

Four Qualities God Blesses

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I want to encourage you today with the story of Daniel. He lived hundreds of years before Jesus did, but his life has a lot to teach us about how to lead a life God blesses, even in a culture that's opposed to God's values. Here's some of Daniel's story.

Much of the nation of Israel had been captured by the Babylonians. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, brought the best and brightest young Hebrew men, including Daniel, to the palace for indoctrination and training. He wanted to give them a new language, new culture, new habits, new food, new religion, and even new names. It was a total reprogramming process.

But Daniel refused to go along with the program, including refusing to eat like the royals did. Daniel 1:8 says, *"Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way"* (NIV). I won't go into the details about why Daniel believed that eating the king's food would defile him. What's important is that he knew it wasn't God's best for him.

A few of his friends stood up with him, but we can assume that most of the young Hebrew men went along with Nebuchadnezzar's plan. Daniel, instead, followed the advice of Exodus 23:2: *"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong"* (NIV). When Daniel stood against the crowd to follow God's best plan, God blessed him. He served in the king's court and received one promotion after the other—without compromising his values.

Daniel displayed four qualities that led to God's blessing in his life. God wants you to cultivate these same qualities in your life.

Integrity: He never forgot who he was.

You have a choice: You can be conformed, or you can be transformed. Romans 12:2 says, *"Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God"* (GNT).

Discipline: He controlled his ego and his appetite.

The Bible says, *"Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God"* (Romans 6:13 NLT). Daniel decided that just because he could do something, that didn't mean he should do it. You can make the same decision, refusing to be seduced by the perks the world may offer you.

Courage: He was willing to stand alone.

Even when other Hebrew boys chose to follow the king's plan, Daniel stood apart. He knew that the majority is often wrong and had the courage to do what was right, no matter what. The Bible says, *"Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong"* (1 Corinthians 16:13 NLT).

Humility: He was tactful with authority.

Even as he was refusing to do what the leaders around him asked him to do, he was humble. Daniel 1:8 says that he *"asked . . . for permission"* not to follow the king's diet. Then he went on to have a discussion and offer suggestions rather than making demands.

In the face of enormous pressure, Daniel lived with integrity, discipline, courage, and humility. God blessed him as a result. God wants you, too, to live like that, regardless of what the people around you are doing.