

DANIEL AND THE MARKS OF A GODLY INDIVIDUAL  
DANIEL 9:20-23; 10:10-11,18-19

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

One interest that I acquired while living in New England earlier in my ministry career was visiting old cemeteries. There are a lot of them around in that part of the country. (PROJECTOR ON--- EASTON CEMETERY) This one was just up the road from us a few miles in Connecticut. I found it to be a profitable experience to wander among old tombstones like these and ponder the evidence that remains from these early American ancestors. These people didn't just leave their names on a slab of rock. Their loved ones often inscribed something that reflected their view of life or the hereafter.

Some epitaphs are short like the one (WAKEFIELD CEMETERY) that I found in this Wakefield, Massachusetts, cemetery. Dated 1791 it simply said, **"Think on death."** Others are longer. Some reflect a clear Christian testimony. (PLAINFIELD CEMETERY) I visited this old cemetery in Plainfield, New Hampshire. On a tombstone of a 35 year old woman who was buried in 1819 appeared this verse: **"Friends, remember in this cold cage of clay/ My body is deposited to lay/ Till Christ the Savior of mankind/ Shall bid it rise for thou art mine."** In such cases it is refreshing to consider that here lies the body of a man or woman whom no one may remember any more but who had a commitment to Jesus Christ.

In Rockport, Massachusetts, at the end of Cape Ann I encountered in a cemetery there this gravestone of a man named Isaac Hannibal. (ROCKPORT CEMETERY) He died on October 24, 1796 at the young age of 36. Inscribed at the bottom of his tombstone was this verse: **"To all young people that pass by,/ As you are now so once was I,/ As I am now so must you be/ Prepare for death and follow me."**

What would you like to have left as your epitaph? Or better yet, what do you think that the Lord would give you as your final description? We can get a good idea about what it would be for a number of people in the Bible. (PROJECTOR OFF) Abraham was called "the friend of God." David was called "a man after God's own heart." As we have seen in our Scripture reading, Daniel was three times called "a man highly esteemed."

*[Last week I mentioned that I would like you to share something of what you have learned from our study of Daniel. So I would like to get some input from you about what has impressed you about the character of Daniel, or why you think Daniel was highly esteemed by God. What has impressed you about the character of Daniel, or why do you think that Daniel was highly esteemed by God?]*

.....

I.

Let me finish up our study of Daniel by sharing several things that have impressed me about Daniel. The first thing that I notice, which is not a characteristic in itself but was essential to making Daniel who he was, is HIS UPBRINGING. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. HIS UPBRINGING) It seems to me that there were two factors that were crucial to this process: his family and outside influences on his life.

The Bible says very little about Daniel's family upbringing. But Daniel was obviously a leader who from an early age did not succumb to peer pressure. Daniel had a high sense of self-esteem. That does not mean that he was proud. It means that he was secure in knowing who he was.

I had a psychology professor in graduate school who claimed that 80% of a child's personality is formed by the time that he or she is age 6. It is in those early years that one's sense of self-esteem is developed. Psychiatrist Scott Peck says in his book *The Road Less Travelled*, **"...children who are loved and cared for with relative consistency throughout childhood enter adulthood with a deep seated feeling that they are lovable and valuable... Children growing up in an atmosphere in which love and care are lacking or given with gross inconsistency enter adulthood with no such sense of inner security."**

That principle suggests that Daniel had parents who spent time with him and gave him consistent love. We also know that he came from royal lineage. Somehow he was related to the king, and certainly he enjoyed special privileges as a member of an upper class family. The track record of Jewish royal families was not especially good. Of the 39 kings of Judah and Israel in the Divided Kingdom period, only 8 are labeled by God's Word as "good." Most of the kings were proud, greedy, self-centered, and idolatrous. The remarkable thing is that in Daniel we do not see someone who was spoiled, undisciplined, or greedy. Apparently his parents, and/or caregivers, showed consistent love and exercised discipline in Daniel's formative years.

The Bible tells us two important things about children, as well as adults. We humans are created in the image of God and therefore have inherent value and worth. Children should be loved, and know that they are loved. The Bible also tells us that children, as well as adults, are born with a sin nature. They have an innate bent toward selfishness and sin. So children need loving discipline. They need correction.

The upbringing that we adults have had cannot be changed. But we can do something about the way that we raise our own children and even our grandchildren. The cover story of *Time* magazine several years ago (7/13/2009) ago had a delightfully conservative perspective on marriage and the family in our country. The author noted the well documented stresses that American marriages and families face today. But she emphasized that traditional values produce the best results, especially in children. Citing the sociological research she notes, **"...on every single significant outcome related to short-term well-being and long term success, children from intact, two-parent families outperform those from single-parent households."** Good marriages and good families make a positive difference on future generations.

The other thing that likely had an impact upon Daniel's upbringing was outside spiritual influences. A year or two after Daniel was born King Josiah, who may have been his uncle or great uncle, discovered the book of the Law in the temple. Apparently the Jews had totally lost the first part of the Bible, the only part which had yet been written and recognized as Scripture. The king proceeded to initiate something of a spiritual revival when this first part of the Bible was rediscovered. We also know that the prophets Jeremiah, Nahum, and Zephaniah were active when Daniel was a boy. Growing up in a royal family in Jerusalem Daniel was more than likely to have had exposure to their teaching.

In this there is encouragement for you who are school teachers, Sunday school teachers, Bible teachers, youth leaders, and Good News Club helpers and leaders.. Even with young people who come from Christian homes I have frequently encountered reports that a youth leader or a Sunday school teacher was responsible for having a significant impact upon someone's life. When kids hear and see Christian adults teaching and living the same values as their fuddy-duddy parents, it can make an impact.

This is often not the report that you will hear or see until years down the road when kids have grown up and start raising their own kids. But this kind of investment in young people can pay eternal dividends. Many kids who think that their parents are too mean and strict end up becoming mean and strict themselves, in a good sense. Not all of us have been blessed with intact families and Christian parents, but we have the opportunity to break the cycle with our own kids and grand kids.

## II.

One of the key qualities that Daniel's upbringing produced was HIS SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT. (II. HIS SUBMISSIVE SPIRIT) That submissiveness was first and foremost exhibited toward God and secondarily exhibited toward people in authority. We find this attitude toward his captors in #1. Daniel and his three friends were just teenagers when they were taken away from their families and brought to a new country by the Babylonians and indoctrinated by a pagan education system.

We see this submissive spirit in the lions' den episode in #6. To King Darius who was tricked into throwing Daniel into the den, his first words upon his escape were, **"O king, live forever."** We see it in #4 when Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream. (PROJECTOR ON--- DANIEL 4:19) In v. 19 he declared, **"My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies!"**

Daniel served faithfully under Nebuchadnezzar for 40 years. To appreciate the significance of that we have to remember the kind of person who Nebuchadnezzar was. He was responsible for bringing Daniel into captivity as a teenager and for tearing him away from his family and friends in Jerusalem. He was an idolater. Nebuchadnezzar led three separate successful military campaigns against Daniel's country. He put the Jewish king, one of Daniel's relatives, in prison. He was a braggart, and he was proud.

(DANIEL 4:30) In #4 v. 30 he asked, **“Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?”**

For 40 years this is the man to whom Daniel submitted. Do you find it difficult at times to submit to your parents, your teachers, your husband, your church leaders, your boss, your leaders in government? (PROJECTOR OFF) Consider Daniel. He submitted to Nebuchadnezzar, a megalomaniac. He did it because he had a submissive spirit and because he was obedient to the Lord.

The society in which we live does not encourage a lot of respect for authority. It is the rebels who tend to be glorified in the media today. How many TV programs show a father and husband who is worthy of respect and submission? In many school classrooms it is increasingly difficult to maintain order. We have read and heard about Las Vegas schools in the last year where teachers have too often been attacked by students.

Years ago when I was living in Massachusetts I encountered a survey that was done of four Boston suburban school districts. Students in the fourth grade were given psychological tests and then were retested in the eighth and twelfth grades. The scientists discovered that students later involved in drugs described themselves on tests as willing to lie, cheat, hurt others, break rules, and disobey parents. Classmates described them as disorganized, insensitive, and lacking in motivation. These traits were evident already by the fourth grade. The leader of the study said that **“he believes that measuring youngsters’ early attitudes toward authority still will foreshadow their actions as they grow older.”** (*Boston Globe*, 12/5/1983) Daniel seems to have developed a healthy respect for proper authority by the time he was a teenager.

As Christians we need to be careful about buying into the attitude of the world. We need to be on guard against the cultivation of a complaining, critical spirit. When we are not submissive to the people to whom we are responsible, it is often a reflection of our insubordination to the Lord.

That does not mean that we should have a blind obedience. In #1 Daniel and company decided that they could not compromise on certain issues. But when they registered their objections, they went to the appropriate authorities and did it in a respectful manner. Even in that situation they displayed a certain submissiveness. We would do well to learn from their example.

### III.

Closely related to this spirit of submissiveness in Daniel is a related characteristic. Daniel was also a man of HUMILITY. (PROJECTOR ON--- III. HIS HUMILITY) Daniel had a right view of himself, both as a young man and as an old man. In #2 Nebuchadnezzar commanded that all of the wise men be killed because they could not tell him the dream that he had. God showed Daniel what that dream was.

It could have been tempting for Daniel to claim some credit for himself. (DANIEL 2:30) But notice what he told Nebuchadnezzar: **“But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king...”** “It is not me. It is the God of Israel.” The other wise men were in to astrology and divination and worship of idols. They were totally unable to figure out Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Daniel could have encouraged the king to go ahead and wipe out these other advisors. Or he could have at least had them fired. But he did not. He had a certain humility.

Decades later when Daniel was an old man, a royal decree was issued that anyone found petitioning any being other than the king should be executed. Daniel continues his humble practice of praying to the Lord on his knees three times a day as was his normal practice. (PROJECTOR OFF) Humility for Daniel started and ended with a right relationship with God.

We human beings often have difficulty in handling God’s blessing. Reading through the Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament I have been impressed by the fact that not only are there 8 kings out of the 39 who ruled in the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah who are good in God’s eyes, but also of those 8 good kings only 2, or perhaps 3, finished their lives well.

Those 5 or 6 other good kings became proud toward the end of their reigns, and that pride led them into sin. They attributed too much of their success and well-being to their own abilities and accomplishments and not enough to the Lord. Daniel demonstrated humility in his old age. He finished well.

Some of you have a considerable amount of ability and talent. Some of you here have been, or will be, recognized as a success in the eyes of the world. To whom will you give credit for your achievements? Will you maintain a Daniel kind of humility toward the Lord?

IV.

Not only was Daniel submissive and humble, but he was noteworthy for HIS LEADERSHIP. (PROJECTOR ON--- HIS LEADERSHIP) He and his three friends were taken into captivity because the Babylonians saw leadership qualities in them that would be useful in government. They were looking for young men who were qualified physically, who were qualified intellectually, and who were qualified socially. In Daniel they got more than they bargained for, because he was also qualified spiritually.

It is evident that Daniel had exceptional leadership abilities in that he functioned as #2 man in Babylon for several decades under several different rulers. That means, for one thing, that he was a skilled administrator. He knew how to get things done. He was practical. An idealist will not be a great leader unless he is also able to get things done.

The fact that Daniel also had a long tenure in office means that he had considerable political savvy. He was wise. He was tactful in dealing with people. Yet he also knew

how to confront in a wise manner and to give counsel that leaders didn't always want to hear. In #4 he told Nebuchadnezzar that he was going to lose his sanity because of pride. He told the king that he should turn away from his sin. The only way that he could get away with telling a pagan, proud king that he was in danger of judgment from the true God was from having a relationship in which Nebuchadnezzar knew that Daniel was committed to him and his well being.

Christian leadership also requires confrontation at times. The most effective confrontation is accomplished when the confrontee knows that the confronter is on his team. The individual needs to know that we are ultimately on his side, at least that we are wanting to see him or her do right.

One of the reasons for Russia's spectacular military failures in its attack on Ukraine is that President Vladimir Putin surrounded himself with "yes" men. His top leaders proved to be advisors who told him what he wanted to hear. His intelligence service said that the Ukrainians would lose heart in any attack upon the country. His military people assured the president that their forces were prepared and would quickly conquer the country. These assertions obviously proved to be untrue. Most of the Russian leadership proved to be corrupt.

Iraq today occupies what was once the center of the Babylonian Empire. Saddam Hussein liked to compare himself to ancient King Nebuchadnezzar. Like King Nebuchadnezzar, Saddam Hussein had advisors who were largely "yes" men. But also like King Nebuchadnezzar, Saddam Hussein had one man in his inner circle who was a follower of the true God. (GEORGES SADA) Georges Sada was a Christian air force general in a government which was almost totally dominated by Muslims. He acquired his position by being really good at what he did and by being a person of integrity.

Saddam Hussein often got frustrated with George Sadas, but he discovered that he was often the only advisor who would tell him the truth about the military situation in his country. It was Georges Sada who was in charge of captured American and Allied pilots who were downed in Iraq. At one point Saddam Hussein ordered him to kill all of the captured pilots. He refused to do it. Because of that the captured pilots were treated decently and all survived the war. Georges Sada was imprisoned for a time by Saddam because of his disobedience. But like Daniel he displayed godly leadership.  
(PROJECTOR OFF)

Daniel was also a great leader and had such a long tenure in office because he was a man of integrity. We can't be good leaders if we lack integrity. If we make promises that we can't keep, if we lie on our 1040, if we talk out of both sides of our mouth, if we try to manipulate people, if our primary concern is our own image and recognition, then we are ultimately going to be losing more ground than we are gaining.

In #6 when Daniel's fellow administrators tried to get rid of him because he was doing a better job than any of them and making them look bad, they examined his life with a fine tooth comb. Daniel had been active in government for at least 60 years. One would

think that after that length of time there would be a few skeletons in his closet. But they could not find anything.

The only ground of accusation that they could come up with was in regard to his faith. If we as Christians are going to take flack from unbelievers, that is what we want to take it for. It should not be for being late for work, for taking too long a lunch hour, for being too negative, for stabbing other people in the back, for not paying our bills, or for being a lousy neighbor. A good leader and a Christian should be a person of integrity.

V.

The last characteristic of Daniel that stands out to me was HIS FAITH. (PROJECTOR ON--- V. HIS FAITH) Daniel was a spiritual leader. The primary focus of his life was serving God. Because Daniel recognized that he had a big God, he developed a strong faith, which in turn resulted in a great impact upon other people. His faith was instrumental in finally causing King Nebuchadnezzar (DANIEL 4:37) to confess, **“Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”**

**One** of the characteristics of Daniel's faith, which I have already made reference to a couple of times, was his refusal to compromise on basic spiritual convictions. Daniel had a submissive attitude toward authority, but he would not compromise his faith. (PROJECTOR OFF)

A **second** characteristic that I see in Daniel's faith is a persevering consistency. He lived in the same city for 60+ years. He kept the same kind of high government job for 60+ years. He worked with pagan kings for 60+ years. He maintained a pattern of regular prayer for apparently most of his life. He prayed for the return of his people to Judah for almost 70 years.

There are important lessons here for us who live in an instant culture. We pray for our neighbor's salvation for a whole month, and when we don't see any change, we write him off as hardened to the Gospel. We share the Four Spiritual Laws with a student at school and find her not interested. So we brand her as hopeless. We run into problems in our marriage, and we decide that we married the wrong person. Somebody in church says something critical of us, and we decide to change churches. We find ourselves in the midst of a congregation with a fair set of people with health problems, and we conclude that God has made a mistake and has given us more than we can handle. Daniel exhibited a faith that persevered.

Then **finally** Daniel's faith was dependent upon prayer. He was an extremely gifted individual. Yet he knew that his needs were not partial but total. Prayer was not a crisis tool for him. It was a way of life. Is it a way of life for you?

At least four times in the book we find him praying. In #2 he and his friends are threatened with death unless they can tell the king his dream. So they pray to escape death. God answers, and Daniel prays a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

In #6 Daniel is threatened with death if he does pray. (PROJECTOR ON--- DANIEL 6:10) According to v. 10, when he finds out that a law has been issued that everyone has to send their prayers through the king, **“He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.”**

In #9 we find him praying in sackcloth and ashes with fasting for the return of his people to Judah. His prayer is stimulated by his reading of the words of the prophet Jeremiah. In response he confesses the sins of his people and pleads for God’s mercy.  
(PROJECTOR OFF)

In #10 Daniel is apparently praying for his countrymen who have recently returned to Jerusalem. An angel from God informs him that his prayer stimulated spiritual battle in the heavenly places.

In Daniel’s prayer life we see praise, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, intercession. We see prayer in crisis and prayer in peace. We find prayer with fasting, prayer without fasting. We see a regular, consistent pattern of prayer. We see prayer that produces answers from the Lord. We see prayers that are not quickly answered.

Daniel is an ideal model for one who is serious about prayer. Prayer for him was both a means and a reflection of his faith in God. The same is true for us. Our prayer life is a reflection of the faith that we have in God, or the faith that we lack in God. Prayer is also a means to greater faith in God.

Is God worthy of our trust? The answer from the Book of Daniel is a resounding “yes.” God is worthy of our trust.

How should we live in an often godless society? The godly statesman Daniel provides us with a role model who is worthy of our consideration. The characteristics that he exhibited in his own society are the characteristics that we need to live successfully in our own society.

We have today considered his submissive spirit, his humility, his leadership ability, and his faith. As we close this part of the service, I would like you to take one of these characteristics or one aspect of one of these characteristics and ask the Lord to develop that quality in you to a greater extent. Consider which of these particular things you might need most in your life. Let’s bow then for a moment of silent prayer.