

Life Lesson 106
Daniel – Part 1
Text: Daniel 1

Introduction

To be carried away by soldiers to a foreign land – how frightening that would be! That is exactly what happened to Daniel. He, like Ezekiel, was captured by the Babylonians a few years before the final fall of Jerusalem.

The Story

King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, decided to train a few of the Hebrew children in the palace. Instead of being ordinary slaves, they would become his wise men and advisors. He ordered his servant, Asphenaz, to pick the smartest and the handsomest Jewish boys from among the captives to train. The king ordered their education, and prescribed what he believed to be a special diet to make them strong.

Daniel was one of the Hebrew children chosen to be trained. From what we can see, Daniel must have been one of the smartest and handsomest of the captive boys. Three of Daniel's friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were also chosen. They all were given Babylonish names. Daniel became known as Belteshazzar. The other three were renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

It was an honor to be chosen to be specially trained for the king's service – but that did not make it any easier for Daniel and his friends. For one thing, they must have missed their homes and their parents. For another, right away they saw that they would be required to do things that God had forbidden them to do.

It started with the food. The king had ordered that they be fed on wine and meat. Daniel knew God did not want him to drink. He also knew that the types of meat that were fixed had been forbidden in the law of God that He had given to Moses. They weren't supposed to eat things the Babylonians thought were delicacies, like monkey meat and pigs and dogs. What should he do?

Daniel was not a guest, but a slave. A slave has to do what the master orders. The king was his master – and Daniel knew him to be a cruel and heartless one! The king could order Daniel thrown in a lion's den or have his head cut off without a second thought.

Perhaps if Daniel had been in the habit of acting surly and rebellious Melzar, who was in charge of Daniel and his friends, would have cheerfully sent him to the lion's den when he came to talk to him about the food problem. Perhaps, too, if Daniel came with a mean and bitter attitude he would have been immediately punished – and the story of Daniel would have ended before it had a chance to begin!

Daniel must have been helpful and obedient as a rule, because Melzar was concerned about him when he saw Daniel was not eating the food he was given. The Bible says that he loved Daniel and wanted to help him.

“I would not make you eat it,” Melzar said to Daniel, after Daniel had explained why he did not want to eat the food. “But, the king has ordered this diet so that you will be strong and healthy. If he comes and sees you all pale and sickly, he will kill me for not taking better care of you.”

Daniel saw that the king's intention was not to make him disobey God. The king only wanted him to be healthy. Instead of being belligerent and saying, "No – you can do what you like to me, but I am not eating that stuff," Daniel offered another plan.

"I do not think that a different diet will make us weaker," he said to Melzar. "Why don't you let my friends and I have only vegetables and water for ten days. The others can eat the regular food. At the end of ten days you can see if we are not as healthy as the others."

This was a reasonable plan, and since Daniel had tried to co-operate with Melzar, he was ready to listen and help Daniel all he could.

Ten days passed, and they were examined carefully. Sure enough, they were stronger and healthier than the others who were eating the king's diet. When he saw that no harm would come to them, Melzar gladly gave them food that was not forbidden by God.

The Life Lesson

There is an important lesson to be learned from Daniel! God wants you to obey your parents and teachers, doesn't He? We are commanded to obey those that have authority over us. What should we do if someone who is an authority tells us to do something we know God does not want us to do?

Daniel showed us the answer to that hard question. First of all, he was diligent and cooperative so the Melzar was ready to listen to him. If you are in the habit of whining and being disobedient, those who are in authority probably will not bother to listen to your point of view. They will think you are just griping again!

Secondly, Daniel did not start out by yelling and insisting that he would not eat the food or drink the wine. He explained to Melzar why he had a problem with it. When Melzar did not agree right away, Daniel respectfully gave an alternative plan.

If someone who is responsible for you makes what you feel is an unwise decision, you should not start out yelling and screaming, either. You could try to respectfully explain your objections. You should also try, like Daniel did, to see why the decision was made and perhaps give an alternative plan.

For example, one girl was upset because her parents, who did not go to church, told her she could not go to Sunday School and church one Sunday. She could have cried and told them that God had commanded His people to meet regularly. She could have said, “God wants me to go to church, so I am going no matter what you do!”

I am glad to say she did not do that, though. Instead she asked, in a respectful manner, why they wanted her to stay home. Her mother explained that they were having company on Sunday afternoon and she needed her help to get ready for them. Her mother did not want to keep her from serving God. She just wanted some help. Because she was not a Christian, she did not realize how wrong that decision was.

Instead of acting ugly and insisting, the girl asked if she could go to Sunday School if she worked extra hard on Saturday to get ready for the company. Her mother agreed. The girl worked hard and willingly instead of playing on Saturday. On Sunday morning her mother gladly gave her permission to go to church.

There may be times when we must stand and say, “I am serving God, no matter what you do to me.” In the weeks to come we will be learning about the times when

Daniel, himself, was in that very position. There are other times, though, when there is no need to be angry or defiant. If we figure out what our authority really wants, and try to make them happy, often there is no problem at all.

God directs us through parents, teachers, preachers, and others who are responsible for us. If we do our best to serve the Lord by serving those in authority over us, the Lord will keep things straight for us!

Review Questions

Why was Daniel living in the Babylonian king's palace?

He was chosen to be trained as one of the king's advisors.

What problem did Daniel have there?

He was given meat and drink that God had forbidden His people to have.

What did Daniel do?

He suggested an alternate plan to the man who was in charge of the boys.

Who kind of contest did Daniel suggest?

He and his friends would eat vegetables and drink water while the other boys ate meat and drank wine. At the end of ten days, they would see who was healthier.

Who won the healthy eating contest?

Daniel and his friends were stronger and healthier.

What should you do if someone who is your authority tells you to do something you know is wrong?

First try to figure out why he is telling you to do it and offer an alternative. If nothing else works, you must say "no."