

The story of Daniel in the Old Testament is particularly relevant and instructive for us as modern-day Christians. The reason why? Because Daniel's story is much like that of all Christians—in reality and in potential. And that's surely no accident.

In this series, we are looking at the highly instructive commonalities of Daniel's life in God to our lives in Christ. This is the sixth in that series—so let's recap the first five.

The first Daniel relevancy was “time and place.” Daniel lived during a very interesting time in the history of His chosen people. His age, his character, his disposition—all these played a part in the narrative of Daniel serving God. Likewise, every serious Christian is, by God's providence, constantly in a time and place where God can and will very effectively use them for purposes of His Kingdom.

The second Daniel relevancy was “competence.” In his own version of a company human resource initiative, Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar was only interested in those who had the cherished competence in helping to advance or manage his kingdom. Likewise, Christians are best positioned to advance the Gospel and touch others for Christ in their work lives when they are highly competent. Here's the phrase I coined long ago: “The pioneering witness for Christ in the workplace is competence.” When a Jesus-follower does this, we can call that a “Daniel 1:4” Christian.

The third Daniel relevancy was a “lifetime ambassador.” Daniel served Nebuchadnezzar and successor pagan-kingdoms competently in very unique ways. But Daniel never stopped being a part of God's core economy: his God-honoring diet, his consistent prayer life, his ability to read the handwriting on the wall, his prophetic voice. He was a lifetime ambassador for God, no matter his life season, in a foreign kingdom.

The fourth Daniel relevancy was “relentlessly faithful dailiness,” which applies to every role we hold as believers. Specifically, that applies to management of a team at work—year-in and year-out—encompassing it all, from our Monday conference calls to our Wednesday operational decisions to our Friday happy hours.

The fifth Daniel relevancy was “building bankable trust.” Our personal character and our consistent performance over a long period of time in a variety of key roles works to make our complete package “bankable”—and therefore transferable—to upcoming opportunities.

Now, to the sixth relevancy of Daniel: his “response to calamities.”

I'm going to start right here with this quote, a quote important to Bible believers: “as for the Israelites, nothing happened that day.” Remember reading that verse over and over again throughout the Old Testament? I repeat: “As for the Israelites, nothing happened that day.” Well, of course you don't remember it from the Bible...because that quote doesn't appear in the Bible. That's because, in actuality, the Bible is chock full of very momentous events—there's hardly space at all devoted to just ordinary days.

You see, the narrative portions of the Old Testament...and certainly the prophetic books...are always setting the stage for something really big about to happen—or telling about the happening itself! Danger, danger! Then David defeats Goliath. Warning, warning! Then the kingdom of Israel is totally defeated by a foreign power.

Take the book of Daniel. Like much of the rest of the Old Testament, that first few chapters are full of calamities—both personal and at the empire level. And one of the most remarkable realities of the book

of Daniel is Daniel's response to calamities. And that's what's amazing for Christians: Daniel's responses are spot-on each time there is a calamity. Consider these sketches:

1. The book of Daniel starts with arguably the worst calamity in the history of the Jews to that point in time—the besieging of Jerusalem *and* the taking of the vessels of the house of God to a profane place *and* the conquest of the southern kingdom of Judah. But Daniel, a young Jew, was found to be competent to become a part of the hostile king's elite service team. Did Daniel reject this role? No, indeed, Daniel found that his service to a king hostile to God to be a worthy calling. This event could have been calamitous, but instead Daniel navigated it for good! (Christians, take note!)
2. But, in this process, the king generously shared the king's high standard of bodily sustenance, providing Daniel and the other elite young men with the king's rich foods. What did Daniel do? He challenged this as contrary to God's plan...yet wisely set up a structure to test results without directly insulting King Nebuchadnezzar. This event could have been calamitous, but instead Daniel navigated it for good! (Christians, take note!)
3. Then, King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that all his wise men couldn't interpret—and they even said *no one* could interpret it. That angered the king and he commanded all the wise men be destroyed—including Daniel and his companions. But Daniel “replied with prudence and discretion” and ultimately appealed to God for the answer. Next, yes *next*, the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision, and in good time, Daniel interpreted the dream for the king. This event could have been calamitous, but instead Daniel navigated it for good! (Christians, take note!)
4. And, of course, you know there is then the story of the King's second dream. Here, Daniel was alarmed about the message he was assigned to give the king, yet he was still faithful to God in delivering an accurate interpretation of that dream, too. This event could have been calamitous, but instead Daniel navigated it for good! (Christians, take note!)
5. And remember Daniel gave an accurate interpretation of the mysterious handwriting on the wall? Well, that's when the book of Daniel literally surfs from one geopolitical empire to another in one sentence, with Daniel participating and then thriving! So, Daniel's service was highly valuable to everyone—even when one failing empire was yielding to another successor empire. This event could have been calamitous, but instead Daniel navigated it for good! (Christians, take note!)
6. And who can forget Daniel in the lion's den, after self-appointed political rivals set Daniel up for failure in the king's eyes because they were correctly confident that Daniel would not stop connecting with God, no matter what an earthly king might forbid along those lines. Of course, Daniel was saved from the lions, and his adversaries were not. Yes, indeed, this event also could have been calamitous, but instead Daniel navigated it for good! (Christians, take note!)

Throughout these narratives about Daniel, we find Daniel's earned competence dovetailed nicely with a seasoned faith, starting even in a very young Daniel and ripening nicely well into his later years. Simply put, Daniel was grounded in God. And every one of his responses to calamities—whether personal or relating to his high-end vocational service or often both—were amazingly perceptive and effective!

So how about us? COVID-19? Stock market crashes? Career disruptions? Troubling health reports? May all of us think of Daniel's anchoring to God...and even what may be accurately labeled as Daniel's presumption upon God to provide protection and answers and rescues...as we prayerfully and thoughtfully consider our own responses to calamities. How about you, friend?

A&A: Application & Action

1. What three adjectives do you think best describe Daniel in his successful responses to calamities?
2. How are you equipping others in your charge—perhaps your children or your co-workers—to actually demonstrate behaviors similar to Daniel in the face of calamities? Be specific.
3. Have you truly defined risks in your life in ways congruent to the eternal ways God thinks about you? Are what seem to be major calamities to you more accurately described as stretching, fruit-bearing opportunities for God’s children, in service to His kingdom? Discuss this thoroughly with a peer.