

SERMON STUDY SUMMARY

Unshakeable Convictions

INTRODUCTION

Unshakeable convictions are foundational beliefs that can be held to through turbulent seasons of life. For Christ-followers these convictions center on the unchanging character of God, the uniqueness of Jesus as the only way of salvation, and the inspiration of the Bible and its relevance for all of life.

Daniel provides a model of how to have unshakeable convictions and radically influence a world far from God. No matter the confusion and lack of moral fabric today, it pales in comparison to what Daniel experienced. Growing up in the holy city of Jerusalem, Daniel had it all: great family, high social standing, handsome, excellent health and top education. The future looked bright until, likely around the age of fifteen, he was violently uprooted and exiled by King Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, a pagan city. To help demonstrate his expanding influence and power in the world, Nebuchadnezzar also took the articles from the Temple in Jerusalem and put them in the house of his gods thinking that his victory proved the superiority of his gods. Nebuchadnezzar initially believed that his victory was due to his military power and only much later in life was he able to acknowledge God's sovereignty (Daniel 4:34-35).

Daniel was unshakeable in his conviction that God was sovereign and the political powers of the time could not thwart God's plan. Nebuchadnezzar's intent was to reprogram talented young people who had potential so that they could serve the Babylonian kingdom (1:3-5). For Daniel and his three friends, this three-year training program was hostile to their Jewish faith. It focused on Babylonian language, religion, customs and cuisine with the goal of assimilating them into a Babylonian worldview. Their Jewish names which glorified God were even changed to names which signified allegiance to the gods of Babylon (1:6-7). Daniel and his friends did not refuse the education, name change or serving the king but did refuse the royal food and wine in order to remain true to God (1:8). Though living in Babylon, they knew they were part of God's Kingdom and did not take the opportunity to compromise God's dietary laws. With great humility and trust in God, their respectful proposal to the chief official to eat only vegetables and water was granted (1:11-14). As they lived out their convictions in a godless environment, God was in control, granting them superior health in spite of a meagre diet (1:15).

Maintaining convictions while engaging a culture far from God is challenging. The accommodation approach sees the world as corrupt, assumes that nothing can be done, and simply follows its value system. The isolation approach sees the world as evil and thus incorrectly avoids all forms of contact. The prayerful engagement approach as modelled by Daniel influences the world and partners with God in His mission of transformation. Jesus redeemed us to bring the world to His saving knowledge. We are not here to hide from the world, fear the world, hate the world or even judge the world. This approach requires unshakeable convictions, wisdom, tact and faith in God.

Daniel understood God's sovereignty and the need for and means to follow through with unshakeable convictions. When he was taken captive, King Nebuchadnezzar was clearly the most powerful person in the world. Daniel outlived his captor and decades later, another king named Cyrus of Persia (1:21) was in power. Throughout all, however, God is ultimately sovereign and in control.

SERMON STUDY GUIDE

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What does your name mean? Is there a story around how you came by your name?
2. When entering an unfamiliar situation, how do you make yourself comfortable?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Daniel 1:1-14

3. What challenges did Daniel and his friends face emotionally, spiritually, culturally, and educationally during this transition? They didn't refuse the education, name change, or serving the king – but they did refuse the King's food. Why do you think they 'picked this hill' to fight on and not the others?

Read Daniel 4:34-35

4. Describe God's attributes. How does God display these in Daniel 1:1-14, 18-20?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Pastor Ashwin mentioned three approaches when it comes to engaging culture. Which approach most resembles the way you live? How does 'prayerful engagement' help us to love instead of fear the world? What does this look like for me in a specific relationship or cultural issue?
6. Daniel and his friends underwent a process of forced assimilation to the Babylonian culture to transform their worldview. This included their food. What are we 'eating' today that may be chipping away at our convictions?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

When we say God is sovereign we are speaking of His absolute Lordship over all of his creation. Release any challenging situations you are facing to His sovereignty and love in your life.

THE WORD (NIV)

Daniel 1:1-14

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— 4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. 5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

6 Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

8 But 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. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, 10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

[Daniel 1:18-20](#)

[Daniel 4:34-35](#)