

Faithfulness **IN EXILE**

CENTRAL TRUTH | We must be faithful to the Lord, even when we suffer.

It isn't always easy to do the right thing. We find ourselves in situations where it's easier to go along with the crowd or stay quiet about what we believe so we can fit in. We don't want to feel out of place or feel like we don't belong. In today's passage, Daniel and his friends find themselves in a new, strange land with new names. They—along with the rest of the Israelites—are in a period of captivity and suffering. Yet Daniel and his friends stand firm in their beliefs, trusting the Lord even when it could be costly. Their faithfulness teaches us that we must be faithful to the Lord, even when we suffer.



REFLECT

What questions do I have about God?

What questions do I have about myself?

What questions do I have about the world and those around me?

DANIEL 1:8-10

⁸ Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief eunuch not to defile himself.⁹ God had granted Daniel kindness and compassion from the

chief eunuch,¹⁰ yet he said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and drink. What if he sees your faces looking thinner than the other young men your age? You would endanger my life with the king."

DANIEL 1:11-16

¹¹ So Daniel said to the guard whom the chief eunuch had assigned to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.¹³ Then examine our appearance and the appearance of the young men who are eating the king's food, and deal with your servants based on what you see."

¹⁴ He agreed with them about this and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days they looked better and healthier than all the young men who were eating the king's food. ¹⁶ So the guard continued to remove their food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables.

DANIEL 1:17-21

¹⁷ God gave these four young men knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom. Daniel also understood visions and dreams of every kind. ¹⁸ At the end of the time that the king had said to present them, the chief eunuch presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king interviewed them, and among all of them, no one was

found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they began to attend the king.²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding that the king consulted them about, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and mediums in his entire kingdom. ²¹ Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Day 01

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-8

📍 READ & RESPOND

We have apps for everything: school, friends, entertainment, and maps. However, faith isn't just another app—it should be the operating system of your life. This prayer, known as the *Shema*, is recited by Jews daily, morning and evening. It serves as the core of their faith commitment, as it does for Christians today. This passage isn't just about believing in God but about making Him the absolute center of your existence. Following the principles of the *Shema* can lead to a more meaningful daily walk with the Lord.

↑ How can your faith be like your operating system rather than an “app” you open sometimes?

↗ What are some practical ways you can love God “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength”?

→ What are some modern, personal ways you could create reminders to help keep God’s truth visible and central in your life and environment?

📍 MEMORIZE

Copy **Daniel 2:20** onto three to five note cards and tape them in places you see every day, like the bathroom mirror, your closet, or the back of your phone. Every time you see one of these cards, read it to yourself.

📍 PRAY

Gracious Lord, help me to love You with all my heart, soul, and strength. May Your Word be the operating system of my life, shaping my thoughts, words, and actions every moment.

Day 02

DANIEL 1:8-10

📍 READ & RESPOND

Daniel and his friends were teenagers when they were forced to live in Babylon, an empire with different gods and customs. As part of their training to serve the king, they were required to eat the king's rich food and wine. But this food likely included meat sacrificed to idols or that violated Jewish dietary laws. Refusing to eat this food could have serious consequences, even death. But Daniel was determined to stay faithful to God, so he asked for an alternative. By doing so, he was potentially putting someone else's life (and his own) in danger. Living for God often means making tough choices that go against the crowd. Daniel chose to honor God, even when it was risky, trusting God with the outcome.

↓ What do you face in your life today that might tempt you to compromise your faith?

↔ How can you stand firm in your faith without being rude or judgmental towards others who make different choices?

→ What are some reasons that you are sometimes afraid to stand up for your faith?

📍 MEMORIZE

Create a graphic of **Daniel 2:20** using a photo editor app. Set this graphic as your background or lock screen this week.

📍 PRAY

Lord, thank You for Daniel's example of courage and conviction. Help me to always honor You, no matter the pressure or risks.

Day 03

DANIEL 1:11-16

📍 READ & RESPOND

The people we follow on social media are sometimes called *influencers* because they influence their viewers and culture. Daniel and his friends didn't want to be influenced by Babylonian culture. It wasn't just about food; it was about compromising their faith. So they proposed a test. For ten days, they would eat a special diet. After ten days, they looked healthier than any of the other young men who were eating the king's food. Their commitment to God's ways led to thriving! Our culture often wants to pressure us into compromising our beliefs. But standing firm in your faith, even in small ways, can lead to God's incredible blessing.

↓ Where are some places where you might face challenges to your faith or values today?

↔ What can you learn from Daniel about how to stand firm in your faith without being rude or rebellious?

↑ What does the unexpected outcome of Daniel's proposed diet tell us about God's faithfulness when we choose to honor Him, even in challenging circumstances?

📍 MEMORIZE

Create a "mind map." Write **Daniel 2:20** in the center of a piece of paper, and around it, write at least five key words, concepts, or images related to the verse.

📍 PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the example of Daniel's courage and commitment. Help me to stand strong in my faith, even when I'm surrounded by different pressures.

Day 04

DANIEL 1:17-21

📍 READ & RESPOND

Daniel and his friends prioritized obedience to God over fitting in or gaining easy favor. So God blessed them by growing their abilities. Daniel even received special insight into dreams! When they were presented to King Nebuchadnezzar along with their fellow trainees, Daniel and his friends were wiser and more skilled than anyone else—even the king's own attendants! Their gifts opened doors for them to influence the highest levels of power for decades. God recognizes our efforts to honor Him in challenging times. He provides blessings, support, and opportunities to make a positive impact for His kingdom.

↑ How does today's passage show that wisdom and insight are not just about human effort but also a gift from God?

↔ How might God use your faithfulness today to open doors for you to impact your school, friends, or community?

→ What's one area in your life right now where you feel challenged to stand out for your faith instead of just fitting in?

📍 MEMORIZE

Use a notes app on your phone and create a quick reference note for **Daniel 2:20**. Set yourself a reminder to look at it a couple of times each day.

📍 PRAY

Lord, help me to be faithful to You in all my choices, trusting that You will equip me with wisdom and use me for Your glory.

Day 05

1 PETER 3:13-17

📍 READ & RESPOND

Peter advises us to stand firm in our faith despite pressure from society. He assures us that true blessings come from living righteously, even if it involves challenges. We are to “regard Christ the Lord as holy.” This is key! Before you can speak about Jesus to others, Jesus needs to be holy—set apart and highly honored—in your own heart. Then, be ready to explain why you have hope. It’s not about having all the answers but being prepared to just share your personal story and the truth of Christ. As you share, be kind and respectful, and live a life that backs up your words. Your actions can silence critics more effectively than arguments.

↓ What are some things you might fear or feel intimidated by when it comes to standing up for your faith or being open about it at school or with friends?

↑ What does it mean for Christ to be “holy” or set apart in your heart? Why is this an important step before sharing your faith?

↔ Why are the way you share and how you live just as important as what you share?

📍 MEMORIZE

Write **Daniel 2:20** five times on a piece of paper. Use a different color pen or marker for all of the nouns (the people, places, and things).

📍 PRAY

Lord Jesus, help me to honor You in my heart and to live courageously for You. Make me ready to share the hope I have with gentleness and respect, trusting You with every outcome.