

WARM-UP

- Share about a time when you tried something new and it was a good experience.
- Was there ever a time you had to stand up for what you believe to be the right thing? What happened?
- Have you ever found yourself in a difficult situation because of something someone else did? What happened?

WORD *¹In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ²And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, 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 placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.*

DANIEL 1:1-2

(Read also **DANIEL 1:3-21.**)

Even before the people of Israel entered the land God had promised them, God warned them that they would not live long in the land if they did not remain faithful to His covenant with them. However, in the time of Daniel, the leaders of Judah turned the hearts of the people away from God. Because of this, God gave the people of Judah over to the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar's troops attacked Jerusalem and carried off its inhabitants into exile. Today, we will look at how God remains sovereign in different situations and how Daniel and his friends responded accordingly.

1 Daniel and his friends did not lose faith in God even in difficulty.

³Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. . . . ⁸But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. **DANIEL 1:3-4, 8**

After Judah fell to the Babylonians, King Nebuchadnezzar gave instructions to educate their young nobility in the ways of Babylon. These skilled young men were to forget their identity and, in effect, their covenant with God. Despite the difficulty they were facing, their faith in God did not waver. They also remained true to God by not defiling themselves by eating food that God had declared unclean for them. What did the king want them to do and how did Daniel respond (Daniel 1:5-10)?

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2 Daniel and his friends trusted God's sovereignty.

¹¹Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹²"Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." **DANIEL 1:11-13**

As part of their training, the skilled young men were to eat and drink the king's food. Daniel and his friends resisted. This was against the beliefs of Daniel and his friends, who knew God's laws and restrictions. Even when they risked their lives, they stood by their convictions and trusted God's sovereignty to pull them through. How do you think this test increased their faith in God? How do you think it could have prepared them for other tests to come?

3

God's favor and wisdom were upon Daniel and his friends.

¹⁷As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. . . . ²⁰And 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 all his kingdom. DANIEL 1:17, 20

God blessed Daniel and his friends with favor. They looked better even when their diet only consisted of water and vegetables. Then, they also received wisdom and ability from God. The king recognized their ability. In fact, they were *ten times better* than the others. How have you experienced God's favor and wisdom in difficult situations?

APPLICATION

- What do you think Daniel and his friends felt and experienced as exiles in Babylon? Where do you think they drew strength and conviction from, and what can you learn from this story?
- Do you believe that God is sovereign, and how should we act in response to this truth?
- How can you show the loving faithfulness of God to your family and friends this week?

PRAYER

- Thank God for being sovereign over your life and never abandoning you even when things are difficult. Ask Him to show you where He is even in difficulty.
- Pray that God will help you understand the challenges you are facing, especially if they are the result of another's actions. Ask for the grace to forgive the ones who acted wrongly and to honor God with your life.
- Ask God for an opportunity to share about His goodness and sovereignty with your family and friends this week. Pray that their hearts will be open to what you will share.



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