

SESSION 1; DANIEL'S STORY. Read Daniel chapters 1-3 and Jeremiah 28



The Book of Daniel was likely written between 540 and 530 B.C.

The setting: In 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon had conquered Judah and deported many of its inhabitants to Babylon.

- 1) After watching or reading a news article, have you ever said “this is it, mankind has sunk as low as it can get, the end must be near.”
- 2) If you could rate today’s society compared to what it was fifty years ago, how would you rate it? In what ways has morality declined?

In this video, pastor and author Larry Osborne will introduce us to a man who learned to thrive in the midst of Babylon: Daniel. We will learn that nothing circumvents the power and sovereignty of God, even when we live in a sin-loving world, our own personal Babylon.

**Show Session 1: Daniel’s Story (18 minutes)**

- 3) Do 'innocent' people suffer because of God's actions?
- 4) What did you learn about Daniel that you hadn't realized before?
- 5) How can understanding the context of Daniel's stories help you see beyond the lion's den or the fiery furnace?
- 6) Does knowing someone else faced far more opposition help you find peace today?
- 7) In what ways have you seen God's hand in your life, even when chaos appeared to be reigning?
- 8) What parts of your life are not thriving? What would it look like to thrive in your life today?
- 9) After watching Steve and Jeanne Bessant's tragic story of losing their son, what surprised you about what they shared? In what ways did God surprise them?
- 10) What was the Bessant family's response to the men who took the life of their son?
- 11) How does their reaction inspire you? Who, in your life, is difficult for you to forgive?

Jeremiah 29:11 is a famous verse that is often quoted out of context, but explores this truth well:

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* The first thing to realize is that the word prosper is not the best translation, the original Hebrew word is **shalom**. This is best translated as **peace** and sometimes as welfare.

It's also crucial to remember that Jeremiah wrote this to Jews who were in exile (captives).

- 12) How does knowing this verse was written to a people who would remain in exile affect your faith and perception of God?

In the midst of that, we meet Hananiah, a seer. Read Jeremiah 28.

- 13) What did Hananiah the Seer do wrong?
- 14) What was Jeremiah's reaction? (See verses 15–17).
- 15) Who today utters this same prophecy, that all will be well?

Jesus' words in John 16:33 remind us of the importance of thriving in exile: *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

- 16) How does knowing the truth that pain and trials will be part of our life help you face them today?
- 17) How does knowing that Jesus has overcome the world help you during your darkest trials?

Read Hebrews 12:4-11 (NLT) *After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin. 5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. 6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child." 7 As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? 8 If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. 9 Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? 10 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. 11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.*

**18) Who does God discipline?**

**19) Why does He discipline His children?**

**20) If you have children, why do you discipline them?**

Read Daniel 1:1–2 (NLT) *During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So, Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.*

**21) Who gave Babylon the victory over the king of Judah?**

**22) How does knowing God allowed such a painful tragedy help you understand the way God deals with us today?**

Ecclesiastes 1:9 *What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.* Ecclesiastes 7:10. *Don't long for "the good old days." This is not wise.*

**23) Why do you think Solomon thought it was unwise to have these kinds of speculations?**

**24) Why do we tend to think the old days are better than today?**

*Daniel 3:1 King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Daniel 3:4 Then a herald shouted out, "People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command! 5 When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. 6 Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." Daniel 3:13 Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. Daniel 3:15 I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?*

**25) How did the king blaspheme God?**

**26) How does Nebuchadnezzar's demand of the people echo Satan's request to Jesus during His temptation in the wilderness? (See Luke 4:5–8 for the temptation of Jesus.)**

*Habakkuk 3:16–19 I trembled inside when I heard this; my lips quivered with fear.*

*My legs gave way beneath me, and I shook in terror.*

*I will wait quietly for the coming day when disaster will strike the people who invade us.*

*17 Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines;*

*even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren;*

*even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty,*

*yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!*

*19 The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights.*

**27) What does this Scripture tell us about the character of God?**

**28) Does God always promise deliverance? And what did Habakkuk choose to do in the midst of a failed crop, starvation, and deprivation?**

**29) How does Habakkuk's response help you to face your current trials?**

**30) Are there any situations in your life where you currently need Daniel's perspective?**

**31) What is one way you can, like Habakkuk, choose to praise God in the midst of your "exile"?**

**32) What source of media negativity affects you the most? Would you be willing to give it up?**

**33) What stands in the way of you believing God is working all things for good behind the scenes (See Romans 8:28)?**

**34) How can a strong, Daniel-like belief in God's rule over everything help you put your current circumstances in spiritual perspective?**

Larry said, "God is much more concerned about our ultimate holiness than He is about current happiness." He is more interested in the way we respond to difficulties than he is in alleviating our current pain. This is not an easy way to view God, it's counter-cultural. And yet, if we look back on our lives when we had the most significant spiritual growth, it came smack-dab in the middle of difficulties. There is hope, no matter what you face today. God is at work.