Daniel Chapter 1 — Study Guide
Lesson Theme: Standing Faithful in Babylon

Focus Text: Dan 1:8 *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself* with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Lesson Aim: To understand how Daniel and his companions remained faithful to God while living, studying, and working within a culture designed to change their identity, beliefs, and lifestyle.

1. Historical Setting — Jerusalem Falls (Daniel 1:1–2)

Daniel's book begins with what appears to be the triumph of Babylon over Jerusalem. But verse 2 says, **"the Lord gave Jehoiakim...into his hand."** God had not lost control. Even in national disaster, His purposes were still operating.

Thought: *When circumstances appear out of control, God is still sovereign.*

2. Babylon Targets the Youth (Daniel 1:3)

Why would Babylon deliberately target the brightest young people of Judah? Babylon was not satisfied merely to conquer the land. It wanted to reeducate the next generation.

Thought: *Whoever shapes the thinking of the youth can influence the future.*

3. Babylon Attempts to Change Their Basic Values (Daniel 1:4, 5)

Daniel and his companions were taught: "the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." Their education, language, environment, diet, and future employment were all controlled by Babylon.

1. Was it wrong for Daniel to learn Babylonian knowledge?
2. What is the difference between learning about a culture and being spiritually shaped by that culture?
3. How can Christians today receive an education without allowing education to replace biblical truth?

Thought: *Daniel could learn Babylon's information without accepting Babylon's worldview.*

4. Babylon Attempts to Change Their Identity (Daniel 1:6–7)

Their Hebrew names were connected with the God of Israel. Their new names connected them with Babylonian culture and religion.

Why would changing someone's name be important in an attempt to assimilate them?

Thought: *Babylon could change Daniel's name, but Babylon could not change Daniel's identity.*

Application: The world may attempt to define us by culture, education, popularity, occupation, wealth, or social expectations. The Christian must remember: My environment does not determine my identity; my relationship with God does.

5. The Turning Point — Daniel Makes a Decision (Daniel 1:8)

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..."

Thought: *Daniel's public faithfulness began with a private decision. He did not wait until the crisis to decide what he believed.*

6. Daniel Combines Principle With Respect (Daniel 1:8–14)

Notice Daniel's approach. He did not become rude, rebellious, or unnecessarily confrontational. He "requested" that he might not defile himself. Daniel then proposed a ten-day test.

What does Daniel teach us about standing firmly for principle while still treating people in authority respectfully?

Thought: *Faithfulness does not require arrogance. We can be uncompromising in principle while remaining Christlike in attitude.*

7. The Ten-Day Test (Daniel 1:11–16)

Daniel requested: "Let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink."

What is the relationship between: Diet → Health → Mind → Spiritual discernment?

Thought: *Daniel 1 presents care of the body not merely as a health issue but as part of faithfulness to God.*

8. God Honors Faithfulness (Daniel 1:17)

"As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom..."

Who ultimately gave Daniel and his companions their intellectual ability? Daniel studied Babylonian education, but Babylon was not the ultimate source of his wisdom.

Thought: *Education can provide information; God gives true wisdom.*

9. Ten Times Better (Daniel 1:18–20)

When Nebuchadnezzar examined them, he found Daniel and his companions: "ten times better"

than the magicians and astrologers throughout his kingdom.

Thought: *Separation from worldly principles does not mean separation from excellence. Daniel was spiritually distinct and intellectually competent.*

10. Daniel Outlasts Babylon (Daniel 1:21)

"And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." This statement is powerful. Kings changed. Governments changed. Empires changed. Daniel remained.

The young captive introduced in verse 6 eventually lived long enough to see the empire that captured him fall. Babylon appeared stronger than Daniel, but Daniel's God was stronger than Babylon.

Memory Verse: Dan 1:8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel did not wait until the fiery furnace, the lions' den, or great prophetic visions to become faithful. His preparation for the great crises began with a seemingly small decision at the dinner table.

The lesson of Daniel 1 is therefore preparation for everything that follows in the book: Those who will stand in the great crisis must learn to stand in the small tests first.

Question: What must you purpose in your heart today so that you will be prepared to stand faithfully tomorrow?