

# Messy People

## Session 7: Daniel—Thriving in Messy Circumstances

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*“Select strong, healthy, and good-looking your men,” he said. “Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.”*  
*Daniel 1:4*

**Main Point:** Sometimes life is messy, and at times the messes feel completely overwhelming. God does not promise to spare us difficulties, but He does promise to be with us through them. And that is enough!

Daniel and his friends, young men who through no fault of their own, found themselves living in a foreign country as prisoners of war. Daniel and his friends encountered many messy situations. Rather than becoming depressed and discouraged as they faced on one difficulty after another, with God’s help they found ways to thrive in spiritually, physically and emotionally. They each possessed five character values that helped them go through messy circumstances: discipline, humility, integrity, wisdom and courage.

### **Resolving to be disciplined**

*“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11 NIV*

*“The king assigned them a daily ration of the best food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service...But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.” Daniel 1:5,8*

How could living by these two verses bring discipline and blessing into your life?

In what ways might you need to endure pain for a time in order to discipline yourself in ways that bring honor to God?

### **Daniel’s first challenge in Babylon**

Read Daniel 1:5,8, 12-19. How did Daniel’s experiment require discipline?

How did God reward him for his discipline?

Read Exodus 23:2 and Romans 12:2. What do these verses urge us not to do?

As Christians living in our culture today, how can we relate to Daniel’s situation in Babylon? What are some challenges we face as individuals and as the church in not conforming to the values of this world?

### **Displaying true humility**

*“Finally, everyone must live in harmony, be sympathetic, love each other, have compassion, and be humble.” I Peter 3:8 GW*

*“Pride leads to destruction; a proud attitude brings ruin.” Proverbs 16:18 NCV*

Read I Peter 3:8. What character qualities does this verse encourage?

Why is humility necessary if we are to live in harmony?

Read Proverbs 16:18. What does pride destroy?

### **Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream**

Read Daniel 2:1-19. Daniel finds himself facing a unique challenge: interpreting King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. What was the messy circumstance in which Daniel found himself? How did Daniel handle the situation?

How do we see both humility and courage in Daniel’s action? What was the outcome?

Read Daniel 2:20-28. What stands out to you in Daniel’s prayer of thanks to God?

How did Daniel show humility and give glory to God when he went before the king?

Read Daniel 2:47. What bold proclamation did King Nebuchadnezzar make? What role, do you think Daniel’s humility played in the king’s proclamation?

Daniel’s humility not only saved his life and the lives of many others but also pointed the king of a pagan nation to the God of Israel.

Read Philippians 2:3-5. What are some ways that our humility can point others to Christ?

### **Living with integrity**

*“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied. ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown in to the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn’t...we will never serve your gods.’” Daniel 3:16-18*

### **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and King Nebuchadnezzar**

Read Daniel 3:1-6 and describe the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had built.

Read again Romans 12:2. In what situations have you found yourself pressured to conform against your Christian values?

Read Daniel 3:16-18 How did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego reply to the king's command?

Read Daniel 3:24-29. Where did Shadrach's, Meshach's and Abednego's integrity lead?

What was the king's response?

Do you agree with this statement? 'Integrity in the face of opposition speaks loudly to others.' Why or why not?

Read Isaiah 43:2. What is God's promise to us?

Read Proverbs 2:7b-8. How can these verses bring you comfort?

### **Choosing a life of wisdom**

*"For the Lord gives wisdom: from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright."* Proverbs 2:6-7a ESV

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."* James 1:5 NIV

According to Proverbs 2:6-7a what is the source of wisdom?

Proverbs 19:8 says, *"Do yourself a favor and learn all you can; then remember what you learn and you will prosper."* Just what are we to do with wisdom and knowledge?

Remember a time when you relied on God's wisdom found in the scripture as opposed to your own plan. How did it work out for you?

Remember a time when you ignored God's wisdom and went after your own plan, knowing it was in opposition to God's. How did that work out for you?

**Daniel and King Belshazzar**, the king who lived according to his own plan.

*"There is a way that appears to be right--but in the end it leads to death."* Proverbs 14:12

Read Daniel 5:1-17 Why did the queen mother suggest the king summon Daniel?

What did Belshazzar offer to Daniel? Why and how do you think Daniel was able to refuse his offer?

Read Daniel 5:25-30 the interpretation of the writing on the wall. Are you surprised by King Belshazzar's response?

Read James 3:13-17. What are the benefits of living wisely?

Do you agree with these statements?

Wisdom is seeing things from God's perspective and responding in ways that please him.

Wisdom is truth lived out which spares us from pain and brings us blessings.

Proverbs 4:7a, Proverbs 8:11 and Proverbs 1:7

### **Having courage**

*"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified...for the Lord your God goes with you, he will never leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV*

*"When Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem." Daniel 6:10*

### **Daniel, King Darius and the lion's den**

Read Daniel 6:1-16 What courageous stand did Daniel take?

How did this plot backfire on the government administrators? Daniel 6:17-24

How did Daniel's courage impact all the people? Daniel 6 25-28

How might this story have been different if Daniel had been too afraid to continue his public prayers?

Read I Peter 4:12. How would you restate this verse in your own words?

*"Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you." I Peter 4:12*

How might your faith and courage impact those around you?

According to Matthew 10:32-33, what is the guarantee for everyone who publicly acknowledges and honors God here on earth?