple is completed and dedicated in 515.

## THE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Chapters 1—4      Captivity and interpretation of dreams and visions.

Chapter 7          Vision of the four beasts.

Chapter 8          Vision of the ram and he-goat.

Chapter 5          Belshazzar's feast—conquest of Babylon.

Chapter 9          Vision of the seventy weeks.

Chapter 6          Daniel in the lions' den.

Chapters 10—12   Daniel's prayer and visions.

From 2:4 to 7:28, the book is written in Aramaic because the focus is on the Gentile nations. Daniel 1:1—2:3 and 8:1—12:13 are written in the Hebrew language.

## A SUGGESTED OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Theme: God is sovereign in history

Theme verses: Daniel 4:34–35

- I. Daniel the Prisoner (Daniel 1:1–21)
- II. Daniel the Interpreter (Daniel 2:1—6:28)
  - A. Interpreting the image dream (Daniel 2)
  - B. The golden image (Daniel absent) (Daniel 3)
  - C. Interpreting the tree dream (Daniel 4)
  - D. Interpreting the handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5)
  - E. Daniel in the lions' den (Daniel 6)
- III. Daniel the Seer (Daniel 7:1—12:13)
  - A. The vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7)
  - B. The vision of the ram and he-goat (Daniel 8)
  - C. The seventy weeks appointed to Israel (Daniel 9)
  - D. The vision of Israel's future and the end (Daniel 10—12)

Six different kingdoms are presented in this book: Babylon—the head of gold (2:32, 36–38) and the winged lion (7:4); Media-Persia—the arms and chest of silver (2:32, 39) and the bear (7:5); Greece—the thighs of brass (2:32, 39) and the leopard (7:6); Rome—the legs of iron (2:33, 40) and the “dreadful” beast (7:7); the kingdom of Antichrist—the ten toes (2:41–43) and the little horn (7:8); and the kingdom of Christ—the smiting stone that fills the earth (2:34–35, 44–45) and the Ancient of Days (7:9–14).





# GOD RULES AND OVERRULES

(Daniel 1)

**F**rom May to September 1787, the American Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia to develop a system of government for the new nation. By June 28, progress had been so slow that Benjamin Franklin stood and addressed George Washington, president of the convention. Among other things, he said: “I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men.”<sup>1</sup> He then moved that they invite some of the local clergy to come to the assembly to lead them in prayer for divine guidance. The motion would have passed except that the convention had no budget for paying visiting chaplains.

Though not a professed evangelical believer, Franklin was a man who believed in a God who is the Architect and Governor of the universe, a conviction that agrees with the testimony of Scripture. Abraham called God “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25), and King Hezekiah prayed, “Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth” (2 Kings 19:15). In Daniel’s day, King Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that “the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men” (Dan. 4:32 NIV).

The first chapter of Daniel's book<sup>2</sup> gives ample evidence of the sovereign hand of God in the affairs of both nations and individuals.

### **GOD GAVE NEBUCHADNEZZAR VICTORY (1:1–2)<sup>3</sup>**

For decades, the prophets had warned the rulers of Judah that their idolatry, immorality, and injustice toward the poor and needy would lead to the nation's ruin. The prophets saw the day coming when God would bring the Babylonian army to destroy Jerusalem and the temple and take the people captive to Babylon. A century before the fall of Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah had proclaimed this message (Isa. 39), and Micah his contemporary shared the burden (Mic. 4:10). The prophet Habakkuk couldn't understand how Jehovah could use the godless Babylonians to chasten His own people (Hab. 1), and Jeremiah lived to see these prophecies, plus his own prophecies, all come true (Jer. 20; 25; 27). God would rather have His people living in shameful captivity in a pagan land than living like pagans in the Holy Land and disgracing His name.

The fall of Jerusalem looked like the triumph of the pagan gods over the true God of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar burned the temple of God and even took the sacred furnishings and put them into the temple of his own god in Babylon. Later, Belshazzar would use some of those holy vessels to praise his own gods at a pagan feast, and God would judge him (Dan. 5). No matter how you viewed the fall of Jerusalem, it looked like a victory for the idols; but it was actually a victory for the Lord! He kept His covenant with Israel and He fulfilled His promises. In fact, the same God who raised up the Babylonians to defeat Judah later raised up the Medes and Persians to conquer Babylon. The Lord also ordained that a pagan ruler decree that the Jews could return to their land and rebuild their temple. As missionary leader A. T. Pierson used to say, "History is His story."

God had made a covenant with the people of Israel, promising that He

would care for them and bless them if they obeyed His statutes, but if they disobeyed, He would chasten them and scatter them among the Gentiles (Lev. 26; Deut. 27—30). He wanted Israel to be “a light to the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6 NKJV) and reveal the glories of the true and living God; but instead, the Jews became like the Gentiles and worshipped their false gods. The nation’s ungodly kings and civic leaders, the false prophets, and the faithless priests were the cause of the moral decay and the ultimate destruction of the nation (Lam. 4:13; Jer. 23:9–16; 2 Chron. 6:14–21). How strange that God’s own people didn’t obey Him, but Nebuchadnezzar and the pagan Babylonian army did obey Him!

So wise and powerful is our God that He can permit men and women to make personal choices and still accomplish His purposes in this world. When He isn’t permitted to rule, He will overrule, but His will shall ultimately be done and His name glorified. We worship and serve a sovereign God who is never caught by surprise. No matter what our circumstances may be, we can always say with confidence, “Alleluia! ... The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” (Rev. 19:6 NKJV).

### GOD GAVE FAVOR TO DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS (1:3–16)

The king’s policy was to train the best people of the conquered nations to serve in his government. He could benefit from their knowledge of their own people and could also use their skills to strengthen his own administration. There were several deportations of Jews to Babylon both before and after the fall of Jerusalem, and it appears that Daniel and his three friends were taken in 605 when they were probably fifteen or sixteen years old. The prophet Ezekiel was sent to Babylon in 597, and in 586, the temple was destroyed.

**A dedicated remnant (vv. 3–4a).** Even a cursory reading of the Old Testament reveals that the majority of God’s people have not always followed

the Lord and kept His commandments. It has always been the “faithful remnant” within the Jewish nation that has come through the trials and judgments to maintain the divine covenant and make a new beginning. The prophet Isaiah named one of his sons “Shear-jashub,” which means “a remnant shall return” (Isa. 7:3). The same principle applies to the church today, for not everybody who professes faith in Jesus Christ is truly a child of God (Matt. 7:21–23). In His messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor, our Lord always had a special word for “the overcomers,” the faithful remnant in each congregation who sought to obey the Lord (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 24–28; 3:4–5, 12, 21). Daniel and his three friends were a part of the faithful Jewish remnant in Babylon, placed there by the Lord to accomplish His purposes.

These young men were superior in every way, “the brightest and the best,” prepared by God for a strategic ministry far from home. They were handsome, healthy, intelligent, and talented.<sup>4</sup> They belonged to the tribe of Judah (Dan. 1:6) and were of royal birth (v. 3).<sup>5</sup> In every sense, they were the very best the Jews had to offer. Because Ashpenaz is called master of the eunuchs, some have concluded that the four Jewish boys were made eunuchs; but that is probably an erroneous conclusion. Originally, the term “eunuch” (Heb. *saris*) referred to a servant who had been castrated so he could serve the royal harem; but the title gradually came to be applied to any important court official. The word is applied to Potiphar and he was married (Gen. 37:36). The Jewish law forbade castration (Deut. 23:1), so it’s difficult to believe that these four faithful Hebrew men who resisted Babylonian customs in every other way would have submitted to it.

**A difficult trial (vv. 4b–7).** It was an honor to be trained as officers in the king’s palace, but it was also a trial; for these dedicated Jewish boys would have to adapt themselves to the ways and the thinking of the Babylonians. The purpose of the “course” was to transform Jews into

Babylonians, and this meant not only a new land, but also new names, new customs, new ideas, and a new language. For three years, their Babylonian teachers would attempt to “brainwash” the four Jewish young men and teach them how to think and live like Babylonians.

The name Daniel means “God is my judge,” but it was changed to Belteshazzar or “Bel protect his life.” Hananiah means “the Lord shows grace,” but his new name, Shadrach, means “command of Aku” (the moon-god). Mishael means “Who is like God?” and the new name, Meshach, means “Who is as Aku is?” Azariah means “The Lord is my help,” but “Abednego” means “Servant of Nebo (Nego).” The name of the true and living God was replaced by the names of the false gods of Babylon; but would we expect unbelievers to do anything else?

Learning a new language and even receiving new names didn’t create much of a problem, but practicing customs contrary to the law of Moses was a great problem. The Babylonians were great builders, calculators, and military strategists, but their religion was steeped in superstition and myth. Just as Christian students in secular schools today often have to study material that contradicts what they believe, so Daniel and his friends had to master Babylonian history and science. In fact, in the final examination, they excelled all the other students (v. 20), and later, God gave them opportunities to show that their Jewish faith was superior to the faith of their captors. But when their course of training required them to disobey the holy law, they had to draw the line.

Surely the king’s food was the best in the land, so why should these four Hebrew students refuse it? Because it would defile them and make them ceremonially unclean before their God (v. 8). It was important to the Jews that they eat only animals approved by God and prepared in such a way that the blood was drained from the flesh, for eating blood was strictly prohibited (Lev. 11; 17:10–16). But even more, the king’s food would first

be offered to idols, and no faithful Jew would eat such defiled food. The early church faced this same problem.

**A discerning test (vv. 8–16).** How can God’s people resist the pressures that can “squeeze” them into conformity with the world? According to Romans 12:1–2, “conformers” are people whose lives are controlled by pressure from without, but “transformers” are people whose lives are controlled by power from within. Daniel and his three friends were transformers: Instead of being changed, they did the changing! God used them to transform the minds of powerful rulers and to bring great glory to His name in a pagan land.

The first step in solving their problem and being transformers was giving themselves wholly to the Lord. Daniel’s heart—the totality of his being—belonged to the Lord, as did the hearts of his friends (Dan. 1:8; Rom. 12:1–2). “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23 NKJV). A heart that loves the Lord, trusts the Lord, and therefore obeys the Lord has no difficulty making the right choices and trusting God to take care of the consequences. It has well been said that faith is not believing in spite of evidence—that’s superstition—but obeying in spite of consequences. When they had to choose between God’s Word and the king’s food, they chose the Word of God (Ps. 119:103; Deut. 8:3).

The second step was to be gracious toward those in authority. The four men noticed that Ashpenaz was especially friendly and kind to them and recognized that this was the working of the Lord. (Joseph had a similar experience when he was in prison. See Gen. 39—40.) “When a man’s ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7 NKJV). Instead of expecting a pagan Gentile officer to obey the law of Moses and get himself in trouble with the king, Daniel and his friends took a wise approach and asked for a ten-day experiment.

Throughout Scripture you will find courageous people who had to defy authority in order to obey God, and in every case, they took the wise and gentle approach. “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18 NIV).

Along with Daniel and his friends, you have the examples of the Hebrew midwives (Ex. 1), the apostles (Acts 4), and even Jesus Himself (1 Peter 2:13–25). All of them had to resist the law in order to obey the Lord, and God gave them success. They were courteous and didn’t try to get others into trouble. They had a meek and quiet spirit. They saw the challenge as an opportunity to prove God and glorify His name.

The four Jewish students didn’t threaten anybody, stage a protest, or try to burn down a building. They simply excelled in their studies, acted like gentlemen, and asked Melzar to test them for ten days by feeding them only water and vegetables.<sup>6</sup> Christians have no right to ask others—especially the unsaved—to take risks that they won’t take themselves. Unconsciously directed by the Lord, Melzar was willing to accept their suggestion, and God did the rest. In the end, the four Jewish boys were healthier in body and better looking than all the other students. This is a vivid illustration of the promise in Matthew 6:33 and the principle laid down in Colossians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:12; and 1 Peter 3:15.

When it comes to solving the problems of life, we must ask God for the courage to face the problem humbly and honestly, the wisdom to understand it, the strength to do what He tells us to do, and the faith to trust Him to do the rest. Our motive must be the glory of God and not finding a way of escape. The important question isn’t “How can I get out of this?” but “What can I get out of this?” The Lord used this private test to prepare Daniel and his friends for the public tests they would face in years to come. The best thing about this experience wasn’t that they were delivered from compromise, as wonderful as that was, but that they were developed in

character. No wonder God called Daniel “greatly beloved” (Dan. 9:23; 10:11, 19), for he was very much like His Beloved Son.

### **GOD GAVE ABILITY AND SUCCESS TO DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS (1:17–20)**

If you want to make a living, you get training; and if you want to make a life, you add education. But if you want to have a ministry for God, you must have divine gifts and divine help. Training and education are very important, but they are not substitutes for the ability and wisdom that only God can give.

**God’s special blessing (v. 17).** These four Hebrew youths had to study and apply themselves, but God gave them skill to learn the material, discernment to understand it, and wisdom to know how to apply it and relate it to God’s truth. As students, all of us need to ask God for wisdom (James 1:5) and then work hard to do our very best. “Faith without works is dead” (2:26), and fervent prayer can never replace faithful study. Both are necessary.

What studies did these young men pursue? Surely they were taught the religion of Babylon as well as the system of astrology that formed the basis for both their religion and their science. The king’s official counselors had to be able to interpret dreams and various omens, because understanding the times and knowing the future were both important to the king’s success. The young men were given what we would call a “secular education” steeped in the superstition of that day.

But should the people of God learn “the wisdom of this world” when they have the inspired and infallible Word of God to instruct them? Some sincere believers think that all “worldly education” is sinful, while others, just as sincere, believe that God’s people should understand the mind-set of the world but not be controlled by it. The great church father Tertullian



(160–220) is an example of the first group, for he asked, “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the church?”<sup>7</sup> He also wrote, “So, then, where is there any likeness between the Christian and the philosopher? Between the disciple of Greece and of heaven? Between the man whose object is fame, and whose object is life?”<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, Moses was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22), and the apostle Paul read the classics and even quoted from them in his letters. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 he quoted the Greek poet Menander; in Acts 17:27 and 28, he quoted Epimenides, Aratus, and Cleanthes; and in Titus 1:12, he quoted Epimenides. In 2 Timothy 4:13, he asked Timothy to bring him his books and parchments, which were probably copies of some of the Old Testament Scriptures and possibly some of the classical writers. The point is that Paul knew the classics and sought to use what he knew to reach people with the truth of God’s Word. “Beware of the atmosphere of the classics,” Robert Murray M’Cheyne wrote in a letter to a friend. “True, we ought to know them; but only as chemists handle poison—to discover their qualities, not to infect their blood with them.”<sup>9</sup>

By understanding the mind-set of the Babylonian people, especially the king’s “magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers” (Dan. 2:2 NIV), Daniel and his three friends were better able to show them the superiority of God’s wisdom. The Lord gave Daniel a special gift of understanding visions and dreams. In the first half of his book, Daniel interpreted the visions and dreams of others, but in the last half, he received visions of his own from the Lord.

**The king’s examination (vv. 18–20).** We don’t know how many students went through the entire course of study, but it’s interesting that Nebuchadnezzar himself took the time to examine them. Since the new graduates were to become his personal advisers, the king wanted to be sure

he was getting the best. By adding exceptionally intelligent new men to the staff, the king would be assured of getting the best counsel available. He was familiar with the older advisers and possibly not too happy with all of them (see 2:5–13). Was he suspicious of a palace intrigue? As we shall see later, the addition and the promotion of these four Jewish boys created jealousy and resentment among the advisers and they tried to get rid of Daniel (chap. 6). As older men, they resented their youth; as Babylonians, they resented their race; and as experienced servants, they envied their great ability and knowledge.

“Magicians” were men who dealt in the occult, while “enchanters” used incantations to accomplish their purposes. “Sorcerers” specialized in casting spells, “astrologers” studied the movements of the stars and their influence on events, and “diviners” sought to see the future by using various methods. Of course, all of these were forbidden by the law of Moses (Deut. 18:9–13). Daniel and his friends had to work alongside these men, yet they remained pure and gave a powerful testimony for the Lord.

The word *inquired* in Daniel 1:20 means “to examine and compare.” The king not only questioned the graduates, but he also compared one with another, and in this way ended up with the very best. There’s no reason why Christian students on secular campuses today shouldn’t be among the finest students who win some of the highest awards to the glory of God. Tertullian didn’t think that “Jerusalem” should have anything to do with “Athens,” but if believers from “Jerusalem” don’t witness to unbelievers in “Athens,” how will these lost sinners ever hear about Jesus Christ? Going into “all the world” includes going to our pagan campuses and letting our lights shine.

### **GOD GAVE DANIEL A LONG LIFE AND MINISTRY (1:21)**

The first year of King Cyrus’s reign was 539 BC, but Daniel was still alive in 537 BC, the third year of Cyrus (10:1). If Daniel was fifteen years old in the

year 605 when he was taken to Babylon, then he was born in 620, and he would have been eighty-three years old when he received the revelations recorded in chapters 10—12. While reading the prophecy of Jeremiah (25:11; 29:10), Daniel understood God’s plan for the Jews to return to their land and rebuild the temple and the city (Dan. 9:1–2); and he lived long enough to see this prophecy fulfilled! How long he lived after that nobody knows, nor is it important that we know. During Daniel’s long life, he had opportunity to witness to Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Belshazzar, and Cyrus, as well as to the many court officers who came and went. He was a faithful servant, and he could say with the Lord Jesus, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4 NKJV).

However, not every faithful servant of God is given the blessing of a long life. Stephen was probably a young man when he was martyred (Acts 7), and Paul was in his sixties when he was killed in Rome. The godly Scottish preacher Robert Murray M’Cheyne was two months short of being thirty years old when he died, yet his ministry still enriches us. William Whiting Borden (“Borden of Yale”) was only twenty-five when he died in Egypt, and David Brainerd, missionary to the Native Americans, was only twenty-nine when God called him. “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). We number our years, not our days, but everybody still has to live a day at a time, and we don’t know when that final day will dawn.

In order to accomplish His plans for His people, the Lord providentially works to put some of His servants into places of special honor and responsibility. When He wanted to protect Jacob’s family and the future of the nation of Israel, the Lord sent Joseph to Egypt and made him second ruler of the land. God had Esther and Mordecai in Persia, where they exposed a plot against the Jews and saved the people of Israel from being annihilated. Nehemiah was the king’s cupbearer in Susa and was able to get

royal assistance for restoring the walls of Jerusalem. I wonder if the men in high political office who assisted Paul were true believers in Jesus Christ (Acts 19:30–31; Rom. 16:23). Even if they weren't, God placed them where they were and enabled them to accomplish His will.

The events recorded in this chapter should be a great encouragement to us when we experience trials and testings and become discouraged; for when God is not allowed to rule, He overrules. God is still on the throne and will never leave us nor forsake us.

Has the enemy destroyed the holy city and the holy temple and taken God's people captive? Fear not, for there is still a godly remnant that worships the true God and serves Him. Does the enemy attempt to defile that godly remnant? Fear not, for the Lord will work on their behalf and keep them separated to Himself. Are godly believers needed in places of authority? Fear not, for the Lord will see to it that they are prepared and appointed. Does the Lord desire to communicate His prophetic truth to His people? Fear not, for He will keep His servants alive and alert until their work is done. Are you in a place of responsibility and wondering how long you can hold out? Fear not, for the same God who called you and equipped you is able to make you "continue" until you complete the tasks that He has assigned you. "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24 NKJV).

Each believer is either a conformer or a transformer. We're either being squeezed into the world's mold or we're transforming things in the world into which God has put us. Transformers don't always have an easy life, but it's an exciting one, and it gives us great delight to know that God is using us to influence others.

## QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION OR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In what ways, if any, do you think the process might have gone differently for the formation of our country had Benjamin Franklin been able to call in local clergy for prayer and dedication?
2. What does the fact of God's sovereignty mean to you in your everyday life?
3. Can you think of examples today where God uses people or powers outside of the church to cause Christians to turn back to Him?
4. List some people that you think of as the "faithful remnant" of Christianity in our world.
5. Daniel and his friends had to determine which parts of the Babylonian culture they could live with and which parts they should stand against. How do you make that determination in your own culture?

6. Describe a time when you or someone you know had to stand up for your beliefs as Daniel and his friends did in regard to the king's food.
  
7. What do you think enables a person to listen to the inner voice of God that tells him who he *is* above all the voices around telling him who he *should* be?
  
8. Name some of the challenges in confronting authorities without being unkind or angry.
  
9. In today's world, is it important to protest legislation that is contradictory to God's Word? What is the most effective way to do this?
  
10. How would you describe the traits that differentiate a "conformer" (someone who adjusts to the culture around him) from a "transformer" (someone who changes the world around him)?