**14 January 24**

**(Week 20)**

**DANIEL**

**A Sincere Faith**

**Focal Verses: Daniel 1:8-21**

**Aim for Change**

By the end of the lesson, we will: **ANALYZE** the choice that Daniel and his friends faced and that choice’s outcome; **ASPIRE** to have the faith of Daniel when confronted with contradictory directives from authorities; and **IDENTIFY** similar situations that call for the exercise of faith.

**In Focus**

Michelle had been working at her new company for a little over a month, and she had just been invited by her co-workers out to lunch. While at lunch her co-worker Tamika asked if she was doing anything for the weekend. She had not been out in a while and replied that she did not have plans yet. Tamika asked if she would like to go to a party in what Michelle knew was a neighborhood known for drug dealing.

Tamika said, “Most of us who work here hang out around there together, and it would be cool to have you join us.” Two of the other co-workers at the table nodded in agreement.

Michelle thought about it for a second. She remembered her cousin almost overdosing at a party in that same neighborhood. She knew that God had not called her to be involved in that kind of environment.

“No, I think I’ll pass. I’m not really into the party scene like that. But let me pay for lunch today, I appreciate you all inviting me.”

***Sometimes God places us in situations where our faith will be tested. Have you ever been tempted to compromise the standards of your faith to be accepted by others?***

**Keep In Mind**

*“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”* (**Daniel 1:8 KJV)**

**Lesson Text**

**Daniel 1:8-21**

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

**9 Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.**

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

**11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,**

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

**13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.**

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

**15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.**

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

**17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.**

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

**19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.**

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

**21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.**

**The Lesson**

**The People, Places and Times**

**Pulse:** In the Hebrew language, this includes everything that is grown from sown seed—not only vegetables, but also fruit, legumes, grains, and bread. It was very similar to a healthy vegetarian diet. This type of food was eaten in a partial fast, excluding meat, dairy, and other delicacies. Eating pulse was not a condemnation of meat eating in general, but regarded by the participant as a way to humble themselves before God**.**

**Eunuch:** A eunuch was usually a man who was castrated. These men were guardians of the women of the court. Men did not volunteer to become eunuchs, their castration prevented them from becoming a threat to the women of the court. Eunuchs were also placed in charge of other court offices because they were single-minded; they were not distracted by sexual desires or family responsibilities. In the ancient world, eunuchs were considered remarkable for their faithfulness to their masters. Eunuchs were common in the royal courts of the Jews, Persians, Babylonians, Romans, and Greeks. In the Law, it was forbidden for eunuchs to be a part of public worship (Deuteronomy 23:1). Elsewhere in the New Testament, Jesus commends those who have figuratively made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:12).

***Why is obedience to God’s Word important in developing and strengthening our faith?***

**Background**

The book of Daniel opens with the statement that God delivered His people into captivity. Other prophets issued warnings of this captivity, and Daniel journaled his experiences during the exile. While captivity is never ideal, God’s promise not to leave or forsake His people is evident in these writings. Although Daniel’s companions would be memorialized by their Babylonian names (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), Daniel retained his identity and reputation throughout history for the courageous stand he took for God. Mishael, Azariah, and Hananiah were also faithful. They chose to be thrown into a fiery furnace rather than bow down to the king’s golden idol.

***What does it mean to be faithful?***

**In Depth**

**1. 1. Purpose Over Pressure (Daniel 1:8–14)** Daniel maintained an important element of his identity. His purpose in refusing to eat the food the king provided was much less about ingesting food, and more about maintaining faithfulness to God’s Law (Leviticus 17:7–16). While Daniel was in the king’s control, he had to obey certain rules, but he still maintained control over his own body.

This type of commitment should also reside within us and resonate with our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. More than a simple protest, Daniel asked permission to follow an alternate diet and offered a test run so they could be monitored and protected from others who might be jealous of their special treatment. Often our purposes can be thwarted by pressure from our peers and the powers that be.

Devising a plan of action might be the best tool to employ, considering temptations and threats will indeed come. Daniel’s purpose to obey God was exemplified by his statement of refusal, and his willingness to operate under certain conditions that would satisfy both sides.

***When we face temptations to compromise or disobey God, what should we do to resist?***

**2**. **Faith Over Fear (vv. 15–16)** Daniel asked to be fed a vegetarian diet to avoid eating meat sacrificed to idols and to avoid other trappings of Gentile royalty that might have compromised his dietary restrictions. We may at times be questioned as to why we refrain from certain activities even though they can seem harmless and pose no visible threat.

As Daniel and his companions ate a diet of pulse (vegetables), rather than consume the king’s meat and drink, others expected them to wither away. However, as they feasted on vegetables and stood on their faith in God, they were blessed with even healthier appearances than all those in the royal household.

Likewise, our faith should literally show in our lives because God’s presence is impossible to ignore. Their patience and calmness in this high-pressured situation helped them operate less out of fear and more through faith in God. They were confident they would not only survive but thrive in God’s care.

***How can our faith support us in triumphing over our fears?***

**3. Testimony After the Test (vv. 17–21)** Despite Daniel’s youth and the fact he was a captive, he honored God in all he did. Moreover, he did not plot to escape his captivity or otherwise thwart Nebuchadnezzar’s schemes. By staying where God had placed him, Daniel and his friends were able to be witnesses of God’s power simply by being obedient. Their peaceful resistance to the meal requirement was balanced by their willingness to serve and answer to the king.

Their physical appearance astounded those around them, especially when accompanied by the God-given gifts of discernment and prophecy. Daniel and his friends’ testimony was not in their ability to pray for and receive an immediate release from captivity, but rather a demonstration of how God kept them, elevated them, and ultimately made them victorious in a treacherous situation. In time, Daniel and his friends would be tested further by the pagan king, but they continued to be faithful to their God.

***What are the benefits of choosing to obey God and remain faithful?***

**Liberating Lesson**

Those whom society designates as role models are not guaranteed to be examples worth following. Our culture admires celebrity for the sake of fame and seems to worship money at any cost, regardless of the true price in terms of morals and decency. How can we demonstrate principles and cherish faith in God when the very opposite is what receives all of the attention?

The church must be willing to speak the truth, identify both the good and the questionable, and try every spirit against the Spirit of God. A simple act of discernment can prevent disaster and may well save a soul.

***If you evaluate your personal life, do you demonstrate the characteristics of a positive role model?***

**Application for Activation**

Write out a list of positive Christian role models who exhibit a life of conviction and character.

Choose to fast from specific foods this week, e.g., meat or sweets.

Pray that God would give you convictions that come from Him and not your other authority figures.

**Take Aways**

**Closing Prayer**

**Week of 14 January 24**

**Daily Bible Readings**

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**Monday -** 2nd Chronicles 13-17

**Tuesday –** 2nd Chronicles 18-20

**Wednesday -**2nd Chronicles 21-24

**Thursday –** 2nd Chronicles 25-27

**Friday –** 2nd Chronicles 28-31

**Saturday –** 2nd Chronicles 32-34

**Sunday –** 2nd Chronicles 35-36