

## Work Principles from the Life of Daniel

Air Dates: October 23-27, 2023

### Day One

As Christians in the marketplace, we face a continual challenge of walking that fine line between pursuing our careers and seeking success and being a strong witness for Christ where we work. Integrating our work and our faith is not the easiest thing to do, is it? The choices are not always black and white; the decisions are not always clear. And while we may not have gone to a foreign country and culture as a missionary, there are times when it sure feels like we're outsiders, foreigners in a culture that is opposed to Christian principles.

The story of Daniel offers us some very important principles for workplace Christians. Let me point out some of the issues that Daniel faced which are not that far from the ones we encounter.

- **Daniel was forced into a job he never chose nor ever wanted.**

Daniel's story begins on a very bleak note. He was taken as a captive—a slave—to another country. He had no choice. But even when evil seemed to be in control, God was working out his purposes. And through it all, Daniel kept a positive outlook.

Do you ever feel that you've been placed in a position you never aspired to? Have you ever felt trapped in your job or your company? When you find yourself in that kind of predicament, it's very easy for your attitude to go south very quickly.

Even if you're in a job of your choosing, there are days when you still feel trapped—when you have dreams of running away, catching the next flight out to a far-away place! But it is exactly in these times that the real depth of your faith shows through. Staying positive and joyful in a place where you may not want to be is a sign of a Spirit-controlled life, and it is a strong testimony for the Lord.

- **Daniel had God-given talents and skills, which he had honed. He was a good steward of his gifts and opportunities.**

God had endowed Daniel with a very bright and quick mind, and Daniel had taken that gift and made the most of it, even in a hostile environment. Paul wrote to Timothy, "*For this reason, I remind you to fan into a flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands*" (2 Timothy 1:6). Have you fanned into a flame the gifts and talents God has placed in you? It's easy to just settle with getting by. But I'm often convicted that God expects me to take my gifts and make them better. You and I will be accountable for the stewardship of our talents and skills.

Daniel learned how to live his faith in a secular culture. His culture could not have been further from the truth or be more corrupt. Yet he remained true. How did he do it?

### Day Two

Did you ever think that an Old Testament saint could be a great role-model for you as a Christian in the marketplace today? I can assure you that Daniel is that man. We're looking at workplace principles from the life of Daniel. Consider this:

- **Daniel was taken completely out of his comfort zone, away from familiar people and surroundings, into a different culture altogether.**

When you go to work each day, you are likely to be leaving your comfort zone and entering a different kind of world—maybe a pagan world. The pagan gods may be a bit different today, but they are there:

- The god of materialism and success
- The god of “I have my own truth”
- The god of sexual pleasure
- The god of any kind of pleasure
- The god of “it’s all about me”

Our challenge is to remain true to the Lord even though we may work in Satan’s territory. Daniel—and his three faithful friends—were fully immersed in a pagan culture. They worked hard and succeeded in that society. But they did not accommodate their lifestyles or beliefs to the pagan world around them. Their approach was obedient involvement. They stayed involved in the world, while at the same time remaining obedient to God and his principles.

Have you ever felt like a foreigner in your working world? Well, that’s because you are, if you’re a Christ-follower. This world is not your home. Peter wrote that we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood a holy nation, a people belonging to God. He goes on to remind us that we are aliens and strangers in this world (1 Peter 2:9).

But Jesus has you there—in that pagan culture—for a purpose. And when you keep a joyful spirit, it is one of the most powerful weapons you have, both to fight off the enemy, to sustain you—because the joy of the Lord is our strength—and to testify to those around you that you have a good reason to be joyful.

### Day Three

Do you sometimes feel very out-of-place in your work environment? Because we live and work in a fallen world, we are often painfully reminded that as disciples of Jesus Christ, we just don’t fit in socially and culturally. Daniel had that same experience, as he was taken to a foreign land. But there in the midst of a totally secular and pagan culture, he stayed true to his biblical principles and did not allow the culture around him to drag him down to its level.

Daniel was deeply influenced by a letter the prophet Jeremiah sent to the exiles. In Daniel 9:2 we read: “In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.” That letter, being prophetic in nature, was the Word of God.

*This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters. . . Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:4-7).*

Notice that Daniel and his close friends were to serve the Lord right there in Babylon, while they were in exile. They were to prosper and work and be involved in the society around them.

I believe God intends for his children to be involved in the pagan culture around us—to work in that culture and be a light in that culture and even be successful in that culture. But we’re never to compromise and adopt the sinful ways of the culture. In the world but not of the world—that is our challenge. Daniel and his three close friends were able to do it very well.

And you'll note that Daniel knew the Word of God as delivered by the Prophet Jeremiah. Undoubtedly that was one of the main reasons he could make it in that culture, because he knew and believed the Word of God. We have it a bit easier because we have the whole written Word of God, and when we make that an integral part of our lives, it fortifies us to be strong for the Lord and stand true to his principles, as Daniel did.

## Day Four

Let me ask you, do you thoroughly like and enjoy everyone you work with and for? I hope so; that would be ideal. But it's often true that you have certain coworkers who aren't so easy to like.

Daniel had some very difficult coworkers too, people who were out to do him harm. People who were very jealous of him and wanted to bring him down. But in spite of their attitudes, Daniel kept his attitude right:

- **Daniel had a compassionate heart for his “co-workers.”**

When Nebuchadnezzar was ready to kill the wise men of Babylon because they could not interpret his dream, Daniel went to Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, and interceded for these men. “Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?” he asked. Now, these men meant nothing to him personally, but he had a compassionate heart, and he knew it was wrong to execute them. So, he went to his trusted fellow-Israelites, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and urged them to pray for these men. God then revealed the meaning of the dream to Daniel and the next day he asked Arioch not to kill the wise men, but instead to take him to Nebuchadnezzar because he could interpret the dream (Daniel 2).

Talk about sticking your neck out! Daniel was a man of great courage as well as great compassion. He cared about these men, even though they were not fellow-Israelites and indeed were astrologers and sorcerers and enchanters—men who were doing things directly opposed to God's principles.

It's not easy to have compassion for people sometimes, is it? Especially those who are antagonistic toward us, or who have no clue about true spirituality. Those whose lifestyles are sinful and against all you know to be right. But as God placed Daniel in the midst of these kind of people, so he does us as well, and he does it so we can show God's love and compassion to people who have no clue what it's all about.

## Day Five

Would you have ever guessed that a man from the Old Testament could offer us a godly role model for Christians in the marketplace today? Daniel is that man. If you haven't read the book of Daniel lately, I encourage you to do so, because there's so much there to encourage you in your life today.

As you read his story, you will see that:

- **Daniel's greatest testimony was his work habits and dedication to doing his job right.**

*“Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom”* (Daniel 6:3). This caused much jealousy among the satraps, so they set out to find something against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so.

*“They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent”* (Daniel 6:4b).

What a testimony! Neither corrupt nor negligent. I never really think of myself as corrupt, do you? Yet let's take a look at what comes under the heading of corrupt: guilty of dishonest practices like cheating

on the expense account, using company assets for your own benefit, disloyal to your employer, giving reports that exaggerate the good and overlook the bad, to name a few.

And even if we pass the corrupt test, here comes “never negligent.” You mean, never neglecting to do what you’re supposed to do? Never failing to give it all you’ve got? Never failing to fulfill promises and follow-up as required? Never overlooking the stuff you hate to do and leaving it undone? Never?

I’m guilty! I wouldn’t want my work habits to be as closely scrutinized as Daniel’s were. With all those satraps looking for something to hang him with, they could find nothing.

Do you see why Daniel gives us such a great role model of a Christian working in the secular workplace?