

Draw The Line  
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Daniel Chapter One

*“This is where I draw the line!”* Everyone has their own version of “the line.” That point beyond which we will not go. We’ll see what Daniel and his friends can teach us about that.

If you went to Sunday School as a kid, you probably know something about Daniel.

**What do you know about this book and the life-story of Daniel? What do you know about Daniel’s character? What do you know about his abilities?**

A Quick Overview of the Book of Daniel

- For years the prophets had warned the people of Judah to turn from their sin and idolatry.
- They refused, so God allowed the nation to be overtaken by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.
- In the year 605 B.C. the Babylonians captured Judah’s king and some of their nobility, particularly the best and the brightest young people, and took them to Babylon.
- Among those taken were Daniel, and his friends, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael.
- The book of Daniel has 12 chapters and can be divided into two parts:
- Chapters one through six are Daniel’s autobiography of his long life in captivity in Babylon. So this is a book of HISTORY.
- If you look in the front of your Bible you see Daniel categorized as one of the MAJOR PROPHETS. Chapters seven through twelve are Daniel’s prophecy about future events.
- Ray Stedman: *“The book of Daniel lays the basis for the book of Revelation. If you would like to know God’s program for the future, it is essential that you understand this book of Daniel.”*
- Stedman also cautions us: *“...you can’t understand the last section of Daniel unless you have lived through and understood what is involved in the first six chapters. There is no way to understand what the prophetic program means unless you first grasp the moral lessons of the first part of the book.”*
- So this morning we begin with the captivity of Daniel and his friends. We’ll see Daniel’s example of how to live as a Christian in a pagan world, without compromising our values.
- I’ve summarized these lessons into five alliterative words to help us remember:
  - RESOLVE
  - RISK
  - RELIANCE
  - RELATIONSHIP
  - REPUTATION

Daniel 1:3–5 (ESV)

3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, 4 youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king’s palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. 5 The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. 6 Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. 7 And

the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

- **King Nebuchadnezzar had a program to assimilate the Israelites into Babylonian culture. According to verses five and six, how did he do it?**
- **In verses six and seven what was the first change brought on these young men?**
- **What kind of young people did the King command should be enrolled in the program?**
- **What was the heart of his “health and fitness” program for these young Israelites?**

Daniel 1:8–10 (ESV)

8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food, or with the wine that he drank.

- **First part of verse eight: What do the first few words say Daniel did?**
- **Why was eating the King’s best food and wine a problem for Daniel and his friends?**
- Daniel RESOLVED he would not defile himself. He “drew the line.” *“You can change my location, you can enroll me in civil service school, you can even change my name, but I WON’T violate the commands of God!”* That’s where Daniel had resolved to draw the line.

The first lesson for us: To live for God in a pagan world without COMPROMISING our values, first we have to RESOLVE in advance not to violate the commandments and principles of God’s word. Regardless of peer pressure or threat of harm, a follower of Christ has to have a place where we “draw the line.”

- After Daniel RESOLVED, he took a RISK. Second part of verse eight:

Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

- **What do you notice about Daniel’s approach to the King’s official? What was his tone?**
- **What kind of attitude or demeanor do many Christians have in dealing with the world?**
- **How do Daniel and his friends teach us about the right attitude?**

Proverbs 16:7 (ESV) 7 When a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

- Daniel stood firm in a respectful and God-honoring manner and God blessed his request.

9 And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, 10 and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king.”

- The king’s official respected Daniel’s request, but HE “drew the line” at crossing the King.
- He had good reason to be afraid.

Ray Stedman writes:

*The Bible itself records that there was no king that had ever lived before Nebuchadnezzar or would ever live after him who was equal to him in authority. There were no restraints whatsoever upon what he desired to do. His word was absolute law. He could take any man’s life at any*

*time. Later on in his reign, he took the lives of the sons of the king of Judah as their father watched and then had the father's eyes put out. Another man was burned to death over a slow fire. This king was an expert in torture. So these young teenagers facing this test know that they have to either comply with the king's demands or forfeit their lives.*

In the face of this kind of danger Daniel REALLY TOOK A RISK:

Daniel 1:12–13 (ESV)

12 “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.  
13 Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king’s food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see.”

Daniel was willing to have his convictions put to the test. He said, *“We can obey God and still pass the king’s fitness test with flying colors.”* Another lesson for us: To live the Christian life in a pagan world, you have to be willing to RISK being put to the test.

- **What would have caused Daniel to be courageous enough to propose this test?**

Chip Ingram writes:

*“Every Christian’s life is marked by ‘windows of opportunity’ that demand that they take a radical step of faith in order to follow Christ and fulfill His agenda for their life.”*

Before we can take a RISK for God, we have to believe in our hearts we can RELY on God to take care of the situation. That’s why we call it FAITH.

Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Back to Babylon. The king’s official agrees to go along with Daniel’s test...

14 So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king’s food.

- Here’s an important point: We admire the resolve of Daniel and his friends not to compromise.
- But here’s what’s really remarkable: **How old were Daniel and his friends at this time?**
- Another important point: This courageous stand wasn’t taken by the clergy, just ordinary young men with extraordinary faith in God.

Alistair Begg said in a sermon on this passage:

*“Ultimately the future of the church in America does not depend its clergy. The future of the church in America depends upon you folks in the pews becoming men and women of resolution and decision.”*

- Let’s do a quick review of what we’ve learned so far:
- To live as a Christian in a pagan world we must RESOLVE to draw the line on our convictions.
- We can live as a Christian in a pagan world if we are willing to take some RISKS.
- We can take those risks only if we RELY on God in faith.

- Here's another lesson: To live as a Christian in a pagan world requires RELATIONSHIP.

17 As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

- **Based on that verse how did Daniel and his friends participate in their training?**
- They could have folded their arms and plugged their ears. They did the opposite.
- **What (Who) was the true source of their wisdom and ability? Verse 17 tell us!**

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*Certainly Daniel and his friends did not believe the foolish religion and practices of the Babylonians, but they studied just the same, just as a Christian student must do when he attends a university today and is told to learn "facts" that he knows are contrary to God's Word. Daniel understood that God would use him as a witness in that godless place—and He did that for the next seventy-five years!*

- It's obvious Daniel and his friends developed RELATIONSHIP with the Babylonians.
- Unfortunately many followers of Christ try to deal with a pagan world by living in a bubble.
- The easiest thing would have been to go along with the Babylonian way of living.
- The second easiest would be to put up a fight.
- These boys did the BETTER thing...As one theologian called it: "Cooperation without compromise."

To have an impact as a Christian in a pagan world we have to have RELATIONSHIP while still sticking to our convictions.

- Before long these young Israelites who refused to compromise but still related to their captors developed a great REPUTATION.

Daniel 1:19–20 (ESV)

19 And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

What a TESTIMONY for God's people to have! They are RESOLVED not to compromise. They take RISKS because they RELY on God in faith. They winsomely RELATE to the people around them. And they have a REPUTATION that is second to none because of their COURAGE combined with the GIFTEDNESS God instilled in them!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- This week, will we be RESOLVED or will we go along with the crowd?
- Will we take some RISKS?
- Will we RELY on God to protect us when we take a stand?
- Without compromising, will we RELATE to the world around us?
- How we answer each of those questions will determine whether or not our REPUTATION advances the cause of Christ.

