

Be the Change in a Changing World
Daniel 1:1-8

Dr. Steve Horn

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Text Introduction: Daniel lived in the days of the Babylonian takeover of Israel. Daniel was drafted into the personal service of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar set out on a plan to make-over certain youth of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to direct the learning, the diet, and the way of life of certain young men. At the end of this “training” period, the hope was that these young men would serve the king. Daniel, even as a young man, recognized Nebuchadnezzar’s plan. Daniel recognized immediately that at the core of Nebuchadnezzar’s plan was the hope that Daniel would turn from his faith in the God of Israel. Though it would have been easy to go the way of many, Daniel had a different resolve.

The story of Daniel is the story of how God used that resolve. There is so much of Daniel’s story that I think is important for us to understand, so let’s begin in the chapter 1.

Text: In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it.² The Lord handed Jehoiakim king of Judah over to him, along with some of the vessels from the house of God. Nebuchadnezzar carried them to the land of Babylon, to the house of his god, and put the vessels in the treasury of his god.

³The king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his court officials, to bring some of the Israelites from the royal family and from the nobility—⁴young men without any physical defect, good-looking, suitable for instruction in all wisdom, knowledgeable, perceptive, and capable of serving in the king’s palace—and to teach them the Chaldean language and literature. ⁵The king assigned them daily provisions from the royal food and from the wine that he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end of that time they were to serve in the king’s court. ⁶Among them, from the descendants of Judah, were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷The chief official gave them other names: he gave the name Belteshazzar to Daniel, Shadrach to Hananiah, Meshach to Mishael, and Abednego to Azariah.

⁸Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king’s food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief official not to defile himself.

Introduction: We live in a changing world. And, we live in a rapidly changing world. It’s scary! As I think about these high school graduates this morning, I think about how much the world has changed in their lifetimes.

Today’s graduates were born in 1997. What did the world look like in 1997? Among many other things that happened in that year, Mother Teresa died. So did Princess Diana. Scientists in Scotland announced that they had successfully cloned a sheep. They named that sheep Dolly.

In 1997, Linett and I had a bag phone in our car. We had it to be used only for emergencies. Now, 18 years later, there are more mobile devices in the world than there are people.

We live in a changing world. Now, you might expect me to say at this point, “Resist change.” “Be the person that does not change.” That’s not what I am going to tell you. I like change. I sometimes resist change, but I like change. What I want you to hear today is: In this changing world, “be the change.”

Daniel lived in a changing world. But instead of giving in to the ungodly and immoral change around him, Daniel became the change agent. How did he do that, and how can we do that?

- **Anchored by Godly Convictions**

The King set out to change their way of . . .

- Thinking (v.4)—The king wanted them to learn a new language and new literature.
- Living (v.5)—The king wanted to change their diet. Their diet represented more than just the things they ate and drank. For these Hebrew young men, their diet represented a way of life—a godly way of life.
- Worship (v.7)—Most of all, at the heart of the king’s agenda, was his desire to change their worship. We notice this in the names. Whereas there has been much discussion on the significance of the meaning of the names, it is generally recognized that their Hebrew names all had something to do with the one true God. Their new names have something to do with referencing pagan gods.

The statement made about Daniel in 1:8 is a reference to his strong conviction that he was going to remain true to the one true God.

We must come to the place in our lives where we believe that some things are right and some things are wrong.

Where do we find those convictions? We find them in God’s Word. We live in a changing world, but God’s Word does not change. Isaiah 40:8 says, “The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God remains forever.”

- **Armed by Godly Courage**

Along with conviction, we must have the courage to stand by our convictions. Daniel had convictions, but he still had to have courage to stand by those convictions. He still had to speak up, stand up, and show up. He spoke up and begged out of the king’s conditions. He stood up to the king’s decrees. He showed up to pray even when told not to pray.

I love the story about Athanasius, early bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius strongly opposed the teachings of Arius, who declared that Christ was not the eternal Son of God, but a subordinate being. Hounded through five exiles, he was finally summoned before emperor Theodosius, who demanded he cease his opposition to Arius. The emperor reproved him and asked, “Do you not realize that all the world is against you?” Athanasius quickly answered, “Then I am against all the world.”

- **Aided by Godly Company**

Don't let it escape your notice that Daniel's resolve was strengthened by the resolve of others. Daniel and his 3 friends purposed together.

*As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.
Proverbs 27:17*

Daniel and his 3 friends prayed together. (2:17-18) Find a Church and find some friends who will help you to live out your commitment to Christ.

God never intended for us to be lone ranger Christians. C. S. Lewis said, "The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle with those who are."

- **Assured by Godly Confidence**

Daniel and his three friends remained confident in God. Daniel 3:16-18 is a great example of their confidence in God. They were confident in the plan of God. They were confident in the power of God.

- **Altered by Godly Change**

None of this happens without first being changed yourself.

One of the first verses I remember memorizing is Jeremiah 12:5. Sometimes it is a daily reminder of the challenges ahead of me. "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with the horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?"