

1983. How many of you remember it? How many of you remember it? Well, that was a year that my family said goodbye to. Family and friends, schools, favorite teachers, everything familiar and things we loved about our life in Indiana.

And we moved to Germany. And anytime you move, it's a shock to the system, but Germany was a shock to our system from the very beginning. We landed, I don't know, early in the morning, you just land and you're, you hit the ground and you've, you've got all this stuff you got to sort out that. By the time evening came around, we were, we were jet lagged. We were exhausted still from the flight.

We were getting so exhausted from getting settled into this, the new lodgings we were in and making sense of that. Our brains were absolutely fried from all the new sights and sounds and if you've been to Germany, rules and expectations. We were exhausted. And that night my dad's boss invited us out to dinner to welcome us into this new place. And the place he invited us to was incredible.

It was an old castle that had been restored into a hotel slash restaurant. It overlooked the Rhine River. It was, it was amazing. We got there at night and even we sort of drove up this winding road to get up there and the castle's all lit up. I'm like, oh my word, this is everything I wanted Germany to be.

It is incredible. Incredible. And we get there and we walk into this restaurant. It's one of those restaurants, like there's tablecloths on the table and the waiters have napkins over their arms. I'm like, I'm living the life I was meant to live.

Finally, twinkle lights around, we're outside. It is exquisite. It's amazing. We're all starving, we can't wait to eat. And the waiter brings us our menu and we look at him and go, I have no idea what is on this menu.

It's not the kind of restaurant where they have pictures of the food. Oh. So I remember Pam, she was just a little kid at the time. Is she here? I don't think she's here this morning.

She was just, I mean, she was still elementary going into middle school. And if you grow up in this part of the world, your experiences are sort of limited to this. And she looks and the boss is trying to explain the different things. And Pam turns to mom and I remember her saying, do they just have like some fish? And her understanding of what fish look like in Indiana is this right here.

That's what she wanted. The waiter brings it and here's what it looks like now. That's a pretty one. I remember the eyeball being, like, burnt and sunken into the head. And Pam looks at that and I can just see her.

I'm across table, and I can just see, like, all this stuff. It's just the day, the trip, all the stuff, the newness, it all just combines. And now there's this thing sitting in front of her, and she is just. I mean, the color washes out of her face. She's trying to process all of this.

There's like this physical, mental, emotional exhaustion going on. It's a psychological storm brewing in her head and in her heart, her body. She's physically experiencing, like, trauma. And I know what's happening in her head because I know what I'm hoping she will do. I'm like, pam, Pam, don't make a scene.

Don't stand out. Just go along, pick around the fish. Eat something else. Just, just, just do it. And Pam is looking at mom going, like, what am I supposed to do with this?

And she starts crying and, oh, now, if you're a Christian, you probably have been in situations where, where the pressure to just suck it up and just go along and don't make a scene. You've probably, probably felt that as well, especially when something happens that really conflicts with your Christian values and what you know to be true in the inner recesses of your heart. And you're like, oh, what do I do? And I get it. Comparing, like sauteed trout that's just dripping in butter and herbs is hardly on par with, like, the testing of our faith when it comes to these moments.

But we live in a world that is daily bombarding us with the small demands, the small expectations that, taken as a whole, really challenge us in our faithfulness and can leave us just feeling overwhelmed and uncertain. And, I mean, we can. I've seen people break down over this stuff. We're going, what do I do when? What am I supposed to say?

How am I supposed to act? How am I supposed to react? So this morning, if you're living in a place where you're just encountering all of this stuff all the time and you're just exhausted, like, what am I supposed to do in this world that I live in to be faithful to Jesus and yet live among the people that I live among, then I pray that this series will help you walk into the storm and through these kinds of storms with confidence, knowing that one, you're not alone. You got your brothers and sisters in Christ, but Jesus is with you too. So as, as Darren said, we want to help you process a lot of this stuff.

And so this afterglow thing that Darren talked about, if you weren't here when he talked about it, it is incredible. And we're just gonna meet after church to kind of work through some of these stuff. You've got your, your pens and papers there, Write down some questions, some thoughts. But in the meantime, while you're doing that, or as you're kind of looking for all the stuff you need to make that happen, we're

going to pray. I'm going to have you turn to Daniel chapter one.

If you've, if you, if you're in your Bible, here's the best way to find it. Go to the first three pages, find the list of books in the Bible, find the number that's attached to Daniel in your Bible and turn to that page in my Bible. It's a little bit right of the center of psalms and you just kind of flip through till you find it. It's a, a short one. You can probably find it just if you just rustle through the pages.

But if you got your Bible app on your phone, I, I love a Bible. I love a good old hard back Bible or a soft back Bible with actual pages. But if you don't have that with you this morning, turn in your Bible app to Daniel chapter one. I'm going to pray and then we're going to get started. Heavenly Father, we are surrounded all the times with storms, and we oftentimes don't even think about them that way.

We just think about them as things we just got to deal with. But, but storms can do a lot of damage. We know from personal experience here in Lawrence County. And so we want to ride these storms. Well, we want to move into them with confidence.

We want to walk out of them being stronger and better prepared to face future storms. So as we look at Daniel, as we get his backstory, we pray that you'll instruct us from your word. In Jesus name, Amen. So if you're in the book of Daniel, you can read along with me. If you're not.

We've got some scriptures up there, but it begins with a cultural storm, a major cultural storm. It's the storm where a foreign power comes into a small little country and completely overwhelms it, takes it captive. It is, it is. It's a storm. Daniel chapter one begins this way in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim captives, King of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

And the Lord delivered. If you've got a Bible where you can underline, underline. The Lord delivered Jehoiakim, King of Judah, into his hands. Now here's a few things. Nebuchadnezzar.

We all, we know that name. If you've been around Bible stuff for a while, you know Nebuchadnezzar is a pretty bad guy. He's not, he's not God's man for the hour unless God chooses to use him, which he did. Jacob. I mean, Nebuchadnezzar is not a good guy, but neither is the other guy, the other king, Jehoiakim.

Now he's the king over God's chosen people, the Jews. And yet he's not a good guy as well. His dad was. His dad was a king named Josiah. Josiah came to the throne early on.

Josiah was a good king, a godly king, but his son, unfortunately was not. The scriptures say that Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of the Lord. He was a bad, bad ruler. And so God sends judgment on him. His kingdom was conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar.

Now one of the first things King Nebuchadnezzar does is he orders his chief of staff, his head guy, to find the best and the brightest from Israel's noble families, the people that he's just, he's just taken captive. But find the best and brightest here and you bring them to me. And so Daniel 1:4 describes this, what he's looking for this way. He says, I want young men without any physical defect. They're healthy, they're handsome, they're showing aptitude for every kind of learning.

They're smart, they're well informed, they're educated, they're quick to understand, they're clever, and they're qualified to serve in the king's palace, meaning their deportment is above reproach. He says, I'm going to teach them the language and the literature of the Babylonians. I'm going to re educate them, I'm going to indoctrinate them into this new world they're going to live in because I got big plans for them. So here's what that looks like. So the king Nebuchadnezzar assigns them a daily amount of food and wine from his own table.

Like whatever he eats, these guys are going to eat. And they were to be trained for three years. This is a three year degree program, three year graduate program. And when they get out, they've got a guaranteed job. They're going to enter into the king's service.

Now, among those who were chosen were some from Judah. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Now, you may recognize one of those names because you know their new names. And here's what here's in chapter, in verse 7, he describes it this way. The chief official gave them new names.

To Daniel, he gave the name Belteshazzar. No one calls him Belteshazzar. We all call him Daniel. To Hananiah, Shadrach. Does that name sound familiar?

To Mishael, Meshach. To Azariah, Abednego, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. If you grew up in Sunday school, you know these names. But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission to not to defile himself this way. Now, here's our first main character.

We've got a lot of guys, but one of them has stood out already. His name is Daniel, and he's very likely a teenager. He's not an old guy at this point. He was a young guy. He's young, handsome, strong and smart.

And this is what the king's looking for to be part of his royal retinue. He's been pulled out of everything that is familiar. He's been brought to this new country, new family, new authority figures, new language, new school, and even new food.

Familiar food is a big deal, all for the purpose of being a reflection of the brilliance and grandeur of Nebuchadnezzar's ever expanding kingdom.

But first, he needs to be indoctrinated into these new Babylonian ways. He needs to be assimilated. And so it's interesting, of all the re education things that Daniel is experiencing, the one thing that he pushes back on is what he's going to eat. He says, I'll read your poets, I'll read your philosophers, I'll learn all your languages. I'll study your astronomy books, your astrology books.

I'll answer the questions the way the professor wants the questions answered. You ever been there? He says, I'll even let you change my name. Daniel means God is my judge. And he goes, I'm gonna let God be my judge in this, but I'm gonna let you change my name to some name that has roots in sort of the pagan idols there.

Balteshazzar. You can call me that. I know who I am. He says, but I can't eat the food now. Why is this a big deal?

Well, first, the food is not kosher. God has some pretty strong rules he lays out into what his chosen people, the Israelites, could eat. And he laid that out. And Daniel's like, there's things I can do and things I can't do, and the food is the thing I, I can't do. It's not kosher.

But the second aspect of this, that this food and wine would have very likely been sacrificed and dedicated to the Babylonian gods, these idols. And one of the very earliest commands that the early Christian church leaders gave to Gentile church converts, Christian converts, is don't eat meat sacrificed to idols. Even Paul, who's pretty open minded about a lot of stuff, says, listen, for the sake of the good of everyone, just avoid eating meat offered to idols. You and I know idols are nothing, but the rest of the world doesn't. And so just avoid that because it, it affects your testimony and affects your witness.

So Daniel says, yeah, that looks amazing. I love butter, I love those herbs and I love trout, but I can't eat it from your table for a variety of reasons, I can't. And so he asked him to bring, asked the servant to bring him food that is permissible for him to eat. And they go back and forth on this. You can read the, you can read the narrative there, but they finally agree to this.

Daniel says, listen, test us for 10 days. Give us, and I think he

means right now, anyone who's willing to sign onto this with Daniel, because there's hundreds of them that are part of this. But not everyone necessarily says, I can't eat the food. Some say, that looks amazing, I'll take double helpings. Some of these guys said we can't.

And Daniel's their spokesperson, he says, okay, test us for 10 days. Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. And then after 10 days, compare our appearance with that of the other young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance to what you see. Try it. Let's assess it later.

So the servant agreed to this and tested them for 10 days. And what happens? Well, at the end of 10 days, they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the other young men who ate the royal food. And so the guard takes away their choice food and the wine and gives them vegetables instead. And the scripture says that to these four young men, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel, God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning.

He, he made them stars in that education system. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. And at the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service three years, the chief official presented them to King Nebuchadnezzar, and the king talked with him and found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, otherwise known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So they entered in the king's service, and in every matter of wisdom and understanding by which the king questioned them, he found them 10 times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. Okay, whew, that was a lot.

But there's a lot there. From the very moment that the Babylonians descended on his hometown, Daniel's life has been one of upheaval and uncertainty. He's been ripped from his place of comfort. He's placed through the design of God. Did you.

Do you remember, you underlined it. God did it. God delivered them into the hands of the Babylonian. So it's been through the design of God into this new world where his values and beliefs are under assault. And here's this place, the storm that he's in, where his faith is being tested.

And what are his options? Have you ever been there? What am I supposed to do in this situation? Option A, he could become a revolutionary. Put on his cap, bandana.

He's going to go in there, he's going to be a culture warrior. He's going to call out every single pagan thing, every single wicked thing that the Babylonians do, and they do a lot, believe me. He could take that approach. But what are the consequences of taking that approach? Because every action causes a reaction, doesn't it?

So here's the thing. So Daniel, sitting alone in his room, pondering these questions, says, okay, this is a great opportunity for me. I could be. If I make a stink about this, about everything, I'm going to be kicked out of the program. If I get kicked out of the program, I'm just going to lose this amazing position that I find myself in through God's design.

And if I get kicked from the position, then I lose whatever platform I may have to be God's man in the moment.

So, yeah, it sounds great to say, by golly, we're taking him down. But in the process, he loses the opportunity to be a change agent in that culture. So that's option A. Option B, he could fully assimilate into Babylonian culture. He could be more.

He could become more Babylonian than the Babylonians. And I can just picture. Daniel's got this picture. If I did That I could be sitting right beside the king, raising our glasses of wine and toasting and laughing and hanging out with all the best and brightest of the culture. Man, that would be amazing to be raised to that level.

And, man, that would be. That'd be incredible. All I have to do is just go along or at least keep my thoughts and opinions to myself. That's option B. But in the process of that, then whatever witness he did have becomes irrelevant.

Who cares if he's got a platform if he doesn't have a message, and he loses the message if he fully assimilates? So maybe you've been in this quandary. How do you respond when your faith values bump up against the world's values? Couple of last year, I got a call from a friend who works in England, and she works in this private school. And she called, and she was really struggling because in the school, this is when all the language around transgender stuff was going on.

And she called. She goes, what am I going to do? I'm being expected to. To use the language and to teach the ideology with my middle school students. And she goes, I just.

First of all, I feel uncomfortable with it, and it's a complicated issue. I totally get that. But I'm just trying to navigate this situation, and I want to do it through the lens of faith, not my comfort. So what is your recommendation? I'm like, listen, I need to fly to England, and we'll just talk about it in person.

I didn't do that. But you've been there. Can you identify with the struggle that maybe she found herself in? Maybe you've experienced something similar, where your private faith enters into the public square, and you have to find where your line is. Like, where can I cross and where can I not cross?

And how Daniel deals with it is a great lesson for us. So he navigates it. If you remember the story now, it's not been that long. He remember. He navigates it with both resolve and courage.

So he says, listen, I really appreciate everything that you've done, but I cannot do this because of my faith. I can't do this thing you have. You can call me whatever name you choose. I know who I am. You can teach me whatever you want.

I know what I believe, but I can't do this thing because it violates a clear law of God for me. I can't do it. And that resolve took courage. Here's the deal. Nebuchadnezzar, we've talked about this, is not a good guy.

But Nebuchadnezzar is the one who's picked out the food. He's went down. I don't know if he goes down the kitchen and picks it out himself, but whatever it shows up on his table, it goes to him. And so if you reject Nebuchadnezzar's food, you've rejected Nebuchadnezzar. And rejecting the king was dangerous.

There's a story about Nebuchadnezzar that says to a king that he got crosswise with, he brought the king and all his sons into his presence, and he had the sons brutally murdered in front of this king. And then he gouges out the eyes of the dad and lets him live. But knowing that his last visual memory is of seeing his sons murdered. This is Nebuchadnezzar. There's another stories where he literally puts his enemies on spits and roast them over a fire.

This is not a good guy. So. So when Daniel thinks about what the outcome could be for staying true to his faith values, he. He understands that. That there could be a very high cost indeed.

And yet he maintains his resolve with courage. And he says, no matter the cost to me, here's how far I can go, and I can't go further. But in addition to resolve and courage, Daniel shows remarkable humility and incredible trust. He didn't just reject the food. He humbly proposed a workaround.

He says, okay, okay, let's take 10 days. He says, for 10 days, you let us eat the simple food. And then after 10 days, let's all get together and we'll reevaluate how this went. And at the end of 10 days, we'll figure out what the next step will be. And in that moment, Daniel demonstrated that we can be firm in our convictions without being stubborn jerks.

You get what I'm saying? We can be firm in our convictions without being just difficult people.

When we were at that restaurant, Pam said, can I just eat Tim's



chicken? And he could eat my fish. I don't even know how that story ended. I can't remember. I just remember the meltdown.

But I remember I'm looking at the fish. I'm thinking, oh, I would totally have eaten that fish in that workaround moment. Let's see what we can do so we don't offend Dad's boss. We appreciate the generosity, and we don't become embarrassing. Let's.

Let's just see if we can find a workaround. My friend is like, maybe I can just teach a different class. Maybe we can find a role where I'm serving in that, I don't. This is not a feature of the role or the instruction I've got to give. But finding workarounds takes a lot of humility.

We have to humble ourselves and say, hey, see if we can do something. I'm willing to work something out here. This takes humility. But if you know Daniel's story and you know what happens after this, you know that God exalts the humble. Jesus said that in Matthew 23, he says, God exalts the humble, but humbles the proud.

And in this instance, humility looks like. Sing. Looks like looking for a workable solution. And in the end, if you know Daniel's story, you know that it leads to a fantastic opportunity for Daniel. So.

So he's humble and he's also trusting. So Daniel's trusting God with the outcome of all this. You know, he has to be. He's sitting there in his room there at the Babylonian university, and he's thinking, okay, God, you have brought me a long way, and I'm still here when others aren't. You've kept me alive for this moment.

And remember what it said in your version. If you look at it, I don't know that I landed on it, but. But Daniel and his buddies found favor with the servant who was taking care of them. He says, I'm being treated really well here. I've got favor with the officials.

God, you've. You've. You've done that. I. We didn't do that.

You've done that. And. And I'm. I've got this incredible opportunity ahead of me that I've been removed from my little world and placed in a big world, but it's a big opportunity. God, you've done that.

Okay, so, Lord, you have brought me safe thus far, and you can lead me on. I know that. So even though things feel a little scary and stormy and chaotic, I look around, Daniel says, and I see God right here in the middle of this storm. I find myself in. He's got me.

So in every biblical account, there's the question that I always have is, okay, so what does this matter? Why is this included in the Bible? What does God want me to learn from this moment? And here's what I think is important for us as believers, as Christians. Jesus says, my

kingdom is not of this world.

Don't mistake this world for my kingdom. As Christians, we are citizens of a different kingdom, and yet we still live in this one. Like Daniel, we are something of exiles. We're some in some way or form or fashion exiles here in this place that we call home and living faithfully, the values the kingdom of heaven in a place that is not the kingdom of heaven means that inevitably we're going to bump up against things that don't align. And managing and navigating through that place is going to require resolve and courage and humility and trust.

So someday, Jesus will make the invisible kingdom visible. He will be king of kings and Lord of lords in not just in theory, we might say, but in actual fact. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess. And that's the reality that we're looking ahead for. But until then, he says, I need you to live out the kingdom right where you're at.

Resolve to be faithful in even the little things. It's just food, but that little thing is going to prepare you for bigger things. Daniel's issues will soon move from the food he's eating to the fact that he's being prepared to be eaten as food. And this moment here will prepare him for that moment there.

If you're going to be food for lions, you got to walk in there confident. And so if Daniel is going to be confident in a den full of lions, he needs first of all to be confident among his peers and his leaders and his supervisors. So stand firm. Stand firm. Be courageous.

Demonstrate courage. Deuteronomy 31 says, Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid. Don't be terrified because of them. Because of them.

Don't be terrified because of them. The Lord, your God goes with you. He will never leave you. He will never forsake you. So however, the spirit of God, and again, every one of us lives in different situations with different circumstances.

However, the Spirit of God prompts you into how to navigate your particular situation. Just know that God is with you. So have courage, but move with humility, man. Recognize. Humility is recognizing your dependence on God.

It's valuing others above yourself. It's seeking to serve others with sort of a selflessness. And so this is Daniel. Daniel doesn't try to take anyone down. He's not trying to own the libs.

He's not trying to own the Republicans. He's just. He's just trying to live in this space with everyone and say, hey, how can we work together to find a resolution to this issue that works for all of us? And he really means it.

He's humble, and he trusts God. Grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home. A couple weeks back, we talked about the disciples in that boat in that big storm. And in that moment, they learned that Jesus is the master over the winds and the waves. And as I like to say, the same one who calms the storm is often the one who called the storm.

Remember, God delivered Jehoiakam into Nebuchadnezzar's hands. And that meant that Daniel is there. By the sovereign act of God. God has brought this storm into Daniel's life. And Daniel says, if God has brought me here, God can sustain me through it.

God's got me and my situation under control. And Daniel will learn that trusting in the small things prepares you for the bigger things. The apostle James lived hundreds of years after Daniel. But I think Daniel would love what James writes to the early Christians. He says this in James, chapter 1, 2, 4.

He says, consider it pure joy, brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that this is the way your faith is tested. And the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. Maturity, completeness, not lacking anything. You've got what you need to face.

Whatever you face today. If you put a plate of butter, sauteed trout and capers and herbs, I pretty sure Pam would try it. She would eat it. But even if she didn't, Pam's developed enough confidence in who she is and what she knows and the yes she says yes to and the no she says no to, that she can face that trout with absolute confidence. There's no meltdowns going to be happening now.

And in the same way, Jesus wants us to be able to face down whatever storms come our way with absolute peace and absolute confidence. So today, whatever challenge, whatever testing of your faith you find yourself in, take a deep breath, remember who you are and whose you are, and say, God, you've got this. I'm gonna. I'm gonna resolve to live boldly. I'm gonna live my faith out with confidence.

I'm gonna live humbly in the world that you've left me in for whatever reasons you have. And I'm gonna live at peace as much as possible with those around me. That's a great way to live. And it's. Daniel would say, you do that, and by golly, God will exalt the humble.

You'll live well, Jesus. As we navigate the world we live in, we know that you've placed us in this time and the season. As Esther will learn in that same Babylonian exile, Esther will learn that God has put us where he has put us for such a time as this on this times and seasons that we live in are not times for us to look back and say, oh,

the good old days. And it's not even for us to look forward and say, someday it will all be better. But for now, you've placed us here.

And the reason you put us here is for your own purposes. We want to be that shining and glorious example demonstrating the brilliance of your kingdom. So help us to live courageously, help us to live with resolve. Help us to live humbly. Help us to live trusting you, so that our light, the light that you've placed in us to shine, would shine bright in the midst of whatever dark, whatever cloudy, whatever murky place you put us.

I pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Now we're going to share in a time of communion. And the lesson for communion right now is this, that wherever you're at, Jesus says, I'm with you. This bread and this cup signify the presence of Jesus.

Some churches go so far as to say, it is the body of Jesus. I don't go that far. But I will say this, that he's commanded us to do this. And he says, when you do it, remember me. I want your thoughts to be on me when you do this.

Sometimes we're tempted to think of all our sins, all our failures, all the ways that we've not live with resolve and courage. But Jesus says, that's not the purpose of this moment. This purpose, the purpose of the moment is to remember me. So I want you to remember Jesus who says, I am with you always and forever. Amen.

Heavenly Father, meet us here, instruct us, comfort us, challenge us, and strengthen us with resolve and courage as we live humbly and trustingly with you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you for listening to this message from Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. Did you know you can watch all of our video content, both current and past, on our YouTube channel. Visit [YouTube.com sherwoodoaks](https://www.youtube.com/sherwoodoaks) to watch messages, series and complete worship services.