

A Food Test (Dan 1)

A Small Group Outline



1. **Praise** (Purpose: To worship God)
 - What are you thankful for this week? (let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)
 - Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God
2. **Pray** (Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)
 - What challenges did you have this week? (write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)
 - Go into a season of prayer
3. **Review** (Purpose: To learn accountability)
 - Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? (e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? Did you do what you said to draw closer to Jesus?)
 - Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.
4. **Give** (Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)
 - It is time to return our tithes & offerings as an act of worship to God. You can do so physically at your place of worship, or electronically. If the latter, please ensure that you get the bank details from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.
5. **Discover** (Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)
 - **Notes for the facilitator**
 - Read *Prophets and Kings* (PK), pp. 479-490.
 - Daniel was 18 when he was taken captive (4T 570)
 - Though Daniel was taken captive, something that appeared to be a curse, God used him to bring a knowledge of the true God to one of the world's greatest empires (viz., Babylon), and resulted in a book that has prophetic value right up to Christ's second return
 - The Great Controversy theme can be seen in the following: Two kings: Jehoiakim and Nebuchadnezzar; Two Gods: Jehovah and Marduk; Two cities: Jerusalem and Babylon; Two temples: God's temple and Marduk's temple; Two peoples: Babylonians and Hebrews (*Stephen Bohr, Specialised Studies in Daniel*)
 - Nebuchadnezzar changed the names of the Hebrew youth to those of Babylonian gods, with the hope of gradually causing them to renounce their faith in favour of idolatry (see PK 481).
 - Daniel, which means 'God is my Judge', was changed to Belteshazzar, 'May Bel protect', Hananiah, means 'The grace of Yahweh', was changed to Shadrack, 'the command of Aku'; Mishael, means 'Who is what God is?', was changed to Meshach, 'Who is what Aku is?' and Azariah, which means 'The help of Yahweh', was changed to Abednego, 'The servant of Nabu'. It is interesting that Daniel and his friends never used their Babylonian names (see Dan. 7:28, 8:1, 15, 27, 10:2, 7) (*Stephen Bohr, Specialised Studies in Daniel*)
 - Although Daniel and his friends studied in the school of Babylon (Dan. 1:4) they still maintained their faith in God. That is why they were considered as outcasts by

their fellow Babylonian wise men (see Dan. 3:8, 12) and also by the Medo-Persian administrators (Dan. 6:4-6)

- Eating of the king's food that was offered to idols meant showing honour, respect and worshipping those gods, which meant disobedience to the first commandment (Ex. 20:3)
- Furthermore, they did not eat those foods because of the risk on the physical, mental and spiritual development (PK 482). The Bible brings our eating and drinking into the sphere of honouring God (1 Cor 10:31)
- Daniel's predicament in this chapter was: Should he disregard God's commandments to secure favour with the king and flattering worldly prospects in Babylon, OR should He obey God's will and offend the king with the possibility of losing his position and life?
- God's original diet consisted of fruits, grains and nuts (Gen. 1:29, 30). After mankind sinned, vegetables (called the plants/herbs of the field in Gen. 3:18) were added. There will also be a plant-based diet in heaven (Rev. 22:2) and even the animals will be vegetarian there (Isa. 11:6-7)
- God also warns against the drinking of wine which was on the king's table (Dan. 1:5), which seemingly was fermented wine. Wine in the Bible refers to both *fermented* wine or *unfermented* grape juice. Positive references to "wine" have to do with unfermented and unintoxicating grape juice. Because of its natural and nourishing properties, grape juice was fittingly used to represent the divine blessing of material prosperity (Gen. 27:28; 49:10-11; Deut. 33:28), the blessing of the messianic age (Joel 2:18-19; Jer. 31:10-12; Amos 9:13-14), the free offer of God's saving grace (Isa. 55:1), the wholesome joy God offers to His people (Ps 104:14-15; 4:7), and the acknowledgment of God through the use of grape juice as tithe, offerings and libations (Num. 18:12; Deut. 14:23; Ex. 29:40; Lev. 23:13). On the other hand, the negative references to 'wine' have to do with fermented and intoxicating wine. Some of the reasons Scripture condemns the use of alcoholic beverages are that they distort the perception of reality (Isa. 28:7; Prov. 23:30-33); they impair the capacity to make responsible decisions (Lev. 10:9-11); they weaken moral sensitivities and inhibitions (Gen. 9:21; 19:32; Hab. 2:15; Isa. 5:11-12); they cause physical sickness (Prov. 23:20-21; Hos. 7:5; Isa. 19:14); and they disqualify for both civil and religious service (Prov. 31:4-5; Lev. 10:9-11; Eze. 44:23; 1 Tim. 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8).
- Some of the meats offered to Daniel and his friends were unclean. Gentile nations ate swine's flesh and mice (Isa. 66:17). God calls the eating of unclean foods an abomination (NIV: 'detestable thing' in Deut. 14:3-8). Other things God calls an abomination are: image worship (Deut. 7:25-26); the occult (Deut. 18:9-11); refusing to listen to God's law (Prov. 28:9); shedding innocent blood (Eze. 22:2-3), sacrificing children to idols (2 Kings 16:3), etc.
- *Read Dan 1 as a group. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quoting Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (use only a few). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - How could God allow righteous people like Daniel and his friends to be taken to Babylon?
 - Since Daniel was a mere teenager when taken captive, it speaks volumes about his home training. What is the power of home education?

- Babylon boastfully took the articles of Israel's temple and placed it in the "treasure house of [their] god", implying that Babylon's god was greater than Israel's God. How do you think God's name and honour was viewed by both Israel and the surrounding nations at this time?
- Why do you think king Nebuchadnezzar changed the names of these young Hebrew boys?
- Was it such a big deal for Daniel not to eat from the king's table? Is there a connection between diet and spirituality?
- What are the dangers of a lack of self-control? [See 1 Cor 9:25-27. Note that we can only overcome in this area through the power of the Holy Spirit – see Gal 5:22, 23. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit]
- Unpack your understanding of vs 8: "Daniel **resolved** not to defile himself with the royal food"
- What is the power of education and spirituality (see vs 17)?
- In what ways did God honour these young men? (Hint: See vss. 15, 17, 19, 20)
- What does this whole passage tell us about God? (Hint: God allowed Israel to reap the consequences of her disobedience by allowing her to be taken captive to Babylon / He honours those who obey Him / etc)
- What does this passage tell us about people? (Israel's disobedience brought them to Babylon / That we can conquer temptation through the power of God and engaging our wills (vs 8) / etc)
- **Application Questions** (select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT)
 - Do you feel that the world is trying to "change your name" and define you in ways other than your Christian roots?
 - What encouragement do you take from Daniel and his friends in your battle with appetite?
 - Is there something that you need to take a firm decision on (like Daniel had resolved), that will strengthen and improve your walk with God?
 - Are there ways you want to improve your mind in order to be of better service to Christ?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "I will seek God this week for power over appetite, and endeavour to eat healthily, temperately and at specific times"

6. **Share** (Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. **Closing prayer**