



**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE®**

Personal

Study Guide

SENIOR ADULTS

FALL 2023

KJV

Staying True in a World Far from God

Confident in the Face of Hard Questions

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STAYING TRUE IN A WORLD FAR FROM GOD

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We have a new look and design!

While many things may have changed in the way *Bible Studies for Life* looks, one thing has not changed: our commitment to discipleship. Each year, our studies focus on eight different areas of discipleship. You can read how we touch on these eight markers of discipleship on page 10, but this issue focuses on two areas.

Live Unashamed. An ongoing challenge believers face is the pull of the world around us. Culture may want to sway us in ways that are contrary to God's plan for us, but what does it look like to stand confidently in God? In the study *Staying True in a World Far from God*, we look at Daniel's life and example to discover how we too can live unashamed in a world far from God.

Share Christ. As we live unashamedly for Christ, we will have opportunities to tell others about Him. People may confront us with questions—*hard* questions. We may even struggle ourselves with some of these questions. In the study *Confident in the Face of Hard Questions*, we will discover answers grounded in Scripture that help us confidently point others to Christ.

May God bless your Bible study group as you dig into His Word!

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Senior Adults KJV Personal Study Guide

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Prayer Requests

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THE PATHWAY OF DISCIPLESHIP

Growing in Christ is a journey—a lifelong journey—but what does that look like? Lifeway’s research reveals eight markers consistently present in the lives of believers who are growing spiritually. Each year, Bible Studies for Life engages all eight of these areas. Following this intentional plan for discipleship ensures progress on the pathway to becoming more like Christ.

Visit www.BibleStudiesforLife.com for a fuller picture of this discipleship plan through 2024.

	FALL 2023	WINTER 2023-24	SPRING 2024	SUMMER 2024
LIVE UNASHAMED	Staying True in a World Far from God			
SHARE CHRIST	Confident in the Face of Hard Questions			
SEEK GOD		A Name Like No Other		
EXERCISE FAITH		Owning a Faith That Matters		
OBEY GOD AND DENY SELF			It’s All About Jesus	
SERVE GOD AND OTHERS			Being an Authentic Church	
ENGAGE WITH SCRIPTURE				Promises We Can Count On
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS				More Than a Sidekick: Serving Alongside Others

STAYING TRUE IN A WORLD FAR FROM GOD

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan

Live Unashamed. We live in a culture that is becoming increasingly antagonistic toward those who follow Christ. Through his actions and prayers, Daniel gives us a powerful example of what it looks like to live unashamed in a culture that sees no need to live righteously and obediently for His glory.

Sept. 3	Session 1	Develop Strong Convictions (Daniel 1:3-13,17-19)
Sept. 10	Session 2	Pray with Passion (Daniel 2:13-23,27-28a)
Sept. 17	Session 3	Speak Truth Boldly (Daniel 5:13-17,22-28)
Sept. 24	Session 4	Live Courageously (Daniel 6:6-13,16-17,21-23)
Oct. 1	Session 5	Confess Wholeheartedly (Daniel 9:3-10,17-19)
Oct. 8	Session 6	Prepare for Battle (Daniel 10:1-3,10-13,16-19)

CONFIDENT IN THE FACE OF HARD QUESTIONS

How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan

Share Christ. When we know what we believe—and why—we stand with assurance in the truth of Christ. Consequently, we speak with confidence as we have opportunities to talk to others about Christ. Questions—even objections—about our faith can arise, but our witness for Christ is not hindered because we know how to respond.

Oct. 15	Session 1	Does it Really Matter Which “Truth” I Believe? (John 3:19-21; 8:31-36)
Oct. 22	Session 2	Are Miracles Relevant? (John 10:22-26; 14:8-14)
Oct. 29	Session 3	Why Do We Suffer? (Job 30:26-31; 42:1-6)
Nov. 5	Session 4	Is Jesus the Only Way to God? (1 John 5:1-13)
Nov. 12	Session 5	Won’t All People Ultimately Go to Heaven? (Matthew 7:13-23)
Nov. 19	Session 6	Is Hell Real? (Thessalonians 1:3-12)



Introduction

STAYING TRUE IN A WORLD FAR FROM GOD

For those who grew up in church, our first thought concerning Daniel is likely of the king throwing him into the lion's den. This centuries-old story highlights the world's antagonism towards the things of God and His followers. The conflict has existed since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden and continues today. The division between the world's standards and God's is not a thin line in the sand; today, it is a vast chasm. The differences are seemingly becoming greater at an ever-increasingly rapid rate.

Daniel in the lion's den is but one snapshot from the life of a prophet

who remained faithful when kings and companions challenged him to forsake God. The book of Daniel portrays him as unashamed, unwavering, and unwilling to compromise in his devotion to God.

One behavior that stands out to the reader is Daniel's faithfulness in prayer. Another is his willingness to show courage. Daniel thus serves as a model for believers who want to stand strong today, despite the world's disapproval and opposition—or even its resentfulness and animosity. Daniel remained unashamedly faithful; we can too. Let's dig in!

G.B. HOWELL

G.B. served as a pastor in Georgia and as an adjunct professor for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary before serving at Lifeway as the Editor of Biblical Illustrator magazine until he retired.



Session 1

Develop Strong Convictions

THE POINT

Our convictions, not our circumstances, define who we are.

THE PASSAGE

Daniel 1:3-13,18-19

QUESTION 1:

When have you experienced culture shock?

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Why couldn't I have a pet dragon that lived under the stairs? Eddie Munster had one. The Munsters' stairs opened like the hood of a car, and Spot would appear, usually breathing fire.

Mere technicalities kept me from owning a dragon. First, where to find one? Local pet stores sold goldfish and hamsters—no dragons. Second, food probably cost a *lot* more than we could afford. Third, we lived in a one-story house, hence, no grand staircase.

Of course, Spot was a fictitious pet on the 1960s sitcom, "The Munsters." The show portrayed a family of harmless monsters who faced challenges as they lived in a world vastly different from what they had previously known in Transylvania. Several 1960s TV shows depicted people living in an unfamiliar place: "Gilligan's Island," "Lost in Space," "The Beverly Hillbillies," and more.

Sometimes we look at our world today and say, "This is *not* the world I have known! Something is vastly wrong here." The Old Testament prophet Daniel was transported into a foreign and ungodly place. His example can help instruct us how we too can live faithfully in a seemingly unfamiliar world.

Daniel 1:3-7

³ And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

⁴ Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

⁵ And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

⁶ Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

⁷ Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

The book of Daniel, being autobiographical, gives firsthand snapshots from the prophet Daniel's life. The Babylonians conquered the ruling Assyrians in 605 BC. The nation of Judah afterwards found itself under Babylonian domination. One of the first acts of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar was to capture choice citizens from Jerusalem, Judah's capital city, and bring them into his royal household. Daniel, who was likely about fifteen years old at that time, was among those taken.

The Best and the Brightest.

Nebuchadnezzar specified the Hebrew captives were to be members of the royal family or from Judah's noble families. Whether Daniel and his friends were members of the royal household or part of Judah's nobility is unknown. People from these social strata would have had the finest education of the day and would have been trained in matters of culture and tradition.

Nebuchadnezzar was looking for people who could support him and strengthen his kingdom, power, influence, and reputation.

Additionally, taking the strongest and most influential to Babylon would weaken Judah, making it vulnerable to future assaults.

What Nebuchadnezzar had not considered was the religious foundation that had been firmly rooted in Daniel and his three Hebrew friends. They had grown up under the influence of Judah's godly King Josiah. His reign (640–609 BC) was marked by God's people renewing His covenant, a nationwide revival, and God's Word being reestablished as the core for Hebrew worship. Daniel and his friends' personal devotion to God and His Word certainly began in the pattern set out by their parents.

This is a reminder for us today to establish environments that honor and revere God and His Word. These godly foundations are not easily forgotten or abandoned. The apostle Paul reminded Timothy of the long-term benefits of being raised in a God-fearing household:

“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5).

The Training and Teaching.

Why was Nebuchadnezzar determined to teach captives the language and literature of the Babylonians (NIV)? He may have wanted to erase from their minds the beliefs and culture they had known in Judah. Changing their Hebrew names, each of which reflected the parents' faith in God, to names that honored various Babylonian gods highlighted Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to erase their God-fearing faith foundations. Or Nebuchadnezzar may have been preparing these youths for future work in Babylon, knowing that the young men would then be prepared to instruct other captives who would be brought to Babylon later. The instruction was to last for three years, a common duration for religious instruction in many ancient Near Eastern cultures.

To further acclimate the young men to Babylonian life and potential service in the royal household, Nebuchadnezzar stated they were to receive the food and drink that was served at his table. He wanted to make sure these promising young men received the best he could offer in the way of food, education, and mentorship.

The Hebrew youths' experience

in Babylon serves as a cautionary tale for us today. As modern culture moves further from God-honoring traditions, increasingly the world will expect people of faith to abandon any evidence of reverence for God. They will pressure us to embrace lifestyles that violate God's Word. Daniel and

his friends remained faithful. The question is, how faithful will we be?

QUESTION 2:

What are some ways we might feel like foreigners in this world?

Daniel 1:8-13

⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

⁹ Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

¹⁰ And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

¹¹ Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

¹² Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

¹³ Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

My wife and I have a friend who went into anaphylactic shock when she drank lemonade as a child. Today, she is especially careful when she

orders at a restaurant. Many times, we have heard her say, "I want a glass of tea with no lemon. And when I say, 'no lemon,' I mean no lemon. You

can't take a glass that has had lemon on the side of it and remove the slice. I am deathly allergic. So, no lemon." Hearing the alarm in her voice, servers are always understanding.

Decision and Defilement.

Daniel and his friends heard they were to have the same food and wine the king received (Dan. 1:5). This certainly would have been the finest cuisine in the land, prepared by only the most-talented cooks. Rather than be excited or pleased, though, alarm bells went off; Daniel saw the food as a source of defilement. The Hebrew word translated "defile" carries the idea of being polluted or desecrated. Why did Daniel think the king's food would defile him? Two possibilities emerge.

1. Daniel, having been raised in a Jewish home, would have understood certain foods were not kosher, and certain animals were "clean" and others, "not clean" (Gen. 7:2-3,8-9). Hebrew Law prohibited Jews from eating certain animals, including—but not limited to—camels, pigs, eagles, shrimp, lobster, vultures, ravens, owls, bats, mice, lizards, and locusts (Lev. 11).
2. Ancient pagan religions often

compelled adherents to leave food before an idol. After it had been presented to the god, the priest or leader would consume it. When God gave the Law to Moses, He prohibited the consumption of food offered to idols (Ex. 34:15). This was an ongoing issue for the people of God, something even early Christians faced (1 Cor. 8:1-13).

Offering food to idols continues today. When visiting India, I saw a concrete shrine erected around a standing stone near the city square. The shrine was the size of a navy-blue drop-off mailbox. The stone had been painted bright orange. People came and placed food and flowers at the base of the stone, believing that it was a manifestation of a Hindu god.

Daniel took a hard stand for his religious convictions. He was gracious in his request, but he had already decided he would not consume the king's food. Daniel's resolve is a lesson for us. We must establish our convictions against unholy, compromised, and/or unacceptable behavior *before* we face the moment of decision.

QUESTION 3:

How do you distinguish between matters of preference and issues

of conviction?

Time for Testing.

Refusing the king's food could be taken as a rejection of the king and as an act of rebellion. The prince of the eunuchs, the king's chief servant, rejected the idea. He was afraid if the youths appeared less than healthy, then his life would be in danger. Daniel, undeterred by the servant's rejection, next approached the personal guard who had been assigned to him. Hearing Daniel's request, he agreed to feed Daniel and his friends only pulse and water for ten days. The Hebrew term translated "pulse" referred to grains, fruits, and other non-meat food items. Afterwards, the guard would evaluate the youths' condition.

Establishing a "Plan B" highlights how determined Daniel was to avoid

defilement. Not surprisingly, the youths looked robust after ten days. They continued with the modified diet for the entire three years of training.

If the young Hebrew lads had eaten from the king's table and afterwards appeared vigorous, alert, and robust, then their condition would be attributed to what the Babylonians had furnished. If, however, they were in that same healthy condition after eating the minimized and modified diet, then the credit would have to be attributed to what God had done. Their actions glorified their God.

QUESTION 4:

How do we navigate the tension between standing in our convictions and not isolating ourselves from the world?

Daniel 1:17-19

¹⁷ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

¹⁸ Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹ And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

DIGGING DEEPER

Babylonian and Persian Kings

For more information about the kings found in the book of Daniel, refer to the article on pp. 24–27.

Daniel and his friends had every reason to question God and wonder why He had abandoned them in such a life-altering crisis. Daniel, though, recognized that God was actively at work—even in their threatening situation. Three times in this first chapter, Daniel affirmed God's hand had been at work amid the historically disastrous events.

1. The Lord "gave Jehoiakim king of Judah" to Nebuchadnezzar (v. 2). This occurred when Babylon's king conquered Jerusalem.
2. "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love" with Nebuchadnezzar's chief official (v. 9).
3. "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill" about all kinds of Babylonian literature and wisdom (v. 17).

Remember, God is always at work—even behind the scenes and in the most difficult of circumstances.

Intellect and Insight.

Rather than acquire information (knowledge), the four young men gained insight (skill) that was beyond normal, human capabilities. They received the wisdom and understanding that comes exclusively from God. They embodied and demonstrated what James wrote about centuries later, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it shall be given him" (Jas. 1:5; cf. Col. 1:9).

Beyond intellect, God also gave Daniel something He had not given the others—the ability to understand all visions and dreams. The Babylonians believed their gods conveyed messages through dreams. Daniel's ability to interpret dreams far surpassed what the king's priests, magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers could do and ultimately impressed the king (Dan. 2:1-48).

When Nebuchadnezzar took the valuable vessels from the Jerusalem temple and placed them in the primary temple in Babylon, his intent was to show the superiority of Babylon's so-called gods (v. 2). Daniel's God-given ability to understand every kind of vision and dream proved the superiority of his God, Yahweh, over the false deities of Babylon. Daniel's God-given gift

ENGAGE

A Line in the Sand

Mark areas in which you have experienced the temptation to compromise:

Gossip Sexual behavior Financial decisions Business ethics

Believers often have to “draw a line in the sand” to indicate the lines they will not cross in compromise. How has God helped you avoid compromise?

was different from and better than the abilities of the charlatans and soothsayers, all “the magicians and astrologers” of his day (Dan. 1:20).

Superior and Service.

Nebuchadnezzar had requested the best and the brightest for his service (v. 4). The time came for Nebuchadnezzar to inspect all the captives who had received three years of training. Scripture gives no indication that Nebuchadnezzar had ever seen any of the captives before this moment; likely, he had not. The king knew what he was looking for: young men without any physical defect, men who had received instruction in all wisdom and knowledge, who were perceptive, and capable of serving in his palace (v. 4).

Nebuchadnezzar handpicked those who would serve in his palace. Having such a hands-on approach signifies the importance of the process, and the four Hebrew youths surpassed the king’s expectations.

Although Daniel had learned about Babylonian culture, its literature and language, he refused to compromise his faithfulness to God. The Lord had not abandoned Daniel; He blessed both him and his Hebrew friends. He took them from being captives in prison to the throne room of the king. Daniel was right where God needed him to be. The Lord had protected His own, and there was more yet for Daniel to do.

QUESTION 5:

What helps you stand firm in your convictions?

LIVE IT OUT

Analyze your own life situation.

Is God working in an unexpected way? If so, pray and ask for His wisdom to see the bigger picture of what He is doing in your life.

Think about your own life.

Is there an area in which you have compromised and adopted the world’s unbiblical values? Pray and ask God for strength to know what to do in this situation.

Tell your story. Share with your family or friends details of a time God led you into an unexpected or even uncomfortable place, opportunity, or situation, but you later saw His hand at work. Explain how this experience affected your life and your family. Pray with them, thanking God for letting them be part of your faith journey.

