



# Community Group Discussion Guide

November 16, 2025

Daniel 1:1-21 | Obedience

## MOTIVATE

⇒ *Starter Question: What have been some of your New Year's resolutions from years past? Did you follow through with any? If you didn't, how long did your determination last?*

## DISCUSS

A lot of times our resolutions fall flat when we lose motivation. Or perhaps we find our goals were not realistic or required too much sacrifice. In contrast, Daniel 1:1-21 motivates and inspires us to determine to serve, obey, and follow God despite our circumstances.

Daniel and his friends were subject to an early exile to Babylon some years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. King Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and took the cream of the crop of Judah's population back to Babylon, almost a nine-hundred-mile journey away from their home. They were brought to the palace to be educated in Babylonian ways so they could serve their new king. For three years they were trained in all things Babylonian and faced the temptation of losing their identity as God's people. It was in this context that Daniel and his friends determined to obey God.

⇒ *Why is obeying God always the best decision?*

### 1. Pursuing obedience to God is always right despite the obstacles.

**Daniel 1:1-2:** <sup>1</sup> *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.*

Because of the kingdom of Judah's persistent unfaithfulness, God gave Jerusalem into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar took many sacred vessels from Jerusalem's temple to Babylon with him, placing them in the temple of his pagan god.

⇒ *Discuss how Judah had received ample warning that God's judgment was coming.*

**Daniel 1:3-7:** <sup>3</sup> *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, <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. <sup>7</sup> 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.*

Nebuchadnezzar also commanded the Judean court's best and brightest youths be brought to the palace at Babylon to be trained for three years in the literature and language of the Chaldeans in

order to serve the king. Among these captives were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, the latter three being more popularly known by the names given to them by their Babylonian captors: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were far from their homeland, but Nebuchadnezzar had commanded that they receive the best of everything. Nevertheless, as they wrestled with how to obey God's commands in a pagan culture, they realized that what initially seemed like a blessing might someday cost them dearly.

⇒ *How would most people in this type of situation likely behave?*

⇒ *Why does obedience to God require determining to follow Him no matter the cost?*

**Daniel 1:8-10:** *<sup>8</sup> But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. <sup>9</sup> And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, <sup>10</sup> 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."*

Babylonians admired well-fed young men with the body and mind to prove it, hence Nebuchadnezzar's order for a specific diet. Verse 8 constitutes a turning point in the narrative: Daniel resolved [literally "set it on his heart"] that he would not defile himself with the king's food or wine. The text suggests Daniel took the lead on this decision, though verses 12-13 affirm that his friends agreed with him. They had a difficult choice put before them. They could obey the Babylonian king and gain his favor by abandoning their beliefs and convictions, or they could remain steadfast in their faith in God and face the potential consequences.

⇒ *Given his context as an exile in Babylon, why do you think Daniel was determined to obey God's law even when it contradicted the order of Nebuchadnezzar?*

⇒ *Have you ever been challenged to obey God even when it contradicted our culture and societal norms?*

How Daniel was being obedient in rejecting the king's food is somewhat unclear. The Law of Moses required certain dietary restrictions (Leviticus 11). However, Jewish exiles had no control over what food they received in Babylon and thus faced the possibility of compromising their commitment to God. Furthermore, the Babylonians also sacrificed a portion of their food and drink to the Babylonian gods, an idolatrous practice of which Daniel and his friends wanted no part. The Law of Moses did not specifically prohibit the use of wine, but perhaps Daniel and his friends decided to remain in full control of their senses during this time.

Daniel wanted to obey God in keeping his Jewish identity and rejecting full assimilation into Babylonian ways. He couldn't control what others called him. He couldn't control what they taught him. But he could control what he put in his body, and that act of obedience would help him remain close to God. This was a risk, as obedience often is, but it was a risk worth taking for Daniel.

⇒ *How have you felt the riskiness of obedience to God in your faith journey?*

Verse 9 states that God granted kindness and compassion to Daniel from an officer with the title "chief eunuch" who oversaw the care of Daniel, his friends, and the other trainees. This granting of kindness provides a sense of hope that maybe this official would honor Daniel's request. Perhaps the chief eunuch recognized the young men were far from home and so he treated them with

compassion.

With wisdom, Daniel offered a test: vegetables and water for ten days followed by an evaluation. This reasonable option gave the guard, and the eunuch, an opportunity to honor Daniel's request and not put themselves in jeopardy. If it didn't work, the supervisors had an out. If it did work, Daniel and his friends wouldn't have to defile themselves. Through it all, God's sovereignty was at work, and no matter the outcome, He would get the glory through Daniel's actions.

⇒ *Discuss this quote: Daniel realized that for the child of God some things cannot be negotiated or compromised. Instead, from the beginning, in what to others seemed a trivial matter, he nailed his colors to the mast. In doing so, he gained a bridgehead into enemy-occupied territory and found himself increasingly strong in the Lord.* –Sinclair Ferguson

Daniel was a risk-taker but not reckless. His faithfulness was not an attempt at gaining God's favor in an unfavorable situation. Rather, Daniel's faithfulness was grounded in the faithfulness of God. Daniel was not surprised at the current events, for he had heard God's word through the prophets that came before him. What God says, He is faithful to do, even in judgment. But Daniel was alive and now in a foreign land, in a position of influence, no less. So he let the grace of God work deep in his heart and teach him to lean wholly on the God who saves, no matter the circumstances. Ultimately, he knew he belonged to the God of Israel, and he would remain faithful to Him whatever came his way.

⇒ *What insights do you have into Daniel's obedient faithfulness?*

Nevertheless, the chief eunuch, who supervised all the youths in training for the king's service, had reservations about granting Daniel's request. He didn't reject it outright, but he expressed his personal concern: "I fear my lord the king." Since the king had commanded that Daniel and his friends receive the palace's choice food and drink, the official wanted to make sure the young men did not look thinner or more haggard than the other trainees. The king might inquire why they looked as they did, and he might not take kindly to news that his officer had allowed the Jewish young men to choose their own diet. The chief eunuch was torn between helping the Jewish exiles honor their commitment to God and obeying the orders Nebuchadnezzar had given him.

⇒ *Even though challenges and obstacles may arise, why do we still need to choose obedience?*  
 ⇒ *When have you faced potential compromises in your spiritual journey?*

**Daniel 1:11-14:** <sup>11</sup> Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> 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." <sup>14</sup> So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days.

Rather than giving up, Daniel addressed the guard whom the chief eunuch had assigned to tend them. Perhaps God would provide a way for them to obey His commands without bringing trouble on either them or the Chaldean officials. Daniel certainly didn't want to cause a problem, though he did want to persist in his attempt to find a way to honor God's commands above all.

- ⇒ *Discuss this statement: The depth of our faith is revealed by the depth of our efforts to obey. What we truly believe becomes clear in what we do.*
- ⇒ *Why is obedience evidence of our faithful commitment to God? How does what we actually do visibly demonstrate what we believe?*

Daniel suggested the guard allow a simple ten-day test for him and his three friends. They would eat only vegetables and drink only water during this period, while the other youths in training would eat the king's choice food and drink his wine. Eating only vegetables and drinking only water would limit their diet but would allow them to obey the Jewish dietary laws. At the same time, the other youths in training who continued to enjoy the best of the king's food and wine would provide a basis for comparison. Daniel proposed that when the ten days were complete, the guard would compare them with the other young men who had eaten the king's best. He then could determine for himself whether any cause for concern existed over his allowance for these four Jewish exiles.

- ⇒ *How did Daniel's words and actions reflect his faith that God would honor their obedience?*

The guard agreed with them and tested them for ten days. God thus gave Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah favor with the guard just as He had given them favor with the chief eunuch. Daniel and his friends demonstrated their faith by requesting this exemption, determined to obey God despite the obstacles.

Wisdom is not only knowing what to do in certain situations but also how to recognize the gravity of a situation. To many, Daniel's diet may have meant nothing. Hadn't he and his friends already accepted the new names and the education? Yet Daniel recognized this was the hill to die on. He knew this was the time to mount a faith-based resistance. This was an opportunity for God to come through. Daniel and his friends were at God's mercy alone. They could not make their bodies look better than the others. Only God could do that. Wisdom was knowing this was the moment to take a new step toward glorifying God, and God came through.

- ⇒ *Why are we sometimes hesitant to express the kind of obedient faith like Daniel and his friends?*

## **2. When we obey God, knowledge and wisdom increase.**

**Daniel 1:15-17:** <sup>15</sup> *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. <sup>16</sup> So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. <sup>17</sup> 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.*

The ten-day test period Daniel had proposed produced the desired results. Daniel and his friends didn't look equal to the others; they looked better than the others. To put it another way, God determined to bless His followers as they trusted Him to overcome the obstacles they faced. We also must assume the Chaldean guard saw God's power in this outcome. Once Daniel and his friends had demonstrated the possibility of being more healthy than the others who ate the king's food and wine, the guard saw no reason to force them to eat the king's food.

- ⇒ *How can our obedience shine a light on God's glory for others to see?*
- ⇒ *How can God get the glory from your obedience, whether the outcome is positive or negative?*

God's blessing to these four Jewish exiles exceeded merely keeping them healthy. He also gave to Daniel and his friends "learning and skill" beyond what they had possessed before. The word skill, also meaning "knowledge," designates the youths' grasp of a large amount of content; they were able to learn much about their new land and its history. The word translated "understanding" denotes special insight beyond what others might possess. This knowledge and understanding extended to every kind of literature they studied as they became more familiar with Chaldean culture.

⇒ *How does obedience help cultivate wisdom in the Christian life?*

God will always bless obedience, yet His blessings can look different than our expectations. Daniel and his friends were still in captivity. God didn't send them back home. But He did give them favor in their new land. God did use them for His glory in their hard circumstances. A life of obedience to God often may look like failure to the world, but that's because the world cannot see ultimate reality. God is the mover behind all things, and all the wheels are turning for His glory and His people's good. Not immediately, but ultimately.

Verse 17 concludes with the singular observation that "Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." This chapter contains nothing more about this God-given ability, but later chapters of the book describe Daniel's use of his gift for God's glory in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (Daniel 2; 4) and interpreting for King Belshazzar the mysterious hand-writing on the wall (Daniel 5). Chapters 7–12 describe four visions of the future that Daniel saw. In each case, Daniel credited God for the dreams and their interpretations and the visions he received.

⇒ *Daniel was merely an ordinary person in the hands of an extraordinary God. How can you apply this to your life?*

**Daniel 1:18-21:** <sup>18</sup> *At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.*

At the end of the time that the king had said to present them, the chief eunuch brought his recruits before Nebuchadnezzar. The king's thorough interview of the trainees confirmed the surpassing wisdom of these four men in particular. The king determined that Daniel and his three friends were "ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom." The term "magicians" describes court officials who specialized in astrology; they observed the stars to discern the will of the gods and also performed healings and exorcisms. The term "enchanters" or mediums focuses especially on those who could recite spells and perform incantations to discern the will of the gods.

Daniel and his friends' commitment to be obedient to God despite the potential cost was used by God to grant them knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. In fact, no one was found to be their equal. This is even more remarkable when we realize that what they excelled in was not the things of God but the things of Babylon. They became Babylonian literary experts, and Daniel understood visions and dreams. They surpassed all the king's advisers in providing him helpful counsel. Even in captivity, Daniel and his friends pursued the well-being of the city that it and they might thrive and be a

testimony to the greatness of the one true God.

⇒ *Can you give an example of how God proved His goodness to you when you obeyed Him?*

The chapter's concluding statement that "Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus" reveals the length of Daniel's ministry. Cyrus conquered Babylon almost seventy years after Daniel came to Babylon as an exile. God blessed His faithful servant with a long life of earthly service. Still, Daniel and his friends would face a fiery furnace and a lions' den in the days ahead. Faithful obedience will result in increased godly wisdom but may also come with a worldly cost.

⇒ *Why can we faithfully trust and obey God's plan even when we can't see the path it will take us?*

## **TRANSFORM**

Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or wine. Because they feared the Lord above all, Daniel and his friends were able to hold fast to their resolve and stay true to their beliefs and convictions. If Daniel had feared the king and his earthly power, succumbed to temptation, and eaten what he wanted, the king of Babylon would not have seen the wisdom and power of God in him. The book of Daniel as a whole describes how God enabled His servants to bring glory to Him before mighty kings.

God calls us to obey His commands. Our obedience to God comes from faith in His character and works. As we obey, we will learn firsthand the wisdom of His commands, and we will learn to trust Him more quickly and more completely as we go through life. God also will use our acts of obedience to point others to Him. People will be drawn to Him as they see our lives and hear our corresponding words.

1. HEAD: Daniel didn't give into his circumstances. He kept his wits about him, believing God more than the king of Babylon was worthy of his fear and obedience. That's instructive for us as believers in Jesus. When life isn't going as expected, we are never without the kindness of God. We can go to Him in prayer and ask Him for wisdom to see His work in our lives as well as the determination to obey Him above all.

⇒ *How does the fear of God relate to our obedience to the God?*

2. HEART: We likely will not be taken to a foreign land, indoctrinated in a foreign culture, and fed foreign food, but we all will face suffering. Daniel's life helps us see that even in suffering God is still at work and worthy of our obedience. Israel was punished for their sin, but God had not given up on them. He was still with Daniel and his friends. He was still their God. When your life doesn't go as planned, He will still be your God too.

⇒ *Under what circumstances do you find it most difficult to obey God, and how can you prepare yourself for those times?*

3. HANDS: Daniel's faith wasn't private. Everyone around him knew where he stood. Because of this, Daniel was persecuted for his faithfulness, but he never wavered. In that regard, Daniel is a type of Christ, who never wavered even in the face of suffering on the cross to take away our sins. Jesus' faithfulness was for our benefit, securing forgiveness and justification through His death and

resurrection. True faith is never private but active in the real world. It was for Daniel and Jesus. It should be for us as well.

⇒ *How will you determine to obey God so He gets the glory through your actions?*

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