

RESOLVE

in the world...not of it

A STUDY OF DANIEL 1-6

TRANSFORM WEEKEND SERIES

LEADER GUIDE

RESOLVE: In the World...Not of It—Leader Guide
Published by Precept Ministries of Reach Out, Inc.
P. O. Box 182218
Chattanooga, TN 37422

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Printed in the United States of America

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RESOLVE



**Resolve to perform what
you ought; perform without
fail what you resolve.**



—Benjamin Franklin

LESSON 1

RESOLVE—TO BE SET APART

Don't go any further than this sentence if you're expecting this study to come with an "easy" button. Seriously, is life really easy—is that what your experiences have taught you? Do you expect that if you think positively, try hard, be nice to animals, pray, and even read your Bible enough, your efforts will be rewarded with a peaceful, easy feeling?

Beware of thinking this way and of those who teach similar ideas. God's Word, the standard we should believe about ourselves and the world we live in, teaches that we're to be separate. We're to be "aliens and strangers" in this world (1 Peter 2:11), persecuted for doing right (Matthew 5:10-11), made fun of for believing what looks like foolishness to the world (1 Corinthians 1:18).

How can you live in a way that's pleasing to God when the world around you sees you as a fool? Well, it takes resolve!

CENTRAL QUESTION**Central Question for Lesson 1:**

What is resolve and why is it important?

Observe the text:

Read Daniel 1:1-8 and circle every mention of *Daniel* including pronouns like "himself." Also underline *youths*.

LEADER NOTE

Key characters like Daniel are almost always an easy place to start your study. Marking key characters and words in the text benefits students in many ways:

- It makes them slow down, which is good for retention.
- It makes the work visual.
- It allows students to focus on one subject at a time.
- It engages them with the text. You can't daydream and mark at the same time!

Daniel 1:1-8

- 1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.
- 2 The LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.
- 3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles,
- 4 youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every *branch of* wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and *he ordered him* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.
- 5 The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and *appointed* that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.
- 6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.
- 7 Then the commander of the officials assigned *new* names to them; and to Daniel he assigned *the name* Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.
- 8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.



INVESTIGATE

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

LEADER NOTE

If you're going to read with a purpose (i.e., to get all the details), you must ask these questions about the things you mark. The text provides the answers, and you'll be amazed at what you learn! The exercise below shows students how to understand a passage by asking 5 W and H questions. It's as simple as investigating the passage as you read by asking who, what, when, where, why, and how!

1. Summarize **what** happened in these eight verses.
2. According to verse 2, **how** did Nebuchadnezzar (the king referred to in verses 2-8) win this battle? **What** did Nebuchadnezzar take from Jerusalem?

say what?

Babylon, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, was the most powerful kingdom in the world at this time in history. According to Jeremiah 25, God sent Babylon to conquer Judah and Jerusalem because Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and the people did not listen to the word of the Lord and turn from their evil deeds and idolatry.

3. **Where** did Nebuchadnezzar put the vessels of the house of God? **Why** do you think he did that?
4. **How** does the Scripture describe the youths taken from Jerusalem?

say what?

The word “youths” tells us that these sons of Israel were probably young teenagers. It’s very likely that they were twelve to fifteen years old.

5. **How** were these young people treated by the Babylonians? Be specific.

6. **Who** are the four youths pointed out in these verses?

7. **What** did Daniel decide to do that set him apart?

8. **What** would the food and wine have done to Daniel if he had taken them?

9. Once Daniel made up his mind, **how** did he go about his decision? **What** did he do, and why is this important?

This is a good place to share a personal testimony about a time when you had to resolve to do something. Or perhaps you know someone else who demonstrated this point well. Students need to begin to see this truth in circumstances other than Daniel's.

10. Describe a situation in which you were tempted to compromise your beliefs. How did you “resolve” to handle it?

Daniel 1:8 says Daniel “made up his mind” —a phrase translated “resolve” in other versions of the Bible. Do you see what “resolve” means now? To resolve is to be like a knothed, a person whose mind can't be changed (according to my grandfather).

This means that no matter how good the food looks (or the guy or girl), no matter how badly you want to take the item that's not yours, no matter how strong the pull is to do what it takes to fit in—you don't. You resolve to honor God instead of giving in to the world. That's being a knothed in a good way!

Now why was it so important for Daniel to resolve not to eat the food from the king's table? Let's look at two possible reasons why.

Observe the text:

Read Exodus 34:10-17. Mark each use of the word *covenant* with a **C** and put a triangle over every reference to *God*, including pronouns.

You're about to mark a key word. A key word is critical to the meaning of a passage and frequently repeated. We often identify key words and phrases as we examine the characters in a passage, like Daniel earlier and God here in Exodus 34. Key words reveal main subjects—covenant in this case—and subjects reveal the theme of a book or chapter.

Exodus 34:10-17

- 10** Then God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the

nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.

- 11 “Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.
- 12 “Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst.
- 13 “But *rather*, you are to tear down their altars and smash their *sacred* pillars and cut down their Asherim
- 14 —for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—
- 15 otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice,
- 16 and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons *also* to play the harlot with their gods.
- 17 “You shall make for yourself no molten gods.



INVESTIGATE

Who?... What?... When?... Where?... Why?... How?...

Remember what we learned about investigating the text? Notice how each question below includes one of these six questions: *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*. Find answers to these questions in the verses you read!

1. This covenant is between God and the Hebrews, His chosen people. **Who** made the covenant?
2. **What** did you learn about God's character that tells you what He thinks and does about people who worship other gods?

say what?

You read that right, God is a jealous God. But it's a righteous jealousy meaning that God expects to be the one and only object of our worship. And after all, He is the only one worthy of it!

3. **What** did food have to do with this covenant?

say what?

What does "eating of a sacrifice" mean? Many religions sacrificed foods in biblical days. So to dine in a foreign land was often to eat food used to worship false gods.

Observe the text:

Look for a second possible reason Daniel resolved not to eat the food from the king's table as you read these verses in Leviticus 11. Mark all references to **God** with a triangle as you read.

Leviticus 11:1-2, 45-47

1 The LORD spoke again to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them,

2 “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, “These are the creatures which you may eat from all the animals that are on the earth.

45 ‘For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.’ ”

46 This is the law regarding the animal and the bird, and every living thing that moves in the waters and everything that swarms on the earth,

47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten.


INVESTIGATE

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

1. **Who** spoke this law?

2. **What** did the law define?

3. **Why** was it important to resolve to follow this law? Relate this answer to the character of God.

4. Now back to the original question. **What** are two possible reasons Daniel had that could have led him to resolve not to eat the food from the king's table?

Do you like to eat? Think of your favorite food or the most expensive food you know of—maybe filet mignon, lobster, or caviar (expensive but actually pretty gross in my opinion). Now imagine saying, “Thanks, but no thanks—I’ll have the vegetable plate.” Pretty crazy right??? Well, not really. Daniel had resolved to not defile himself with the king’s choice food and wine. We can’t tell exactly why from the text, although the laws we read in Leviticus and Exodus give us a pretty good idea. But we can tell that Daniel had “made up his mind” or resolved to not eat the foods offered to him.

What do you think was the easy thing to do in this situation? Daniel made up his mind, putting himself at risk in the process. Yet he also showed great respect to the leader in charge by asking his permission.

So what went down after Daniel politely asked to be released from eating the food?

Observe the text:

Read Daniel 1:9-21, continuing to circle *Daniel*.

Daniel 1:9-21

9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,

10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my LORD the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.”

- 11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,
- 12 “Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.
- 13 “Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see.”
- 14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.
- 15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food.
- 16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.
- 17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of* literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams.
- 18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.
- 19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s personal service.
- 20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm.
- 21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.



INVESTIGATE

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

**LEADER
NOTE**

These lessons are designed for you to lead discussion rather than lecture. The questions are suggestions, so don't feel locked in if you want to change the order, wording, or even ask totally different questions. And don't be discouraged if your discussions ramp up slowly. Most students are used to being taught, not discussing, and hopefully they'll get better each time you do this!

1. Summarize **what** happened in these verses.
2. **Why** did the commander of the officials agree to Daniel's plan?
3. **Who** besides Daniel resolved not to eat the food?
4. **What** can we reasonably assume about the rest of the youths (other than these four)?
5. **What** plan did Daniel present to the overseer?
6. **How** did the test results turn out?

7. **How** did God honor Daniel and his friends' resolve?
8. **What** is God calling you to resolve to do right now?
9. **What** will you have to sacrifice in order to do what God is calling you to do?
10. **What** factors in the world are pulling you in a different direction? What circumstances are tempting you to compromise as the king's food and power may have tempted Daniel and his companions?

**LEADER
NOTE**

This question and the faith workout on the next page may seem repetitive, but students will come to an answer at different times in the lesson. And the question is extremely important!

11. **How** are you going to overcome the world?


CENTRAL QUESTION
Central Question for Lesson 1:

What is resolve and why is it important?



FAITH WORKOUT

While the world often portrays Christians as weak, it is true that standing up for what is right, standing on God's Word takes great strength, great resolve. What is God calling you to resolve to do right now? Through the distraction, the suffering, the peer pressure, where are you compromising and what are you going to do about it?



WRAP THAT UP!

Daniel and his friends set themselves apart from the crowd. They resolved to be set apart to God. That phrase, set apart, is really the definition of being holy. To be holy is to be set apart to God, to be purified. Peter describes us, as believers, this way:

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation.

(1 PETER 2:9-12)

Like Daniel, we are to keep our behavior excellent among those in the world who don't know our God, the one true God. But don't be fooled into thinking that it will always go as well as it did for Daniel.

Resolve to let God teach you through the life of Daniel as we continue on in this study!

