

A STUDY OF DANIEL

connect **360**

ALL THE BIBLE FOR ALL OF LIFE



Faith Under **Fire**



connect 360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

Faith Under Fire

A STUDY OF
Daniel

Donnie Auvenshine • Tan Flippin • Don Garner
Chuck Gartman • William Miller • Brad Williamson



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*Faith Under Fire A Study of Daniel—
Connect 360 Bible Teaching Guide*

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How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This *Teaching Guide* has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first “Bible Comments” for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of “Bible Comments” are “Understanding the Context,” “Interpreting the Scriptures,” and “Focusing on the Meaning.” “Understanding the Context” provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. “Interpreting the Scriptures” provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. “Focusing on the Meaning” offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is “Teaching Plans.” You’ll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the “Discovery Plan,” which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the “Discussion Plan,” which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, “Connect with Life,” provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, “Guide Bible Study,” offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible’s message. The third major heading, “Encourage Application,” is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents in their *Study Guides* and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church’s adult Bible study teachers don’t have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.
5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session

can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)

6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible comments in the *Study Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this *Teaching Guide*, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

Premium Commentary. Plan to get the additional Bible study comments available online. Visit our website, call 1-866-249-1799, or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website. The price of these comments is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

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FREE! Downloadable teaching resource items for use in your class are available at www.baptistwaypress.org. Watch for them in the “Teaching Plans” for each lesson. Then go online to www.baptistwaypress.org and click on “Teaching Resource Items” under the “Teacher Helps” tab for this study. These items are selected from the “Teaching Plans.” They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, copy them as needed, and use them in your class.

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lesson **1**

A Diet for Success

MAIN IDEA

Hard times not only build character, but they also reveal it. How a person handles difficulties says a lot about that person's beliefs.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

When you have faced a difficult situation, how did you handle it and what did it reveal about your faith?

TEACHING AIM

To lead adults to learn to trust God when their world falls apart



Bible Comments

Understanding the Context

The Babylonian king subdued King Jehoiakim of Judah and “carried off” articles from the Temple in Jerusalem and young men from the Jewish royal family (Daniel 1:1-2). Exile from the “promised land” had the potential to destroy the Israelites’ faith in God.

Second Kings 23:34—24:6 narrates key events during the last days leading up to the Babylonian destruction of Judah. Before the Babylonians, there were the Assyrians. In the latter years of the 8th century B.C., the Assyrians had destroyed the northern kingdom Israel and taken its inhabitants into exile (722 B.C.). The kingdom of Judah was not destroyed by the Assyrians, but Judah was subjugated and lost its independence (735 B.C.). From this point forward until the end of the New Testament period, the Israelites were under the authority of successive empires: Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Roman. [There was a brief period of Jewish independence during the latter years of the rule of the Greeks; 142-64 B.C.] Dispersion, living in lands other than the “promised land,” was an experience for the majority of the Israelites across these centuries. This circumstance was a “crisis of faith” for the Israelites. How would Israelite faith in God survive and be practiced in “exile?”

The Babylonians believed their conquering of Judah was evidence that the God served by the Jews was powerless to save the Jews when faced by Babylonian gods and armies (Psalm 137). Most of the nations conquered by these great empires lost their distinctive religions and were assimilated into the great empires. Indeed, the “lost tribes of Israel” were the Israelite inhabitants of the northern kingdom, Israel, who were taken into exile by the Assyrians and “disappeared.” The best explanation for their “disappearance” was they lost their distinctive faith and culture and became simply a part of the population of the Assyrian empire. Would this be the fate of the Israelites from Judah as well? Could faith in the God of Israel survive the crisis of the defeat and exile of Judah?

The Book of Daniel offers encouragement to the Jewish exiles to faithfully serve the God of Israel (stories in chapters 1–6) and to expect a glorious future for God’s kingdom to come (visions in chapters 7–12).

These messages were relevant in Daniel’s lifetime, and across the centuries to come. They were particularly relevant during the time of the Greek ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), who tried to unify his rule under a single religion and culture. The message of Daniel had a powerful word to those Jews living through the fiery persecutions of Antiochus IV.

The first chapter of Daniel locates the story at the very beginning of Babylonian exile.

Interpreting the Scriptures

The Historical Setting: Beginning of the Exile (1:1-2)

1:1. The beginning of the end of the kingdom of Judah occurred in 605 B.C. when King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians subdued King Jehoiakim of Judah. Jehoiakim was king over Judah from 609—598 B.C. He had been placed on the throne by the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:33). According to Babylonian calendars the taking of Judah occurred in Jehoiakim’s third year, the date here in Daniel 1:1. The Palestinian and Egyptian calendars call this the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 25:1, 9). In Judah and Egypt, the first year was considered the calendar year during which the king took the throne (a partial year).

1:2. “And the Lord delivered (the Hebrew actually says “gave”) Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.” The Lord, Adonai, the ruler or sovereign, is the one who gave the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar power over King Jehoiakim. The central theme of the Book of Daniel is the Lord, the God of Israel, has power and He is in control. Articles were taken “from the temple of God,” highlighting the authority and sovereignty of the God of Israel.

Taking articles from the Temple in Jerusalem and putting them into the treasury of the temple of a god in Babylonia made a political and religious statement: “our gods” have triumphed over “your gods.” Isaiah 39:2, 6 was fulfilled.

Daniel and His Friends Introduced (1:3-7)

1:3. “Some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility” were taken into exile. This weakened the political power and future for the kingdom of Judah, while strengthening the Babylonian empire by providing capable young men to be trained as Babylonian administrators. Isaiah 39:7 was fulfilled.

1:4. The young men were well-suited physically and mentally to serve the king. The four-fold description: “showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace,” indicated that these young men had received godly training in Judah before being educated and trained in Babylon. Daniel and his friends were in their early teens, 14 or 15 years old. Their training lasted about three years. This would be similar to the American high school experience. They were taught “the language and literature of the Babylonians.” This “re-education” of the Jewish exiles intended to make them into “good Babylonian” servants.

1:5. These young men and the other exiles were provided food and drink from the king’s own supplies.

1:6. Four Jewish exiles were part of the group: Daniel: “God is my judge,” Hananiah: “Yahweh (the LORD) has been gracious,” Mishael: “Who is what God is,” and Azariah: “Yahweh (the LORD) has helped.”

1:7. The chief of the court officials gave these four Jews new Babylonian names. Kings gave new names to their subjects to show that the subjects were under a new authority and had a new future under the benevolence of the king. Joseph had been given the Egyptian name “Zaphaneth-Paneah” (Genesis 41:45); Eliakim had been re-named “Jehoiakim” by the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:34); and Hadassah was re-named “Esther” (Esther 2:7). The giving of Babylonian names was intended to lessen their Jewish identity and facilitate their assimilation into Babylonian life and culture.

There is an overt religious distinction between the Israelite names, which mention God (El) and Yahweh (the LORD), and the Babylonian names, which mention Babylonian gods Bel (Marduk, chief of the gods), Aku (moon

god), and Nabu (second in the hierarchy of Babylonian gods). Daniel was renamed “Belteshazzar: Bel, protect his life,” Hananiah became “Shadrach: Command of Aku,” Mishael became “Meschach: who is what Aku is,” and Azariah became “Abednego: Servant of Nabu.”

The Moral Test: The King’s Table or the LORD’s Table? (1:8-16)

1:8. “But” indicates a significant turn in the story. The Jewish exiles seemed to be cooperating and accepting Babylonian education, and even Babylonian names. However, there was a line that Daniel was not willing to cross. He perceived that total acceptance of the Babylonian life represented a threat to his devotion to God.

“Defile” represented moral or ceremonial compromise of Israelite faith and practice. The Israelites were aware that some objects and activities were permissible for some nations, but not for Israel; or, for some Israelites, but not for others, such as priests. Maintaining these distinctions fostered the sense of holiness, that which is set apart or separate from the common. Even in a foreign land, there are some distinctives of Israelite faith and practice that must be maintained.

Perhaps readers find it odd that Daniel would accept Babylonian education, and even a Babylonian name, but object to Babylonian food. However, food was not the only objection the exiles would have as the stories to follow in Daniel 3 about worshiping images, and in Daniel 6 about abandoning the practice of prayer, demonstrate. Israel’s dietary laws was one of the features of her unique covenant with and service of the LORD.

In the Old Testament world, sharing a meal was a commitment to friendship and had covenantal significance (Genesis 31:54; Nehemiah 8:9-12). Perhaps Daniel viewed the acceptance of the king’s food and drink as a sign of loyalty that Daniel had reserved for his God and could not, or at least would not, give that loyalty to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel made his request in a polite and tactful manner.

1:9-10. God was at work on His people’s behalf, even in the foreign land of Babylonia. The language is explicit: “God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel.” Today, it almost seems like it can go without saying, but in Daniel’s time the message was significant. God can and will bless His people even if they are not in His “promised land.”

1:11-14. Daniel proposed a 10-day trial to see if his requested diet of vegetables and water would produce healthier Israelites than the royal food and wine produced in the other exiles.

1:15-16. God blessed the covenant faithfulness of Daniel and his friends with a health that exceeded all the other exiles.

God's Blessing on Daniel and His Friends (1:17-21)

1:17. “God gave” knowledge and understanding to these four, and to Daniel He gave the ability to understand visions and dreams of all kinds. When reading 1:17 and 1:4 together, Proverbs 1:7 is affirmed—“the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” The “fear of the LORD” is an awe of God that leads to worship and obedience.

1:18-20. King Nebuchadnezzar discovered that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were ten times better than his other counselors (“magicians and enchanters”).

1:21. The chapter ends by stating that Daniel lived until the time that the Persian king Cyrus overthrew the Babylonians and established the Persian Empire. The very next year, Cyrus allowed the exiles from Judah to begin returning home. Daniel was somewhere between 85 and 90 years old when the exile ended. Daniel outlived his Babylonian captors.

Jeremiah had prophesied that the Exile would last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:12-14; cf 2 Chronicles 36:20-23; Ezra 1). To those Jews who were experiencing the Exile, it might have seemed endless. But, the Exile would not go on forever (Isaiah 40:31).

Focusing on the Meaning

In spite of repeated warnings by the prophets, the Israelites in Judah did not actually think their nation would fall, their temple would be destroyed, and they would be taken into exile. But it happened (2 Chronicles 36:15-21). Critical questions were raised by this turn of events. Could the Israelites from

Judah endure the Exile? Would the Israelites from Judah become “lost Israelites” in the same way that the Israelites from the northern kingdom Israel had? Would the Jewish exiles barely survive, or could they thrive? Would it be possible for these Jewish exiles to succeed as exiles without compromising their holiness and losing their faith in God?

For these critical questions, the Book of Daniel offered an encouraging and hopeful “Yes.” Just as Joseph had survived Egyptian slavery and rose to prominence in the Egyptian court, so did Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Joseph’s world fell apart when he was sold into slavery and eventually became a prisoner in Egypt. But Joseph did not forget God, and God did not forget Joseph (Genesis. 39:2-4, 21-23; 41:37-40). So it would be for Daniel and his friends.

Can you imagine how much more painful it would have been if our nation had fallen to our enemies on 9/11/2001? How would our faith make out? Would our trust in and service of God be destroyed or purified? Would our faith fail, or would it grow stronger through perseverance “under fire?”

I remember gathering with other American Christians at noon in our university’s chapel on 9/11/2001. We prayed, we wept, we testified to our faith in God. One of the things said that day was this: “If God was sovereign at 6am this morning, he is still sovereign at noon today.” Our circumstances and our “world” were dramatically changed that morning, but nothing that happened that morning changed who God is. We confess we may not understand God and what He is doing when our world falls apart; but true faith is refined, not destroyed in the fire.

God reigns.

Teaching Plans

DISCOVERY PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Before class, write the following words on a marker board: Culture Shock, Food, Language, Traditions, and Other. Ask volunteers to recount situations in which they had a difficult time adapting to a new place. Ask them to identify which word or phrase described the difficulty and how they dealt with it.
2. Comment that as Jewish teenagers, Daniel and three of his friends were taken away as captives from Judah to Babylon—a country with differences in culture, language, and food; the teenagers even got new names. But even then, their faith in God remained strong. Ask, *How do you think Daniel and the others felt to be uprooted from their home, family, and culture as teenagers? How do you think you would fare given those same circumstances?*

Guide Bible Study

3. Comment, *According to the first two verses in the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered the nation of Judah during Jehoiakim's reign. Nebuchadnezzar then carried away plunder from Jerusalem.* Divide class members into small groups and assign each group a passage and accompanying question. (A copy of these questions is available in “Teaching Resource Items” for this study at www.baptistwaypress.org.)
 - Daniel 1:3-7—How would you describe what happened to Daniel and his friends?
 - Daniel 1:8-10—Why did the commander not accept Daniel's suggested dietary plan at first?
 - Daniel 1:11-16—What was the test Daniel proposed to the king's official?
 - Daniel 1:17-21—How did God bless the Jewish teenagers, even though they were in a foreign culture?

Ask groups to briefly share their responses.

4. Give the following minilecture: *The title of today's lesson is "A Diet for Success." Obviously, a major part of this chapter is about Daniel and his friends not eating the king's food. They may have considered the food defiled because it was not considered "kosher," it may have been sacrificed to idols, and eating it would have implied they accepted Babylon's culture. And although Scripture does not say Daniel objected to the new name given to him or his education in Babylon's ways, he did object to the food from the king's table because eating it would be disobeying God's Word. Daniel and his friends remained faithful to their beliefs even during this time when their world was turned upside down.*
5. Give the information from "No Wand Required" from the sidebar in the *Study Guide* and discuss how that information relates to today's lesson.
6. Ask learners to look through this first chapter of Daniel and find the ways in which God blessed Daniel and his friends (see verses 17 and 20, possibly others). Ask for responses. Explain that Daniel and his three friends were later exalted by the king even after they held on to their faith and the way of life they were accustomed to. Ask, *In what ways can God bless you if you remain faithful to Him in trying times?*

Encourage Application

7. Instruct the class to get in pairs and think of a modern-day situation in which (a) someone is uprooted in some way from normal life, (b) the choices available for how they could respond, and (c) what the consequences would likely be for the available choices. Encourage them to think of as many options as possible for how the person could react. Ask for their responses. Explain, *It is easy to make the right choice in how to respond in difficult times while sitting in a classroom. The true test of faith and character is making a decision that will please God the next time you actually face a crisis.*
8. Close with a time of focused prayer. Instruct learners to respond with a difficult situation in which they need the Lord's help after you say, *God, help us to turn to you when . . .*

DISCUSSION PLAN

Connect with Life

1. Ask volunteers to tell about a time when they went through one of the following situations and what they learned about their faith during that time: an unexpected health issue, the sudden loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, or moving to a new city.
2. Comment that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had the best and the brightest young men from Jerusalem to serve in his palace where they could be indoctrinated with its language, literature, and customs. Ask, *Have you ever been in a cultural situation that felt similar to Daniel's? How did you respond?*

Guide Bible Study

3. Ask volunteers to take turns until the entire first chapter of Daniel is read, then review by focusing on these points:
 - Daniel and his Hebrew friends were taken captives to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Judah.
 - As part of a test, Daniel and his friends refused to eat the king's food and ate a healthy diet instead.
 - Daniel and his friends remained faithful to their beliefs, even in a foreign land.
 - God blessed Daniel and his friends with wisdom and understanding, and they served in King Nebuchadnezzar's court.(A copy of these points is available in the "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.baptistwaypress.org).
4. Discuss the second of the "Questions" in the *Study Guide* about being faithful to Christ.
5. Ask, *If you could go through a difficult time that would guarantee your faith grew tremendously as a result, would you do it?* After discussion, explain that going through difficult times and maintaining a focus on God will lead us closer to Him. And while the temptation to let go of Him is

strong when we face difficulties, it is during those situations we must seek Him desperately instead.

6. Discuss the first of the “Questions” in the *Study Guide*. Then use the information in the “Food for Thought” sidebar in the *Study Guide* to discuss the matter of Daniel and his friends not eating the king’s unhealthy food in this story—as well as how that could have implications for other life issues today.

Encourage Application

7. Ask for a volunteer to read Daniel 1:5-7. Say, *By his actions, Nebuchadnezzar communicated to Daniel and his friends that they were to depend on him for all their needs and turn their backs on God. But they refused and looked to God instead. Satan uses similar strategies against us today, wanting to indoctrinate us into the world’s system so we turn our backs on God as well.* Use a marker board to present this simple chart to the class:

Nebuchadnezzar’s Strategies	Satan’s Strategies
Wanted Daniel and his friends to eat his food	Wants us to feed on what the world offers
Changed the names of Daniel and his friends	Wants us to identify ourselves in reference to the world
Educated Daniel and his friends in his language, literature, and customs	Wants us to educate ourselves in the ways of the world

8. Say, *Given the difficult situation in which Daniel and his friends found themselves, it is obvious they had strong convictions. Based on what you know about these young men, are there particular convictions Daniel had that you would like to develop based on Daniel 1? Are there difficult situations in your life right now that are fighting against your convictions? If so, what are they?*

9. Close by allowing class members to voice prayers about relying on God during trying times.