

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. Let's briefly summarize the first nine podcasts.

First, Daniel was relevant to his *time and place*. Likewise, every serious Christian is, by God's providence, constantly in a time and place where God can very effectively use them for the purposes of His Kingdom.

Second, Daniel was *competent*. The Babylonian King was interested only in those who were competent. Likewise, Christians are best positioned to touch others for Christ in their work lives when very competent.

Third, Daniel was a *lifetime ambassador*. Daniel served pagan-kingdoms competently in very unique ways. But Daniel never stopped being a part of God's core economy: he was a lifetime ambassador for God.

Fourth, Daniel revealed his *relentlessly faithful dailiness*, which applies to every role we hold as believers.

Fifth, Daniel was great at *building bankable trust*. Our character and performance over a long period of time work to make our complete package “bankable”—and therefore transferable—to new opportunities.

Sixth, Daniel's *responses to calamities were fantastic*. We ourselves are making fresh acquaintances with calamities. And every one of Daniel's responses to calamities were amazingly perceptive and effective!

Seventh, Daniel expertly handled *unavoidable enemies and conflicts*. Jesus Himself promised that merely following Him creates enemies and conflicts! Daniel was superb at handling those very types of situations.

Eighth, Daniel's *fearless steadfastness*. Daniel steadfastly just trusted God, *only* God—fearlessly!

Ninth, Daniel applied the practice of *seek, reveal, speak*—a cycle that every believer should work to apply.

Now, to the tenth relevancy of Daniel, and that is his reality of *surfing the biggest waves*. That's right, surfing the biggest waves! Daniel is quite unique—you see, he lived under the rule of different empires and thrived under several significantly different regimes. What does that say to us? Is Daniel's experience and his responses throughout his life relevant to our times and our places? Well, let's take a step back and recap some interesting history.

Babylon figures very prominently in our narrative here, and that starts with the so-called “table of nations” coming from Noah. And Babel, or Babylon, is first mentioned right there in Genesis 10. You know about the Tower of Babel, where humanity was striving to build a very tall structure to be like God. So God Himself destroyed the Tower of Babel and dispersed humanity and confused their languages.

Ancient Babylon was located in what is now modern-day Iraq. The Babylonians threw off the yoke of the Assyrians and became a far-reaching empire. God's prophets warned that Babylon would defeat God's people under the leadership of Zedekiah—and that unfolded exactly as prophesied. And that wasn't a simple little defeat for citizens of Judah. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was so angry about the rebellion that he destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and Judah's leaders were exiled. As part of all that, Daniel was deported from his homeland as a young man. That highlights the first wave, a really important wave, that Daniel surfed...his personal formation in the small kingdom of Judah, a kingdom easily swallowed up by Babylon. But Judah was and remains important to God, so important in God's economy that He actually let it rise and then fall as a result of its disobedience...all part of the preparation for the coming of Jesus. Daniel's early years reveal this truth: not all important waves are calamities where people drown—in fact,

many waves are very helpful to those spiritually ready to surf, and Judah was formative for Daniel. But his future was to be spent under powerful leaders who were not in God's camp—more big waves were ahead!

But Daniel was truly prepared to serve in a hostile regime...and prepared in several very vital ways. We see in the book of Daniel that he clearly had been vocationally, emotionally, and spiritually prepared well to live in a new system...under leadership that was hostile to God. And so the life and times of Babylon was where Daniel surfed to next. But he did not drown there, he surfed on top of the waves, we might say, because he was competent and, from the very beginning, stood out as most exceptionally fit to serve the king of Babylon. And, of course, he did just that in the context of Jeremiah's prophecy that was surely known to Daniel himself...that God's people were to be under the yoke of Babylon for decades.

Yet, amazingly, Daniel's adventures in surfing big waves were not over. By Daniel's own real-time interpretation, the handwriting on the wall revealed the literal overnight fall of Babylon to the empire of the Medes and the Persians, the successor empire run by King Darius and King Cyrus. And you know the story of the lion's den that followed. These were major political upheavals in what we now call the Middle East. And the book of Daniel reveals that he surfed all these big waves very well, even while under threat from his enemies for his very life. But Daniel's reach went even beyond that—his prophecies for all believers are still yet to fully unfold! So, amidst a hostile culture, Daniel triumphantly declared God's truth for the ages! His surfing of waves extended from the last day of Judah to the end times yet to be unfolded!

Here's the key: Daniel's response to it all was the calm application of God's character that was made manifest in Daniel...those very features we have covered in this podcast series about Daniel: his relevance, his competence, his ambassadorship for God, his faithful dailiness, his trust-building, his response to calamities, his handling of enemies and conflicts, his fearless steadfastness. Daniel's fruitful surfing of big waves over a lifetime was fruitful precisely because of these exceptional qualities displayed in his life.

So, what about more recent times? The 20<sup>th</sup> century had some mighty big waves: the Spanish flu killing 50 million worldwide, the rise of mass usage of cars and air travel, mass communication manifested through radio and TV, space travel, two world wars, the rise and fall of Soviet Communism, countless regional wars and civil wars, the rise of new technology and the internet. And—actually most important of all—a vibrant Christianity spread in unprecedented fashion to many countries! Yes, hundreds of millions added!

What about this generation, our times? A couple of decades into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have seen the spread of terrorism, the rise of big platforms like Google, Facebook and Amazon, the incredible leverage in daily life brought about by connected mobile phones, a global pandemic, deep government reach into the minutest details of life, cultural upheavals, and the steady erosion of freedom. These are big waves, my friends. Yes, significant change is afoot. And we know that such waves will never cease until Jesus returns.

The question is: are we surfing our times as well as Daniel did, navigating waves of big change in ways that reveal God's presence in our lives? Or are we tending towards being overwhelmed, exhausted, or even defeated? Are we preparing those we are teaching, mentoring, and discipling to be a Daniel? Kings testified to as the spirit of Daniel, calling upon him time after time. The Spirit of God is no less active in our lives—He indwells in us for that very witness to all of the hand of God in the lives of His people.

The fact is, our privilege is to model and teach others how to surf the big waves—some being amazing opportunities and others being nasty challenges. No matter the big wave rising in your time and place, focus on the truth of Jesus, the person of Jesus, the Kingdom of Jesus! Because His victory *will* sustain!

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. You can drown in a big wave, but you can also drown in a small wading pool! Are you instinctively resistant to change or have you learned to welcome change as the opportunity to reveal your surfing skills to others and, in so doing, glorify God? Elaborate.
2. Do you project fear or anticipation to others when a big wave is coming? What are the Scripture verses that support fear? What are the Scripture verses that support anticipation?
3. What specific techniques have you developed to welcome and successfully surf the big waves of life? Be specific.