

These 4 Qualities Catapulted Daniel to Success

Daniel was uprooted from his homeland as a prisoner of war and relocated to Babylon as a teenager. It's believed that he was a descendant of King Hezekiah, thus a prince of Judah (2 Kings 20:17-18). Daniel was probably a eunuch (Dan. 1:3-7) and so he never mentioned a wife or children.

His name means "God is my judge." This matches a major theme in His writings—God has the final verdict in the affairs of men. Daniel's visions describe earthly kingdoms as pawns on God's chessboard, which He maneuvers to fulfill His will. Benjamin Franklin said, "... The longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men..." Like a master maestro, God orchestrates global events to serve His purpose. With all the chaos in the world today, it's reassuring to know God is still in control.

Daniel served in the highest levels of government during Israel's 70-year Babylonian captivity. Exile, by the way, is "A prolonged absence from one's own homeland." Even though Daniel was in exile, he still lived a lifestyle of excellence. "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and officials because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king thought to set him over the whole realm" (Dan. 6:3). *Daniel was preferred above the presidents and officials, because an excellent spirit was in him* (Dan. 6:3). In a sense, we are also in exile because we don't belong to this present world. This is merely our temporary home. The same God who enabled Daniel to excel is with us. Consider four excellent qualities Daniel possessed:

1. **Daniel's Character:** Daniel is one of a few Bible characters with no major flaw on his record, perhaps aided by the fact that he wrote his own book.

(Autobiographies tend to be kinder to the subject than biographies.) Still, He was a politician without a scandal. How refreshing is that? In fact, his enemies spied on him and tried to dig up dirt to tarnish his reputation “But they could find no occasion or fault because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him” (Dan. 6:4). The only “fault” they found was that he prayed too much. No skeletons in the closet, no double life or secret sins lurking in the shadows. Daniel was a rare man of impeccable character and integrity who lived above reproach both publicly and privately.

Character is a determination to do what is right no matter what the cost. Character, like the foundation of a house, is below the surface. Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooten said, “Your character is more important than your reputation. Your character is what you really are; your reputation is only what people think you are.” If we watch our character, our reputation will take care of itself.

Character is formed when we choose to do right when given the opportunity to do wrong. Every day we are presented with opportunities to sin. When we resist temptation, character is the result. Daniel proved that we can live clean lives even in a corrupt culture.

2. **Daniel's Conviction:** Conviction often involves doing what is not popular or not doing what is popular. Conviction means you have set boundaries for your life. Some things are morally right; others are morally wrong. The old saying goes, “Take a stand for something or you will fall for anything.” Daniel had conviction and it compelled him to take an unpopular stand. “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's food, nor with the wine which he drank” (Dan. 1:8a).

King Nebuchadnezzar trained his captives for leadership with a three-year crash course on Chaldean culture. They learned the language, arts, sciences, religion and the ways of Babylon. He spared no expense feeding and training these future leaders. Included in this “college” was a daily buffet of what I call “Chaldean chow” or “Babylonian bologna” (a provision of the king’s meat and wine). But the “unclean” food violated Daniel’s convictions, so he requested a simple substitute diet of vegetables and water. (Many churches today still utilize this type of “Daniel Fast.”) So why did Daniel and his comrades abstain from this food? What was the big deal? The king’s meat was unclean for one of three reasons: 1) The meat was either soaked in blood and cooked extremely rare, which was common among the Gentiles but forbidden to the Jews (Lev. 17:11-12). 2) The meat was from an unclean species of animal forbidden by Mosaic Law and avoided by kosher Jews. 3) The meat was sacrificed to idols. In any event, Daniel viewed the food as a violation of his personal convictions.

After only a 10-day trial diet, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than those eating off the palace menu and so they continued their diet. Daniel followed his convictions rather than the crowd. What if he had gorged himself on the king’s gourmet delicacies? There would be no book of Daniel for us to read because there would be no story to tell. Daniel dared to be different and God honored him for it. As Jiminy Cricket told Pinocchio, “Let your conscience be your guide.”

3. **Daniel’s Courage:** Daniel’s jealous enemies tricked King Darius into signing a bogus law that prohibited petitions to any God or man except him for thirty days. Violators would be thrown into a den of hungry lions. The trap was set, and they waited for Daniel to take the bait, but he ignored that law without fearing the fallout. It takes courage to disobey a law knowing it may cost your position or even your life. But when they outlawed prayer, he prayed anyway.

One author wrote, "Courage is not the absence of fear but the conquering of fear." Someone else said, "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." Courage is the fortitude to do what is right no matter what the cost. Normally, Christians should obey the law and strive to be model citizens. However, there are exceptions when laws violate our conscience and are contrary to God's Word. In such cases, we need the courage to obey God rather than man. Another author noted, "The lions showed no interest in Daniel. Why should they? He was nothing but backbone and grit."

4. **Daniel's Consistency:** When King Darius realized his folly jeopardized Daniel's life, he was distraught. Unable to reverse the absurd law, Darius ordered Daniel to the lion's den. Notice what he said, "Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you" (Dan. 6:16). Daniel made such an impression with his consistent faith and lifestyle that Darius knew God would save him somehow. Consistency is the hard part of Christianity. It's hard to do anything three times a day besides eat. But Daniel prayed three times per day and consistently lived out his faith.

Success is rarely the result of one act of heroism. Success usually results from a lifetime of diligence, discipline and making wise decisions. If you keep doing the right thing, eventually you'll be rewarded. God rewarded Daniel's faithfulness and spared him from the lions. Then King Darius wrote, "I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God" (Dan. 6:26).

It's remarkable how God used one . to influence an entire empire. Truly, Daniel distinguished himself by his exceptional qualities. He dared to be different, and what a profound difference he made. The same God is with us. He will use us too—if only we strive for excellence in exile.

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