
Intro: Was there ever a time in your life when you felt like God was not listening to you? What was it and how did you respond at the time?

I doubt there has ever been a true believer in God that was not so overwhelmed by life and what was happening to them that they began to question God’s presence or even His love for them. Sometimes we are at a breaking point and we need to see the miraculous Creator of our life do something significant to help us. We want to see God in action!

Some might think that sounds like a lack of faith, but David cried out to God time and time again. Listen to David in Psalm 13. “How long, O Lord? Will forget me? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death; my enemy will say, ‘I have overcome him, and my foes will rejoice when I fall.’ But I rejoice in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.”

Question – How can David, a man after God’s own heart both question God and tell of his complete confidence in God in the same discourse? (*David is venting his frustration to God, getting everything off his chest and out in the open, but then he declares that he knows God loves him and everything will be okay in the end and he will not quit singing to the Lord who has been good to him. Isn’t that refreshing to know that a man after God’s own heart could pour out his frustration at how hard everything was at the time? He’s not showing a lack of faith; he is pouring out his heart and then celebrating the fact that God will at some point I come through again in God’s time and God’s way and it will be good. Some would think that David had a slight lapse in faith, but in reality it shows genuine faith to trust God even when it seems God is ignoring us.*)

I want us to see that God is the hero that transforms life even in the darkest of times. It was true in David’s life and it is true in Daniel’s life. All God’s great servants have that one thing in common. No matter what life throws at them, no matter how frustrated they get, they keep their faith and trust in God to do the miraculous in His time. They are long-suffering, one of the characteristics of God. Many people teach Daniel as a book about the incredible faith and miraculous power of Daniel. However, the Book of Daniel is about the miraculous power of God in the life of those who are faithful. It comes in many forms.

Background: Daniel was a nobleman of Judah. He was taken into captivity probably while in his early teens. Imagine being a teen-ager with clout and suddenly your life goes from somebody to owned by somebody! His ministry lasted the entire length of the Babylonian Captivity. His final prophecy has been dated to around 536BC. He would have been in his 80’s. The meaning of his name is “my God is Judge.” That is in perfect harmony with the overall theme of this book, the sovereignty of God. The book describes the current and future world conflicts, but God’s control over all events is clearly demonstrated.

Read Daniel 1:1-2

1. Why would God allow Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, to conquer Jehoiakim, King of Judah?

(Notice it says the Lord delivered King Jehoiakim into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar. God's people had quit trusting in God and walking in all His ways. That never turns out good. God protected His people when they were faithful. As a whole, they had not been so God delivered them by withdrawing His protection from them. The Gate or hedge of God's protection was left open by the calloused hearts of His people.)

Q – How do we lose the protection of God today or can we? *(Yes, we can. All we have to do is quit listening to the Holy Spirit of God as He leads us through the Word of God and prayer. If our hearts grow calloused to listening to God's leading, we will take a path that brings failures and heartaches into our lives. In essence, we allow life to conquer us by not constantly listening to God. We are called to study, learn and do His will with our lives as we grown in the knowledge of our Lord.)*

2. What did Nebuchadnezzar take from Judah and what did he do with them? *(He carried off some of the articles from the temple of God and put them in the treasure house of his god in Babylon.)*

Read Daniel 1:3-16

3. What were the qualifications of the young men to be selected for special service given by King Nebuchadnezzar? *(Israelites; from the royal family; young with no physical defects; handsome; show aptitude for every kind of learning; be well-informed; be quick to understand and qualified to serve in the king's palace)*

Q – Why do you think the king would want to use these captive slaves from Judea? *(Their place in the palace would cause their families to not want to cause any trouble; to use highly educated young men to be further educated to serve the king's growing interests; or to indoctrinate them into the Babylonian ideals, spoiling them so they will become bridges to Judea relationships, in other words for control of lands and peace, just as kings would do with arranged marriages.)*

4. What was Ashpenaz, the chief of the court officials, to teach the ones selected? *(Babylonian literature, and language to steep them in the culture.)*

5. What would they get for 3 years if chosen? *(The same gourmet food the king ate, the wine the king drank. The king was spoiling them so they would never want to leave this life of indulgence. That would be like someone saying, "Come to work for me, I will educate you, give you steak and lobster, a great place to live, your will never be without as long as you live. ")*

Q – How do people fall for that same temptation today? *(People live above their means and therefore we are always focused on taking care of what is keeping us feeling fulfilled and successful. It can happen to any of us at anytime if we are not in control of our lives.)*

What kind of knowledge could this ancient culture teach? The library of Ashurbanipal (704-681 BC) before Daniel's day was uncovered and contained over 22,000 volumes of cuneiform tablets. They had religious, literary and scientific works. Their was a numbering system created by the Sumarians that is still in use today. It is the system of 60; 60 seconds in a minute; 60 minutes in an hour, dividing a circle into 360 degrees. They knew algebra, geometry. The Pythagorean theorem was known by the Babylonians more than a thousand years before Pythagoras! They knew the positions of the stars and planets. The Code of Hammurabi, which was 1700BC tells

how physicians were performing delicate operations on the human eye. They were so advanced in knowledge and culture that it is very difficult for us to even imagine.)

6. Who was chosen from Judah? (Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.)

They were given new names. People often wonder if that was simply to make them more Babylonian. Here was the problem. Daniel's name meant "God is Judge". Hananiah meant "The Lord is gracious". Azariah meant "The Lord is my Help". Mishael meant "Who is like God?" Nebuchadnezzar was not going to allow them to be known by these Hebrew names that lifted up their God! So Ashpenaz gives them new names. Daniel becomes Belteshazzar (Bel will protect); Hananiah became Shadrach (Inspired of Aku); Mishael becomes Meshach (Belonging to Aku); and Azariah become Abednego (Servant of Nego). They were attempting to turn them to their gods of victory believing they had done away with the Hebrew God.

7. Why did Daniel think that he would defile himself by eating from the King's kitchen? (Probably because eating and drinking the best in the Kingdom could easily cause you to get comfortable and start embracing the Babylonian lifestyle. Too much of a good thing can be very dangerous, especially when it comes to luxury.)

8. What does Daniel ask for instead? (Vegetables and water. If they were going to build muscle and strength, this was not exactly the perfect diet.)

9. What miraculous abilities does God give to the four servants of God? (Obviously a 10 day blessing of health and nutrition. He also gives them exceptional knowledge and understanding of the Babylonian literature and the ability to learn exceptionally fast and accurately. He also gives Daniel the miraculous ability to understand visions and dreams. Notice God is providing the level of their excellence because they will not forsake Him, even in captivity among foreign gods.)

Q – How could God do the miraculous within Christians, within us today IF we would trust in Him alone and bravely stand regardless of the costs? (God can empower us to the highest level of self-control; to the highest level of morals and ethics; to be the antithesis of this world, a light in darkness. God can empower us to show hope in midst of the worst of times, to confound people who do not understand the peace of God in the middle of life's storms.)

10. What did the King discover and what did he do with these Judean Hebrews? (He discovered they were 10 x's better in wisdom and understanding than all his magicians and enchanters throughout the entire kingdom. He placed them in the king's service.)

Q – What are some of the lessons you and I can learn from this chapter?