

## Our Wisdom Is Tied to Our Piety

In my previous article, we saw that Daniel and his three friends were shown favor by the Babylonian “steward” who was directly assigned to them by the “chief of the eunuchs.” The steward agreed to Daniel’s plan that he and his friends not eat the king’s delicacies for 10 days to try and determine if they were still healthy by means of only partaking of vegetables and water.

God was with these young Hebrew boys, and at the end of the trial period they looked better than the other boys. God protected them from having to eat of the defiling delicacies of Babylon.

Let’s look now at *skill, wisdom and understanding given*.

For the third time now in this first chapter, we’re reminded that God is in complete control. “As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” (1:17) In this last section, we’re told, in effect, that the three years are already at an end (“at the end of the time” in Verse 18) and Daniel and his three friends are now brought before the king. The king speaks with them in Verse 19 and is amazed at their learning. There was none like them!

Notice Verse 20: “And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers that were in his kingdom.”

Keep in mind that, even though these young men have been trained in the ways of Babylon, they shine in the sight of the king because their wisdom has come from God, not the Babylonian magic arts. This truth will be seen to a greater degree as the book of Daniel proceeds beyond Chapter 1.

Let me note again that the primary focus of Daniel is on God — his sovereignty, his goodness and certainly his faithfulness to his people and his promises. That being said, it’s also right that we glean appropriate life lessons from the choices, lives and actions of Daniel and his three friends.

In Matthew 25, Jesus gives us an important biblical principle that we’ve seen in the lives of Daniel and his three friends. “You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. ... To everyone who has will more be given.” (Mt. 25:21, 29)

In our passage, we've seen the faithfulness of Daniel and his three friends in their firm resolve not to defile themselves with the king's food. This may seem like a small thing but it gives us a picture of another important biblical truth. Challenges of ongoing faithfulness to God will happen — not so much in the large things like resolving not to commit murder or even adultery, for example, but in the day-to-day, little things.

Are we faithful to always tell the truth? Are we faithful to put others ahead of ourselves? Are we faithful to treat others the way that we want to be treated? Are we faithful to give an honest days work to our employer? Are we faithful to give God thanks for our daily blessings? Are we faithful to be regularly in God's word? Are we faithful to fulfill our vows to God? Are we faithful to use our gifts and fulfill the calling that God has placed on us? Are we faithful members of a healthy, local, Christian church?

Former PCA pastor Dr. Bryan Chapell comments on this section of Daniel. He writes: "Daniel's protection of his relationship with the Lord was rewarded with a special closeness and communication that allowed him to understand the things of God. This is a very simple reminder that if we are responsible for leadership among God's people (as pastors, lay leaders or parents), our wisdom is inevitably tied to our piety." (Piety is a word that speaks of fulfilling our duties or obligations toward God. Piety is also sometimes used to refer to personal godliness and faithfulness to God.)

Dr. Chapell goes on: "God gives understanding and usefulness to those who are faithful to him. Piety and spiritual discernment are inseparable."

Verse 21 tells us that Daniel was captive in Babylon until the first year of King Cyrus, who was the Persian king that God used to free the children of Judah and send them back to Jerusalem. Here in the first chapter, we learn that Daniel will spend most of his life in a foreign, pagan culture. In this series from Daniel 1, we've seen a number of ways in which our non-believing culture can seek to draw Christians away from faithfulness to God. What practical life application can we glean from what we've heard today?

— Faithfulness to God in what might seem to be little things in our life is important. Daniel and his three friends were blessed by God because of their unwillingness to partake in the pleasures and delicacies of the pagan culture of Babylon. We want to be careful not be drawn away from obedience to God by the promises of a secular culture. God blesses our obedience and faithfulness to him and he does this in a number of ways. One obvious way that we're blessed when we obey God is simply because his ways are always what's best for us and anything opposed to him is not, no matter how it may seem in the moment.

— Even though it's biblical that we seek to obey God at every point, the story of Daniel and his faithfulness is not meant to be a story that merely highlights heroic moral courage. In other words, we must not merely see this book as a call to moral courage — and a desire to be like Daniel. We don't want to see the book of Daniel as merely a list of things that we should do to stand against the Pagan culture in our own day. Even though we can be encouraged by the lives of Daniel and his three friends, the book of Daniel is a reminder of the goodness and faithfulness of our Covenant God.

— We fail daily to meet God's perfect standard. Yet, God is always faithful. Our joy, rest and blessing is not in our ability to always be faithful in standing against an ungodly culture. Our rest is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Daniel didn't obey perfectly, and neither will we. Jesus is the only one who obeyed perfectly, and our hope, as well as our comfort and rest, is in Jesus, both now and for all eternity.

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