

Session 9B Daniel: Six Examples of the Forerunner Lifestyle (Dan. 1-6)

I. OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The first section is historical (Dan. 1-6): It highlights six episodes in Daniel's life.

Daniel 1: Dedication of youth, refuses to compromise, embraces a fasted lifestyle in Babylon

Daniel 2: Nebuchadnezzar's first dream – receiving the word of the Lord in crisis

Daniel 3: Being a faithful witness (Rev. 13), deliverance from the fiery furnace

Daniel 4: Nebuchadnezzar's second dream – calling leaders to righteousness

Daniel 5: Belshazzar's feast - the sudden downfall of governments (fall of Babylon)

Daniel 6: Daniel in the lion's den - supernatural deliverance of believers in persecution

II. THE FIRST SIX CHAPTERS OF DANIEL: EXAMPLES OF DEDICATION (DAN. 1–6)

- A. The first section of the book of Daniel is historical (chapters 1-6). In each of the first six chapters we read about episodes in Daniel's life that give us a picture of the values and lifestyle that the Lord is calling forerunners to embrace. These include wholehearted dedication, endurance in persecution by taking a stand for Jesus and His Word, and boldness to speak prophetically, even to secular authorities, as Daniel did when he interpreted the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar.
- B. The Lord is raising up forerunners who will give others understanding of God's purpose and plan to expose the deceptive strategies of the enemy. Understanding the truth is essential in equipping God's people, so that they are not deceived, confused, offended, fearful, or seduced by sin in the midst of the unique dynamics that will occur in the generation in which the Lord returns. Rather, the Lord's people are to walk in clarity, peace, gratitude, confidence, and holy love.

III. DANIEL 1: EMBRACING A FASTED LIFESTYLE – DANIEL'S YOUTH

- A. In Daniel's early days in Babylon, while still in their teen years, he and his friends refused to compromise. They set their heart to not defile themselves (Dan. 1:8).
⁸But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank... (Dan. 1:8)
- B. They were wholehearted in their dedication to the Lord all their days, starting in their youth. They embraced a fasted lifestyle in the face of certain pleasures that were available in Babylon, and they refused to compromise by yielding to the ungodly culture that they lived in. Overcoming peer pressure to conform is a challenge in every generation.
- C. Biblical fasting is abstaining from food for spiritual reasons. It is not merely a diet. It involves reducing the types and amount of food that we eat and increasing our time with the Lord.

- D. By fasting food, we position ourselves before the Lord *so that our heart may be tenderized and become more sensitive*; thus, we are able to receive more from Him.
- E. In the fasted lifestyle, we embrace a spirit of heightened consecration in order to position ourselves to receive more from the Lord. The fasted lifestyle includes restraining from legitimate and permissible pleasures for the purpose of a more focused dedication to the Lord. It includes fasting food as well as fasting related to media, entertainment, and other legitimate pleasures.
- F. Daniel set his heart to live a fasted lifestyle, even refusing permissible things in his dedication to God. He and his three friends *ate vegetables and drank water*. The word that is translated *vegetables* in the NKJV is translated as *pulse* in the KJV. It comes from the Hebrew *zeroa*, which means “that which grows from seed.” Thus, *zeroa* includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes (peas or beans), nuts, seeds, tofu, and herbs.
¹²“*Test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. (Dan. 1:12)*”
- G. Daniel’s lifestyle is a picture of the unusual dedication that God will call people to in this hour, even as the values and doctrine associated with the harlot Babylon (Rev. 17-18) are emerging in the midst of this pleasure-seeking generation. The resolve to live a fasted lifestyle positions us to grow faster and deeper in God and to receive more as the darkest hour of history approaches.
- H. Daniel fasted to position himself to encounter God more by continuing to pray (9:3), humble himself (10:12), renounce compromise (9:20), seek for greater insight into God’s love (9:23; 10:11, 19) and His end-time plan (7:16; 8:15-19; 9:2-3, 22-23; 10:1, 11-14; 11:33, 35; 12:4, 9-10), and to pray for a greater breakthrough in God’s purposes, including for Jerusalem (9:1-3).
- I. ***Practical***: God calls some to a fasted lifestyle that affects how they approach food and pleasure.

IV. DANIEL 2: RECEIVING THE WORD OF THE LORD IN CRISIS – THE KING’S STATUE

- A. As in Daniel’s day, God still desires to establish young prophetic voices to speak even to secular leaders. In Nebuchadnezzar’s second year, while Daniel was still a teen, the king had a prophetic dream that no one could interpret. Daniel and his friends sought the Lord and received the answer.
¹⁷*Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret...* ¹⁹*The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. (Dan. 2:17-19)*
- B. The crisis of that hour was that King Nebuchadnezzar *demand*ed the interpretation of the dream from his leaders under the threat of death. The situation was very difficult, because the king refused to disclose the dream, so that no man could interpret it without God’s help (2:4-11).
- C. Only someone with an intimate relationship with God, someone who was close to His heart and attuned to His Spirit, could do what Nebuchadnezzar was asking.
¹⁴*The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. (Ps. 25:14)*

- D. Daniel and his godly friends sought the Lord, and He gave Daniel the interpretation (2:17-19).
¹⁷Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, ¹⁸that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret...¹⁹The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. (Dan. 2:17-19)
- E. We see the importance of godly friendships among those who seek the Lord together for a prophetic breakthrough. Daniel didn't only pray by himself. He called together his fellowship group, his band of prophetic brothers, and they sought the Lord together (2:17-18).
- F. In a time of crisis, Daniel received the word of the Lord to speak to the highest authorities of his day. Today, the Lord desires to use young prophetic voices to reveal the secrets of the heart and to answer to crisis situations of their day. A similar thing happened with Joseph (Gen. 40-41).
²⁵The secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he [an unbeliever] will worship God and report that God is truly among you. (1 Cor. 14:25)
- G. There are some life and death situations that can only be answered by receiving the prophetic word of the Lord. In our day, the crisis may sometimes be economic, where situations arise that will result in many losing their jobs unless someone receives a word from God to answer the crisis. Or it may be a social crisis with tensions in the community, or riots in the streets that can only be answered by someone who receives a word from God.
- H. At that time, Daniel and his friends were not leaders in the king's court. They were merely students being trained in a school so that one day they could be on the king's staff. Young Daniel spoke to the leaders over him with confidence and wisdom (2:14), asking for time to seek God for His answer to the crisis. In this case, it was to receive interpretation of the king's dream.
- I. When Daniel went before the king, we see that he used two phrases to define the God he served: he spoke of "the God in heaven" and "the Revealer of mysteries" (2:28). In going before the king, Daniel is not merely trying to save his own life, but is aware of his role as the ambassador of the God of heaven. In this case, King Nebuchadnezzar's dream actually revealed key facets of God's plan for what would happen with his nation and other nations coming after him.
- J. After Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the king fell prostrate before Daniel as an act of submission, reverence, and adoration to Daniel's God. Jesus told the church of Philadelphia that their enemies would worship God before their feet and acknowledge that God is with them (Rev. 3:9). In the end-time Church, God will raise up prophetic young voices to stand before even secular leaders to communicate His prophetic message to them. They will include young men and women like Daniel, who have a history of seeking God for a spirit of understanding.
⁹I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. (Rev. 3:9)
- K. **Practical:** We are to seek the Lord for His answer in times of crisis and then be being willing to speak what the Lord says to secular leaders.

V. DANIEL 3: BEING FAITHFUL WITNESSES – FACING A FIERY FURNACE

- A. We see the dedication of young people who were tested by fire when they refused to compromise. Daniel's three friends refused to worship before Nebuchadnezzar's statue, even when threatened with death. God delivered them from the fiery furnace.
- B. These men were no longer teens. They now held places of authority in the government. In other words, they took a stand for Jesus in the marketplace knowing it might cost them their jobs, their careers, or even their lives. God supernaturally intervened on their behalf, delivering them from the crisis—a fiery furnace. You may never face a literal furnace with fire, but you may face a fiery furnace of very difficult situations caused by taking a stand as a faithful witness for Jesus.
- C. The Lord is calling His people to be faithful witnesses, with great allegiance to Jesus' heart for the Church, Israel, and the nations. Our witness for truth must be clear, bold, fearless, and tender. God is raising up those who will be faithful witnesses to the truth (Rev. 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4).

³*And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy... (Rev. 11:3)*

¹¹*“They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”...¹⁷The dragon...went to make war with... [those] who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. 12:11, 17)*

- D. Where was Daniel? Did he bow down? In all likelihood, Daniel was in another major city on official business. Daniel had been promoted to the position of chief administrator for the king (2:49). Daniel was familiar enough with Susa, the capital of the Elamites, that he could identify it in his vision a few years later (8:2). This suggests that he had spent a significant amount of time there. Presumably he was in Susa or some other foreign capital when this event occurred.
- E. There were possibly thousands of people on the plain of Dura worshipping the image (2:2-3). The king would not have known that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had not bowed down, if it were not for jealous men under their authority who told the king to undermine their positions. Though God promotes His people, there will be those who seek to cast down the Lord's servants.
- F. The three men declared that while God was able to deliver them, yet even if He chose not to deliver them, they would stay loyal and faithful to Him. Unlike the three who were delivered from the fiery furnace, many end-time believers will die for standing for Jesus (Rev. 6:9-11).

¹⁷*“...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.”¹⁸But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” (Dan. 3:17-18)*

- G. This story depicts the intensity of resolution that will be seen in the end-time Church when the Antichrist will demand the nations to worship his image or be killed (Rev. 13:12-18).
¹⁵*...cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.* ¹⁶*He causes all ...to receive a mark...* ¹⁷*no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark...* (Rev. 13:15-17)
- H. **Practical:** To be willing to stand for Jesus in society and the workplace before secular authorities.

VI. DANIEL 4: CALLING LEADERS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS – THE HUMBLING KING

- A. We see the sudden humbling of powerful world leaders related to prophetic words given directly to them. This fourth episode of Daniel's life occurred about 25 years after his friends were delivered from the fiery furnace (Dan. 3). Daniel was now in his forties.
- B. Daniel interpreted the king's dream and prophesied that the king would endure seven years of insanity, leading him to acknowledge the one true God before being returned to kingly authority.
- C. Once again, none of the wise men serving other gods was able to interpret this dream. The king called Daniel "one in whom is the spirit of the holy gods" (4:8-9).
- D. God will humble the world's most powerful leaders in the end times so that they might acknowledge His sovereignty over them and establish His purpose in their sphere of authority.
- E. Daniel recognized that the dream was a call to repent and a warning of judgment. Giving a word like this to the most powerful man in the nation has consequences. Daniel believed that the prophecy was an opportunity for the king to avert trouble through repentance (4:27).

²⁵They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen...and seven times [years] shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men...²⁷Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity." (Dan. 4:25-27)

- F. Daniel warned the king that he must break off from his sins or he would be humbled.
 - G. Nebuchadnezzar did not repent. About a year later he surveyed his accomplishment and concluded that his success was all due to his own great power. This resulted in a season of seven years in which God humbled him. In His mercy, God had given him a full year to repent (4:29).
- ²¹I gave her [Jezebel] time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²²Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. (Rev. 2:21-22)***

- H. After seven years of insanity and the loss of his prestige, Nebuchadnezzar finally repented.
- I. The Lord will raise up forerunners, who at times will call those in leadership over the spheres of society to repent before He humbles them by His judgments and disciplines.
- J. In the end times God will use his servants to prophesy to various leaders concerning His ways. He will intervene suddenly in their lives and humble them. It will require courage on the part of the Lord's messengers to call leaders to repentance.
- K. Jesus will humble the leaders of the nations who do not repent (Isa. 2:11-18; 10:12; 25:6).
- L. ***Practical:*** To be willing to speak to secular leaders about personal issues in their life.

VII. DANIEL 5: THE SUDDEN FALL OF GOVERNMENTS – BELSHAZZAR’S FEAST

- A. This fifth event occurred while Daniel was in his early eighties. It began with a supernatural event during King Belshazzar’s royal feast, in which he was desecrating the vessels once used in Solomon’s temple.
- B. When Babylon was the most powerful nation on the earth, Daniel prophesied that it would fall suddenly. He warned the national leaders of Babylon that their nation was finished, and that it would soon be divided and given to the Persians.
- ²³And You have lifted yourself up against the Lord...²⁶God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it...²⁸Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. (Dan. 5:23-28)*
- C. God released sudden judgment on the king and his nation by writing supernaturally on the palace wall. That very night, in October 539 BC, Babylon fell to Persia, and Belshazzar died.
- D. Not only were Belshazzar and his nobles profaning the vessels stolen from the temple by using them in a common setting, they were at the same time declaring the superiority of the gods they served (5:4). Yet it was not the strength of their gods that had delivered Jerusalem into their hands; it was God judging His people by giving them into the hands of the Babylonians.
- E. Now the Lord will show them that He is the One who “sets up kings and deposes them” (Dan. 2:21) and who “does what he pleases with the people of the earth” (4:35) even as Nebuchadnezzar had experienced.
- F. When Daniel came before Belshazzar, Daniel did not merely interpret the writing on the wall. He gave the king a message about how God had humbled Nebuchadnezzar, and reminded Belshazzar that he knew the whole story. So he set the judgment in the context of the mercy of God, who had given Belshazzaar more than enough time and information before judging him (5:22-23).
- ²²“But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.” (Dan. 5:22)*
- G. This historical event of the sudden defeat of an evil king and his empire foreshadows the sudden fall of the Harlot Babylon (Rev. 18:9-10).
- ⁹“The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’” (Rev. 18:9-10)*
- H. Just as Belshazzar was at the height of luxury and feasting, and then fell in one hour (5:1-4), even so the harlot at the height of her luxury, ease, and power will fall suddenly (Rev. 18:1-18).
- ¹⁷“In one hour such great riches came to nothing...¹⁹They threw dust on their heads and cried out...saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city...in one hour she is made desolate.’” (Rev. 18:17-19)*
- I. **Practical:** To be willing to speak to secular leaders about national issues.

VIII. DANIEL 6: PERSECUTION AND DELIVERANCE – FACING A LION’S DEN

- A. Daniel 6 demonstrates costly obedience in the face of persecution and the threat of prison and death. This extraordinary obedience and faith was followed by supernatural deliverance. Daniel was delivered from the lion’s den, from the very mouths of hungry lions.
- B. At this point Daniel was in his eighties, shortly after the fall of Belshazzar and during the reign of Darius (who was under King Cyrus). Darius had made Daniel one of his three primary leaders over the kingdom, inciting the jealousy of other Persian leaders. Thus they proposed a new law that the king authorized, which resulted in Daniel being forbidden to pray to the God of Israel.
- C. His life was threatened probably near the time that he received the vision in Daniel 9 or Daniel 10. We cannot be decisive about the exact date, but Daniel 6 is assumed to have occurred near the beginning of the Persian rule because of the language of establishing its government in Babylon. Daniel 6 expresses the demonic rage against Daniel near the time that he received prophetic insight.
- D. They planned a way to trap Daniel, knowing that he would never draw back on his personal devotion and commitment to prayer. Daniel stayed true to his prayer life, knowing that the new law was a scheme established because of their jealousy. Daniel’s consecration in this situation expressed his lifelong commitment to prayer (6:10).

¹⁰Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. (Dan. 6:10)

- E. He had always set his heart to obey the Lord. This was once again put to the test. He continued steadfastly in his usual daily habit of prayer, resulting in his being thrown into a den of lions. Yet the Lord supernaturally delivered him from persecution. There was a sudden reversal of fates as Daniel’s oppressors were thrown into the very lion’s den that they had prepared for Daniel. The result of Daniel’s testimony and God’s deliverance was that the name of the Lord was exalted in the nations by King Darius (6:25-27). God’s purpose is always to exalt His name.
- F. David warned rulers and lawmakers in the end times not to make decrees against God or refuse to pay homage to His king (Ps. 2:10-12). Believers in the end times will face official decrees and laws intended to prevent them from worshiping the Lord.
- G. Should we obey man rather than God, when man’s law is clearly against the commands of the Lord? Daniel could have prayed in secret. But he prayed at his window with his arms held high to the Lord. End-time believers will face the question of whether or not they are willing to identify publicly with the Lord, even when it is unpopular or costly.
- H. **Practical:** To be willing to stand for Jesus in the workplace before secular authorities.
- I. **Summary:** We see six examples: one about the fasted lifestyle (Dan. 1), two about taking a stand for the Lord in the public arena, knowing that it could cost us our job or life (Dan. 3 and 6) and three about speaking prophetic dreams to secular authorities (Dan. 2, 4, and 5).