



Unshakable Faith

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Week 1

Theme: Identity (Chapter 1)

Weekly Memory Verse

"To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds."

– Daniel 1:17

Day 1: Deliverance

Prayer of Illumination

God, source of all light, by Your Word, You give light to the soul. Pour out on us the Spirit of wisdom and understanding that our hearts and minds may be opened. Amen.

Reading

Read Chapter 1 entirely, then focus in on Daniel 1:1-2.

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 1:1-2?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

We start this chapter, right out of the gate between a rock and a hard place. Daniel's time was at the beginning of the 70-year captivity that Jeremiah had prophesied and then, we see that Babylon attacked Jerusalem and took the Israelites as captives again later on. The people see hope coming and then devastatingly, their captivity period is extended due to sin and rebellion. Not to make light of the gravity of this story, but I think in this season, our minds can go to our present COVID circumstances. Just when we thought the quarantining was over, it was

extended (though for different circumstances than sin and rebellion). And yet, the message of the phrase that we see frequently in the Old Testament, "The Lord delivered," stands true in the story of Daniel and still stands true today. Deliverance is a hope and promise that God gives us because it is a part of His character, and we can stand on the fact that God cannot disown His own character. We serve a deliverer today.

Reflection

How do you relate to Daniel 1:1-2 today?

In what areas do you need to trust that God is who He says He is - a deliverer?

How does your life reflect the belief that God is a deliverer even if you can't see it yet?

From where have you been asking to be delivered?

Might God be saying He's positioned you to be right where you are?

Day 2: Identity and Character

Prayer of Illumination

Prepare our hearts, O God, to accept Your Word. Silence in us any voices but Your own, so that we may hear Your Word and also do it; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading

Daniel 1:3-7

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 1:3-7?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

These verses reflect Daniel's identity as a Jewish man, who was chosen to serve the king and learn the language and literature of the Babylonians. It was different and something new for him, but he was given a choice: What identity was going to continue to shape him? Was it the Babylonian identity that he needed to conform to, or was it his identity that was rooted in Judaism? What's important about Daniel's identity is not that he is Jewish per se, but that he is orienting his identity to God. He grounds himself more in God than in Judaism.

We are all given the decision to root our identity in something or someone. The definition of identity is "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual." Every decision we make either more firmly roots our identity or masks our identity. That's why you never see someone change who they are with their core values, beliefs, and character overnight. It's a gradual stacking of daily decisions that adds up over time.

Throughout these verses, we see Daniel was convicted to remain steadfast in his identity.

Reflection

Who are you? Who do others say you are?

What or who is your identity rooted in?

How have you let culture name you and tame you?

Does your identity and character change based on external circumstances or is it driven by internal beliefs and values?

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Day 3: Faithfulness

Prayer of Illumination

Almighty God, in You are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Open our eyes that we may see the wonders of Your Word. Amen.

Reading

Daniel 1:8-10

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 1:8-10?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

Daniel was incredibly faithful to the Torah, God's Word. He wasn't just familiar with God's Word, but rather, he meditated on it day and night (Joshua 1:8). Daniel 1:8-10 in the NIV says that Daniel resolved not to defile himself. The Amplified version says, "Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile (taint, dishonor) himself." In other words, Daniel refused to compromise in areas that he knew God wanted him to be faithful in.

It's in these verses we hear the similar words found in Isaiah 55:9 when God says, "My ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God's way is always best. Shortcuts delay the Promised Land. Compromise in one area often means compromise in every area, and defiling oneself always affects someone else. Daniel was faithful from the start regardless of the consequences, and it resulted in favor and compassion.

As you reflect on these verses, what comes to mind?

Reflection

Is there an area in your life in which you've chosen compromise where the Lord is asking you to be more faithful? Share that with someone this week and honestly ask for accountability.

What shortcuts are you tempted to take in this season because they look better on the outside or are easier in the moment?

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Day 4: Training

Prayer of Illumination

Psalm 19:9-10, "The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb." Open my heart that I may know and trust Your Word — that it would be sweeter than honey. Amen.

Reading

Daniel 1:11-21

Meditation

What is the Lord revealing to you today through Daniel 1:11-21?

What do these verses say about God's character?

How does this apply to us today?

Contemplation

Daniel, Hananiah (also known as Shadrach), Mishael (also known as Meshack), and Azariah (also known as Abednego), had to go through an intense training. Daniel 1:5 tells us this training lasted three years. On top of that, they went through ten days of a particular fast, only eating vegetables and water and believing that God was going to do abundantly more than they were asking. They visibly displayed that God was on their side, and as a result of that risky faith, God honored them with visions and dreams of all kinds. God gave knowledge and understanding in ways they may not have received otherwise.

We know training doesn't happen overnight, and it often requires a strict regimen. In weight training, it's a painful process as old muscle is torn down and new muscle is rebuilt. In these verses, we see four men go through strict training, collectively and together. Their strength was in "where two or more are gathered" (Matt 18:20). There was accountability in their training. No one does CrossFit alone for a reason. And as a result of their training, God provided a unique anointing — granting them favor, compassion, wisdom and knowledge.

Reflection

Risky faith is never easy, but you don't need to go through it alone. Who has God put in your life to help hold you accountable and pursue God? When was the last time you thanked them for being your "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego"?

In what area of your life do you think God is training you for something He hasn't yet revealed? Have you ever wanted the full game plan before the next step?

Commit to fasting a meal today with one other person. Listen to what God wants to reveal to you. Ask Him for dreams, visions, blueprints, etc.

Day 5: Pause & Reflect

Ask the Lord, journal, and pray through the following questions ...

God, what are some of the takeaways from Chapter 1 that you want to highlight in my life?

Spend time today posturing yourself to listen and reflect on each day's theme:

- Deliverance
- Identity and Character
- Faithfulness
- Training

What is one thing you are going to do in response to this week's message and reading plan, and who is going to hold you accountable?

Write down one takeaway and one action step in a journal to commit to it.

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