INTRODUCTION – Daniel and his three friends were taken captive by the Babylonians and were taken from their home in Jerusalem to Babylon. Babylon had a secular culture, and the lifestyle, tradition, and religion of Babylon was completely different from the monotheistic Jewish way of life. The four young Jewish men were given three years of training, indoctrination and education that were designed to separate them from their Jewish beliefs, Jewish culture, and their worship of the Jewish God “Yahweh”. But ...

PRINCIPLE #1 – DANIEL IS A MAN OF CONVICTION (v. 8-16)

A. DANIEL DECIDES NOT TO DEFILE HIMSELF (v. 8a)

Daniel 1:8a, “But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine...”

How would Daniel defile himself if he ate the royal food and wine given to him from the King of Babylon? He would be eating food which God had forbidden the Jews to eat. Daniel knew the dietary restrictions given to the children of Israel by God in the Law by Moses.

   a. Daniel knew that He was not to eat Pork or Horse, both of which were commonly eaten in Babylon.
   b. (Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14:3)
   c. Daniel knew that he was not to eat meat which had not had the blood drained out of it. (Leviticus 17:11-14)
   d. Daniel also knew that he was not to eat meat or drink wine which had been sacrificed or offered to pagan gods. (Exodus 34:15, Numbers 25:1-2, Deuteronomy 32:37-38).

How would Daniel have known the dietary restrictions found in the Law of Moses?

Daniel’s knowledge of the law probably can be traced to godly Jewish parents who had obeyed Moses’ instructions to teach the scriptures diligently to their children. Moses told the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

The Psalmist said in Psalm 78:5-7, “He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep His commands.”

ILLUSTRATION – Donald Campbell tells the story about a Japanese girl, who was studying at an American college. During a Christmas vacation she went home with an American classmate. When the vacation was over and she was leaving to go back to college, the mother asked, “How do you like the way we Americans live?”
“Oh, I love it,” she said, “You have a beautiful home and a wonderful family, but one thing puzzles me. I went with you to church and saw you worship God there. But I have missed the God in your home. In Japan we have a god shelf and we worship our gods right there in the house. Don’t Americans worship their God in their homes?”

APPLICATION – If we don’t worship God and talk about His commands in our homes we will never prepare our families to live as effective Christians in our non-Christian society. In our sinful society, it is inevitable that believers of all ages will face situations where they are asked to disobey God’s commands.

As Christian parents and grandparents, we need to prepare our children and grandchildren for those occasions by both teaching them God’s commands and obeying His commands ourselves. All of us who are Christians need to personally commit ourselves to obey God’s commands found in the Bible regardless of the temptations to live otherwise.

Do we spend time reading the Bible to find out how God commands us to live? Do we obey God’s commands? Do we make sure our children know the commands of God? Do we encourage them to read their Bibles, attend Sunday School and Church? Do we want them to know and obey God’s commands?

Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

2. DANIEL BELIEVED THAT HE PERSONALLY WAS TO OBEY GOD’S COMMANDS.

Even though he was a long way from the watchful eye of his parents, relatives, fellow church members, and priests Daniel resolved to obey God’s commands. Even though he was surrounded by Babylonians who were totally ignorant of God’s commands, Daniel had the conviction that he should obey God’s commands. Even though he was surrounded by many Jewish captives that were willing to disobey God’s commands, Daniel decided that he would rather obey God than follow the crowd into sin. Daniel had a lot of good reasons to compromise and to disobey God’s commands. He could have said, “Everybody else is disobeying God. Nobody is perfect. If I don’t compromise, I’ll be odd and peculiar. I won’t have any friends.”

APPLICATION – Do we have the conviction that we personally are to obey God’s commands? Is our conviction that we personally are to obey God’s commands strong enough to withstand a little peer pressure? Can our conviction to obey God’s commands withstand a little ridicule or teasing? Or are we quick to compromise our Christian conviction to obey God’s commands? A lot of Christians know what God’s commands are, but they don’t have the desire or conviction that they need to obey them personally. We must remember that compromising with our non-Christian culture and disobeying God’s commands can be very expensive emotionally, physically and spiritually. We can’t put a price on peace of mind, joy and eternal rewards.

PRINCIPLE #2 – DANIEL IS DETERMINED TO OBEY GOD AND TAKES ACTION

1. DANIEL ASKS THE CHIEF OFFICIAL TO CHANGE HIS DIET (v. 8-10)
Daniel 1:8-10, “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. Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, 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.”

The way Daniel approaches the Babylonian in authority over him reflects his good judgment and common sense. Instead of approaching him with a demand, Daniel approaches him by asking for permission. By asking for permission Daniel demonstrated a respect for authority – even if it was ungodly authority. God had caused the chief official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the chief official refused Daniel’s request because he was afraid of the king and did not want to be caught changing the kings orders. The chief official was not kidding Daniel. If he did not do his job well, he really might lose his head. Life was cheap in Babylon and subject to the whims of the king.

Life is cheap in North Korea as well and subject to the whims of Kim Jong Un. Reports say that Kim Jong Un has executed 70 officials, many by machine gun, since taking power in 2011. South Korea’s National Intelligence Service, said that that Hyon Yong-chol, 66, North Korea’s defense minister, had apparently been executed, possibly with an anti-aircraft gun, in front of hundreds of people at a military school in the North Korean capital. His offense was disloyalty to Kim. He was seen dozing off during a military event presided over by Kim and challenged his authority on several occasions.

January 3, 2014, “Jang Song Thaek, Kim Jong Un’s, uncle who was 2nd in command in North Korea and is believed to have been in charge of training his young nephew was executed as a traitor. A Hong Kong-based pro-Beijing newspaper (Wen Wei Po) reported that Jang and his five closest aides were set upon by 120 hunting hounds which had been starved for five days. Kim and his brother Kim Jong Chol supervised the one-hour ordeal along with 300 other officials, according to the newspaper. (Wen Wei Po). The newspaper added that Jang and other aides were "completely eaten up." USA TODAY 10:33 a.m. EDT July 9, 2015; World News, January 3, 2014

APPLICATION – A person with deep moral convictions does not need to be rude, disrespectful, or abandon common sense to make a point. A person can seek to obey God and live a holy life in a pagan culture without being obnoxious. We can be thankful that we do not live in a country that was founded on or adopted an atheistic culture.

2. DANIEL DOESN’T GIVE UP. HE ASKS THE GUARD TO CHANGE HIS DIET FOR A BRIEF TIME. (v. 11-14)

Daniel 1:11-14, “Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ‘Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 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.’ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.”

When the chief official refused to change Daniel’s diet, Daniel did not give up on his desire to please God easily. He persisted by approaching the guard who was directly responsible for him with a proposal that their diet be changed for just 10 days as a test. Their diet would consist of vegetables and water. This would insure that their diet would not include any food that was forbidden by God’s law. The guard who did not report directly to the king, could afford to take a chance agreed to change their diet for just 10 days.
ILLUSTRATION – We should persistently pursue our goals as well as persistently seek to please God. We shouldn’t give up easily. (p. 41 “Man in the Mirror”) - Steve and his wife sold their businesses, he enrolled in graduate school out of state, and they purchased a home near the university. When they went to close the mortgage on the new house, the mortgage company wanted him to falsify some financial information. Steve said, “I can’t do that.” They said, “It’s no big deal. Everybody does it,” Steve said, “I don’t think you understand; I can’t do that. The Bible says, “Thou shalt not lie.” The finance officer said, “If you don’t then we can’t give you the loan.” Steve really believed God had led them to the decision to return to school, but to complete the move he would have to compromise his integrity. He said his decision was really quite simple: Who do I put first in this decision - my own desires or Christ?” Steve decided to return to school locally instead of moving out of state on a lie. He decided to put Jesus first, and he couldn’t be more at peace.

APPLICATION – Are we persistent in our desire to obey God’s commands? Or do we give up quickly?

PRINCIPLE #3 – GOD REWARDS DANIEL FOR HIS OBEDIENCE (v. 15-21)

A. GOD GIVES THEM PHYSICAL HEALTH (v. 15-16)

Daniel 1:15-16, “At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.”

Daniel’s faith led him to believe that in only 10 days God would bring about such improvement in their appearance that the guard would change their diet permanently. Daniel’s faith in God was rewarded, for at the end of the 10 days the four young men had a healthier appearance than the others and the guard did in fact change their diet permanently.

B. GOD’S GIVES THEM THE ABILITY TO LEARN (v. 17)

Daniel 1:17, “To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.”

With God’s help Daniel and his friends mastered the Babylonian literature on astrology, magic incantations, omens, and divination. They not only had a thorough knowledge of the Chaldean literature, but because they had a thorough knowledge of God’s law they also had wisdom to understand it as well. Only Daniel was given understanding “in all visions and dreams”. Their intellectual ability and their physical health were gifts from God.

They could have prayed the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 119:98-100, “Your commands make me wiser than my enemies for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders for I obey your precepts.”

C. THEY IMPRESS THE KING AND ENTER HIS SERVICE. (v. 18-21)

Daniel 1:18-21, “At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael
and Azariah; so they entered the king’s service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.”

At the end of the three years of training, all of the young men were brought before king Nebuchadnezzar for a personal interview. Because of God’s goodness to them, Daniel and his friends graduated at the top of their class. In fact God had blessed them so abundantly that they even surpassed the Babylonian experts at their own game. They entered the service of the King and Daniel served the kings of Babylon for approximately the next 70 years.

The one Christian leader in our day who has been an unofficial chaplain of our Presidents for the last 65 years has been Billy Graham. Every president of the United States since Truman has courted Billy Graham’s favor. In 1950, Truman called Billy and asked, “Would you like to meet the President?” Billy did and he went to the White House, and before he left, the two prayed together. President Eisenhower asked Billy’s counsel when he was sending troops into Little Rock because black students were not being allowed to enroll in an all-white high school. Billy also was invited to visit Eisenhower at Walter Reed Hospital shortly before he died. They talked about assurance of salvation and prayed together. Eisenhower then said he was ready to die.

Four days before he was inaugurated as President, John Kennedy invited Billy to spend the day with him in Palm Beach. Billy said Kennedy was concerned about the moral and spiritual condition of the nations. Billy spent more than 20 nights at the White House during Johnson’s administration. Every time Billy would say to President Johnson, “Let’s have a prayer,” the President would get on his knees to pray. Billy was personal friends with Richard Nixon beginning in 1950. President Nixon often asked Billy to read the Bible and pray with him. In the last year of Nixon’s presidency he told an aide, “Don’t let Billy Graham near me, I don’t want him tarred with Watergate.”

Gerald Ford said, “Billy dropped by the Oval Office on several occasions while I was President. They were get-togethers of old friends. They had no political or other significance.” Billy and Ruth Graham visited Jimmy and Roslynn Carter both in the governor’s mansion in Georgia and in the White House.” Billy met Ronald Reagan in 1953 and the two remained close friends. After the assignation attempt on President Reagan’s life, Billy flew immediately to Washington, D.C., to comfort and pray with Mrs. Reagan, and do anything he could for the President. President Reagan said, “It was through Billy Graham that I found myself praying even more than on a daily basis … and that in the position I held, that my prayers more and more were to give me the wisdom to make decisions that would serve God and be pleasing to Him.”

Billy said that George H.W. Bush says straight out that he has received Christ as his Savior and that he is a born again believer.” Billy was with President Bush at the White House in 1991, the Gulf War began. President Bush said, “Billy Graham has been an inspiration in my life,” said Bush. “It is my firm belief that no one can be President ... without understanding the power of prayer, without faith. And Billy Graham helped me understand that.” When he was governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton joined Billy Graham at a Little Rock Crusade in 1989. Billy also visited Clinton in the Oval Office after he became President. George W. Bush said a turning point in his faith came during a private talk with Billy Graham along the coast of Maine in 1985. He wrote, “Graham’s words planted the “mustard seed in my soul” that eventually led to a decision to “recommit my heart to Jesus Christ.” Even President Barack Obama visited Billy Graham at his Montreat, NC home in April 2010. The two of them had a private prayer time and some conversation.
APPLICATION – No one should say, “If I live for God, I’ll lose out.” You may lose out on some worldly experiences, but you will experience the abundant life Christ promised. As the man of God had said to Eli many years before in 1 Samuel 2:30, “Them that honor me I will honor.”

PRINCIPLE #1 – DANIEL WAS A MAN OF CONVICTION (v. 8-16)
   A. HE KNEW THE COMMANDS OF GOD
   B. HE BELIEVED THAT HE PERSONALLY WAS TO OBEY GOD’S COMMANDS.

PRINCIPLE #2 – DANIEL WAS DETERMINED TO OBEY GOD AND TAKES ACTION

PRINCIPLE #3 – GOD REWARDS DANIEL FOR HIS OBEDIENCE (v. 15-21)
   A. GOD REWARDS DANIEL WITH PHYSICAL HEALTH
   B. GOD REWARDS DANIEL WITH INTELLECTUAL ABILITY
   C. GOD REWARDS DANIEL WITH A POSITION IN THE ROYAL PALACE

In every age God is looking for people like Daniel, people who are willing to stand alone in order to obey Him. And their greatest rewards won’t be in this life.

We need to be like Daniel. We need to learn and remember God’s commands. Then we must diligently obey them.