

Passage: Daniel 1:1-21

Title: Resolve

Series: Daniel

Topic: resolve

Theme: resolve instead of compromise

Big idea: Faithfulness isn't futile.

Driving question: How can we be faithful to God in the face of so much pressure to conform to the world around us?

Particular focus?

Guiding framework:

Resulting disposition / application:

Detailed outline

Time allotment: 33min (@90-100wpm, appx. 2970-3300 words)

I. Pre-introduction

A.

II. Introduction

A. [Pace / positioning / tone] "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

B. This of course is Dorothy's famous line from the Wizard of Oz.¹

1. The movie starts off with Dorothy and her family in small town KS. Early on in the movie a tornado comes through, but this isn't any ordinary tornado.

¹ e.g. <https://imsdb.com/scripts/Wizard-of-Oz.-The.html>

2. After the tornado dies down, Dorothy steps out of her house and realizes she and her dog Toto are in a very different place than KS.
 3. She's now in Oz. The movie even switches from black and white to color to reinforce the difference.
- C. "We're not in KS anymore, Toto."
- D. [Pace / positioning / tone] Today we start a four week series working through parts of the book of Daniel in the Old Testament — focusing on Daniel's character and (even more importantly) the God he serves, and I wonder if Daniel and his friends said something very similar.
- E. "We're not in Jerusalem anymore, Toto."
- F. Daniel and his friends that we'll meet soon were born in Jerusalem in the 7th century B.C.
1. They were born to families that were in the nobility — successful families that had a lot of promise to offer.
 2. A lot of their childhood was under the reign of King Josiah that you can read about in 2 Kings 22-23: Josiah instituted good reforms and the nation seemed to be getting on track.
- G. But then fairly early in their lives — they were probably somewhere around their mid-teenage years — the Neo-Babylonian Empire (which is basically right next door to Judah [map here?]²) starts to flex its muscle and is taking over neighboring regions under their King Nabopolassar³

² See esv.org, "Exile to Babylon" map.

³ See Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol 4 (M-P), pp 352-53.

and then his son — someone you may have heard of, King Nebuchadnezzar.

1. This siege happens in Jerusalem in 605 B.C.
2. Here's what this means for Daniel and his friends (remember they're teenagers here; if you're a sophomore or a junior or a senior in high school — imagine this happening to you):
3. Daniel and others are taken from their homes and exiled to Babylon. Babylon is appx 900 miles away from Jerusalem, and the two cities are world's apart. [map down]
 - a. In terms of population, Jerusalem was likely about 6,000 people.⁴ Babylon, on the other hand, was the largest city in the world and it's guessed that it was the first city to reach 200,000⁵ — over 30x larger than Jerusalem.
 - b. Jerusalem was declining.
 - i. After the reigns of David and Solomon in Israel, God's people endure division in the kingdom (the kingdom splits into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah) and multiple bad rulers.
 - ii. Spiritually and politically things are fragile at best, and an absolute train wreck at worst.
 - c. Babylon, on the other hand, was ascending in its strength.

⁴ <https://www.drandroidjackson.com/the-population-of-jerusalem-through-history/>

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylon>

- i. Under King Nebuchadnezzar, the empire is exerting military might, and the city of Babylon is doing one building campaign after another.
- ii. Nebuchadnezzar builds the Hanging Gardens of Babylon — one of the seven wonders of the ancient world — next to a grand palace called “The Marvel of Mankind.”⁶ (He probably wasn’t into tiny houses. Go big or go home, I guess.



- iii. The walls surrounding the city of Babylon were 80’ thick and 320’ tall.⁷
- iv. Daniel and his friends would have seen over a thousand temples dedicated to various gods,⁸ as opposed to the one temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem.

d. In almost every way, Babylon would’ve felt so different than Jerusalem.

H. We’re not in KS anymore, Toto.

I. [Pace / positioning / tone] So now the question I want to ask is this:

1. What can we learn from Daniel and his friends about how to live faithfully for God (we’ll see they do this again and again) in the world they find themselves in

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanging_Gardens_of_Babylon

⁷ Per the Greek historian Herodotus: [https://www.worldhistory.org/wall/#:~:text=The Greek historian Herodotus claimed,feet \(97 m\) high.](https://www.worldhistory.org/wall/#:~:text=The Greek historian Herodotus claimed,feet (97 m) high.)

⁸ as mentioned in Jeremy Treat sermon on Daniel 1.

- when things seem so foreign and life feels so out of control?
2. How do they live for God, when certain things in the larger culture fly in the face of their allegiance to the one true God?
 3. **Or let me say it this way for us:** How can we live faithfully for God in our world today — when faced with pressure to conform to the world around us?
When things feel like they're changing so fast and life can feel out of control?
- J. **[Pace / positioning / tone]** This isn't an abstract question.
1. If you're a follower of Jesus, this is a question of daily significance. How do you live faithfully for Jesus when following Him is challenged by the values and practices of the world around us?
 - a. How do you live faithfully as a Christian parent — raising your kids to follow Jesus — when the values of the culture say the greatest thing you can do is focus on their grades or the activities they're involved in?
 - b. How do you live faithfully as a student, when you're invited to a party that you know will involve you in things that you know perpendicular to Christian teaching and values?
 - c. How do you live faithfully when there's so much on your phones to pull you down instead of lift you up?

- d. Or if you want something more big picture: How do we live as we move from postmodernism into what cultural commentators are calling metamodernism (how's that for a big word!?) — how it swings back and forth between truth and relativism, irony and sincerity, and with its features of consumerism, incoherence, and desire for right-ness?⁹
 - e. How do we live faithfully for God in this sort of world?
2. If you're not a follower of Jesus and you're here seeking to learn more about Jesus:
- a. Listen in today and you'll see that Jesus is worth following, even when it means going against the flow.
 - b. Culture is so fleeting. It's promises don't satisfy. Jesus is true. He is lasting. Knowing Him is better than anything.
- K. [Pace / positioning / tone] From Daniel and his friends, we'll see that faithfulness to God is never futile. Living differently can make a difference.
- L. Now back to our question: How can we live faithfully for God in our world today?
- M. To answer this, let's start walking through Daniel 1. Here's a glimpse of what's coming, and then we'll dig in.

⁹ See for e.g. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/understanding-metamodern-mood/>; also <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2024/april-web-only/what-is-metamodernism-postmodernism-dead-next-gen-z-alpha.html>

1. **The realities of exile** — this is where we'll see the pressure Daniel faced to conform.
2. **The response in exile** — how do Daniel and his friends respond?
3. **The triumph over exile** — God's work and faithfulness to Him win the day.

III. Body

A. The realities of exile

1. **Daniel 1:1-7:** 1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. 3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— 4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. 5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. 6 Among those who were chosen were some

from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.
7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

2. **The realities of exile** are all over this passage.
 - a. Articles from the temple of Yahweh desecrated and transported to another temple. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians would have interpreted this and portrayed this as a display of “our god is more powerful than your God.” It’s a big deal.
 - b. The best and brightest Hebrew youth exiled to Babylon — these were the heirs apparent, the ones with the best test scores and the state track records. They’re now living 900 miles away, entered into this program of assimilation into Babylonian culture, designed to become carriers of that culture.
 - c. They’re given new names.
 - i. Their meaning of their old names (Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah) all identify with Yahweh in some way.
 - ii. Their new names reflect association with Babylonian gods.¹⁰
 - iii. At the most fundamental level of their identity, Babylon is working to reshape how they see themselves.

¹⁰ see esp ESV Study Bible 1586, also for e.g. Goldingay 165.

3. [Pace / positioning / tone] The bottom line is that these Hebrew youth are living in Babylon, and Babylon is working very intentionally to assimilate them into Babylonian culture. The goal is that they respond to Babylonian names, think like Babylonians, and worship like Babylonians.
4. Think how disorienting this all would've been, especially at first. Everything feels different and out place for Daniel and his friends.
 - a. There are ways we can relate to this. I'll start on a lighter note.
 - i. As a parent living with teenage boys, there are plenty of times I feel like I'm living in something of a foreign environment.
 - ii. I hear new words around the supper table all the time — words or phrases like “glow up,” “finna” “bussin,” “rizz,” “cap,” and “cheugy.”
 - iii. My boys love that I'm using this Gen Z brainrot, by the way.¹¹ 🤔
 - iv. **Last week I saw a guy having some fun with new slang and so (very tongue-in-cheek) he translated John 3:16 into “Gen Z speak.”**“For God was so extra for the world, his Sigma straight up slayed for our skibidi, that if we vibe and rizz with him and not basic, cringe, and sus

¹¹ <https://parade.com/1293898/maryniles/gen-z-slang-words/>

we won't be fire or lit, but boujee and bussin forever, bruh. No cap."¹²

- b. That's the foreign environment I'm living in with teenagers. That's the lighter side.
- c. [Pace / positioning / tone] But there's also the more serious side to feeling out of place.
- d. The Bible teaches that for followers of Jesus, we are pilgrims traveling toward our true home.
 - i. Write down these verses I'm about to mention and check them out later.
 - ii. Philippians 3:20 says we are "dual citizens" — citizens not just of a country on earth but more primarily "citizens of heaven."
 - iii. In 1 Peter 1:1, Peter addresses Christians as "exiles" — this world as it is now is not our home.
 - iv. In Hebrews 11:13-14 — this great "hall of faith" chapter — the author of Hebrews says that the people who stand out for faith in God understand they are "foreigners and strangers" on earth.
 - v. Hebrews 13 says we are "looking for the city that is to come."
- e. In other words, as followers of Jesus we are all exiles.
 - i. This world as it is not our true home.

¹² Thaddeus Williams facebook post, May 26, 2025 at 10:09pm.

- ii. Yet the same realities of exile that Daniel and his friends face are realities that we face: there are ways that the world around us is trying to squeeze us into its mold.
 - iii. To define our identities, dilute our worship, and determine our path.
- 5. If you've placed your faith in Jesus, is living as an exile part of your ongoing framework — allegiance to a different King (Jesus) and following a different path (discipleship to Him)?
- 6. **Romans 12:2 says it so clearly:** [2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.](#)
- 7. But now how do we do this? How do Daniel and his friends live faithfully for the one true God in the midst of their exile?
- B. **The response in exile**
 - 1. **Daniel 1:8-14:** [8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, 10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your\[a\] food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." 11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official](#)

had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

2. Before verse 8 we don’t get any hint of resistance on the part of Daniel and his friends.
 - a. They could tolerate the name change.
 - b. They could sit through the classes where they’d learn Babylonian culture and practices.
 - c. In all of this, Daniel and his friends never isolated themselves. They were enculturated into parts of Babylon.
 - i. There had to live in some gray areas.
 - ii. I’m sure there was some messiness to this.
 - iii. They were in the world.
3. [Pace / positioning / tone] But they were not of it.
 - a. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had a line they wouldn’t cross.
 - b. As followers of the one true God, they knew they had to be distinct in certain key ways.
4. **That phrase in v. 8 is one to underline or highlight:**
“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine...”

5. That Hebrew word for “resolve” literally means something like “Daniel set his heart.”¹³ “He made an internal decision that affected and set his external actions.”¹⁴
6. There was something about this food that crossed a line for Daniel and his friends.
7. **The ESV Study Bible sums up what’s going on here well:** “Daniel and his friends avoided the luxurious diet of the king’s table as a way of protecting themselves from being ensnared by the temptations of the Babylonian culture. They used their distinctive diet as a way of retaining their distinctive identity as Jewish exiles and avoiding complete assimilation into Babylonian culture (which was the king’s goal with these conquered subjects). With this restricted diet they continually reminded themselves, in this time of testing, that they were the people of God in a foreign land and that they were dependent for their food, indeed for their very lives, upon God, their Creator, not King Nebuchadnezzar.”¹⁵
8. As you live as a follower of Jesus, is your life marked by a certain distinctiveness? If someone followed you around for a month and listened to the way you talk,

¹³ See NET Bible search on this phrase. See also Jeremy Treat comments on this in his sermon.

¹⁴ Treat sermon

¹⁵ ESV Study Bible 1587

the jokes you tell, the things you watch, the things you do, the views you hold — do these things set you apart as a follower of Jesus?

9. ~~Any comments here on how areas of conviction can differ? We need grace and conversation here! [Maybe dictated by space...?]~~¹⁶
10. [Pace / positioning / tone] But notice that this passage doesn't only tell us *that* Daniel resolved not to eat certain food. It also tells us how he went about living this way.
 - a. He didn't take the plate of food he was given and throw it at the wall.
 - b. He didn't stage some visible display of disapproval. He didn't create splash and noise, drawing all sorts of attention to himself.
 - c. He didn't kick the court official in the shins and say "I'll never do that as a Hebrew."
 - d. Verse 8 says he asked permission. He put parameters around the decision ("let's try this for 10 days"). He was understanding of the situation he was putting the official in.
 - e. In other words, Daniel lived with conviction at the same time as he showed respect, understanding, and graciousness. What a lesson!

¹⁶ While some areas of conviction are clearly defined as "black and white" by God's Word, other areas of conviction have more to do with conscience (see Rom 14?). In these latter issues, we need careful understanding of what God Word says (and doesn't say), careful listening to others, civility, and a value on unity.

- f. [Pace / positioning / tone] Brookside: We never want to compromise biblical truth. No matter the cost.
 - i. And let's care about how we live with conviction.
 - ii. You can do a lot of damage if your only lens is conviction and crusade. Don't forget about character.
 - iii. Let's not sacrifice our character as we live with conviction.
- 11. [Pace / positioning / tone] Daniel 1 has shown us the realities of exile (the pressure to conform) and a faithful response in exile. Here's our third point:
 - C. **The triumph over exile**
 - 1. **Daniel 1:15-21:** 15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. 17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. 18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 20 In every

matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

2. The clearest example of triumph over exile is the practical results we see from this “test” that Daniel and his friends run.
 - a. After the 10 day special diet, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were healthier than the others in their program. They passed the test with flying colors!
 - b. This isn’t primarily about the diet.
 - i. If you want to be a vegetarian that’s fine (more meat for me! 🤔), but this is clearly God’s supernatural work here in this specific situation.
 - ii. That’s the only way that 10 days would make this noticeable of a difference.
 - c. Not only were they were healthier physically, they far surpassed their peers in terms of competency and practical skill.
 - d. Even in exile, Daniel and his friends grow into a significant position of leadership and influence.
 - i. (Christians shouldn’t shy away from positions of influence!)

- ii. They're examples of Jeremiah 29:7, where Jeremiah tells God's people to "seek the good of the city" — even in exile.
 - e. Faithfulness isn't futile. Daniel and his friends make a difference. They experience a measure of flourishing. There's a triumph in this.
3. But there are other indicators of triumph over exile in chapter 1.
- a. 3x in ch 1, there's some form of the phrase, "God gave" (in vv 2, 9, 17).
 - i. What this drives home is that God is never absent.
 - ii. Though it looks like he's been defeated when his temple is ransacked, God is in control.
 - iii. When the situation seems tense and fragile as Daniel and his friends resolve to abstain from the king's food, God gives compassion, favor, and blessing.
 - iv. God never loses control or backs away from the situation. He's involved and acting. His grace is at work and His purposes triumph.
 - b. Or here's another indicator of triumph over exile: In Daniel 1:21 it says this: Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.
 - i. On the face of it, this looks like a simple historical comment — noting how Daniel was in his role until the first year of this guy King Cyrus

- which we know is 539 B.C., almost seventy years after Daniel was deported to Babylon.
- ii. But tucked into this comment, Daniel 1 is practically screaming triumph at us.
 - iii. You see, Cyrus isn't some other King of Babylon, a generation or so down from Nebuchadnezzar. Cyrus is the King of Persia — another empire entirely that conquers Babylon.
 - iv. Nebuchadnezzar — the big bad boss that seems so powerful in ch 1 — Nebuchadnezzar and his reign are so fleeting. In fact, the Babylonian Empire is fleeting — not even lasting a century.
 - v. And yet Daniel remains.
 - vi. Faithfulness isn't futile.
 - vii. When we take this long view — we see triumph over exile.
4. **[Pace / positioning / tone]** And then for our lives today, we know even more than Daniel. As we consider the life and work of Jesus Christ, we see triumph over exile.
- a. Jesus willingly entered His own “exile” — leaving heaven and coming to earth in the form of a man.
 - b. Jesus responded faithfully in His exile — living a sinless life, and ultimately becoming “obedient to death” on a cross, bearing our sins in our place.
 - c. And Jesus triumphed over exile — rising to life on the third day and now seated victoriously at the right hand of God the Father.

- d. Because Jesus triumphed, our faithfulness in exile as His followers has purpose, and our hope beyond exile is secure.

IV. Conclusion / Application

- A. [Pace / positioning / tone] “Toto, we’re not in Kansas anymore.”
- B. Since that’s the case, how can we live faithfully for God in the world we actually live in?
- C. Straight from what we’ve seen from Daniel 1, let’s boil this down to some very practical take-aways for our lives.
 - 1. We need to **remember our identity.**
 - a. For everyone who’s following Jesus as Savior and Lord, a fundamental characteristic of our identity is that we are exiles — pilgrims traveling toward our true home.
 - b. Our goal isn’t to settle into this world just the way it is and absorb everything it has to offer.
 - c. Our goal is to seek the good of the city we live in *and* remember that we are dual citizens. Our allegiance is to Jesus and our eyes our fixed on Him.
 - d. We live daily in light of **Hebrews 13:14**: “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.”
 - e. Are you living like one in exile? Seeking the good of the city you’re in yet living distinctly, longing for and looking to the city that is to come?

2. Second practical take-away: Let's **resolve to live faithfully.**
 - a. Does your life look different because you follow Jesus?
 - b. We don't do this to earn His favor. We are saved entirely by grace through faith.
 - c. And then this grace changes us from the inside out — creating new desires that lead to different actions and habits.
 - d. In what specific area of your life do you need to live distinctly from the world around us, to demonstrate that you identify with Jesus and worship Him?
3. Third take-away: **Hope in the triumph that Jesus wins.**
 - a. Our posture in living faithfully isn't a deep sigh, sagging shoulders, and dragging feet.
 - b. Our posture in living faithfully is hope! Our head is up, our shoulders are back, and our eyes are fixed on Jesus.
 - c. Even in exile, faithfulness can make a difference! Look at Daniel and the huge ways God uses him! Your influence can make such a positive difference!
 - d. And then remember to take the long view.
 - i. Exile isn't where the story ends. Jesus wins.
 - ii. His death and resurrection seal the victory, and His return someday will reveal the victory.

- e. As you think about faithfulness, is your mindset characterized by defeatism or determination? Hopelessness or hope? How can you stand out for hope this week?
- D. How can you live for God in the world around us today?
 1. Remember your identity.
 2. Resolve to live faithfully.
 3. Hope in the triumph that Jesus wins.
- E. Close in prayer?
- V. Worship direction?
- VI. Communion language?
 - A.
 - B. Close in prayer?

extra words (overview and footnotes, etc): c. 261 (through p. 21)