



Daniel, the Old Testament prophet, was an expatriate, forced to live in a culture whose world-view was incompatible with his own. As a young man, he was among the Israeli captives who were forced to go to Babylon (present day Iraq) and he never returned. It was one of the darkest periods in Jewish history, a time of adversity that would cause many to despair, regretting and despising the decisions made by their political leaders that resulted in their hopeless situation.

Despite the dangers and difficulties, the persecution and political back-stabbing, Daniel earned the respect of the King and was appointed to the post of Prime Minister, a position he held under three separate administrations.

Daniel made the *critical decisions of godly leadership*. He maintained his integrity through many life-threatening challenges by daily choosing that which was right and good instead of the convenient and expedient. He remained faithful to his God and found, in the end, that God was faithful to him.

Jesus reminded us that *today matters* and one thing matters today more than anything else. "Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:33-34).

1. *Daniel 1:1-7.*

What do you learn about Daniel's circumstances?

What do you learn about Daniel and his friends?

What were some of the seemingly insurmountable challenges they faced?

2. *Daniel 1:8-10.* Daniel made a "critical decision" that put him and others at risk.

What was his decision?

In what ways was it counter-cultural?

What were the foundations of his decision?

What risks were involved?

3. *Daniel 1:15-17, 19-20*

What were the consequences of Daniel's decision?

What resources gave Daniel an advantage?

In what ways does Daniel's life illustrate that today matters?

4. Maxwell says, "The secret of a good life is to manage a good day." How will you make *today* matter?

"Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom"

Prayer of Moses—Psalm 90:12

Additional notes from the John Maxwell study on Today Matters.

1. Effective people make right decisions EARLY and then manage them daily.

Daniel made up his mind he wouldn't compromise his values even though the king offered him great food and comfort. He made some right choices early in his life and managed those decisions for the rest of his life.

2. Making right choices may go against the trends of popular CULTURE .

Daniel took a stand in the face of what everyone else was doing. His decision seemed like it would put him at a disadvantage with his peers; however, he stuck with it, and his convictions were proven to be right.

3. The secret to your success is determined by your daily AGENDA .

Daniel began living by his values as a young man. He may have begun as a child. Every day he practiced certain decisions he made, such as praying three times a day. He continued doing this even when he did so in civil disobedience. He knew what he stood for and what he wouldn't stand for.

4. When opportunity arises, it is too late to PREPARE for it.

Daniel didn't wait until he had become a famous prophet to begin practicing important decisions. He was preparing for his future when no one was watching. Because his spiritual life was in great shape, he was ready when the king needed him to interpret a dream or provide some wisdom. He was open to scrutiny after just ten days in Babylon.

5. You never change your life until you change something you do DAILY .

You will become what you are becoming right now. Great accomplishments are the result of a daily routine that compounds over time. Life change happens when habits change, and habits change when you change what you do in your daily agenda.

6. Decisions help us START . Discipline helps us FINISH .

Daniel made right decisions early on, which helped him begin in the right direction. However, it was his daily discipline that allowed him to follow through on those decisions. The decision is an event. The discipline is a process. Decisions help you to start well. Discipline helps you to finish well.