

DECEMBER 2023



Bible Study | Faith in Action

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Prepare

- Bible
- Journal
- Pen/pencil

Get Started

What would you do if you were persecuted for your faith? How would you respond if being a Christian became costly? We all hope we would remain faithful. This month, we'll look at faithfulness in the life of Daniel and learn how we can cultivate a lifestyle of faithfulness here and now.

Study and Learn

Read Daniel 1:1–16.

Looking at the context Daniel found himself in is vital. He was forcibly removed from his home and sent to live in a pagan culture. As part of the assimilation process for the Hebrew young men, Daniel was indoctrinated in the Babylonian culture and language. Daniel remained faithful despite King Nebuchadnezzar's attempts to strip away his Hebrew convictions and identity. How did he do this? By holding to the teachings, convictions, and practices he had been taught.

Reread Daniel 1:8.

Whether Daniel was trying to obey Levitical laws regarding clean and unclean food, rules concerning foods offered to idols, or perhaps avoiding the temptation of being pulled away by a life of luxury, he resolved to live differently. He and his three friends determined to live in a countercultural way that reminded them of their dependence on the God they worshipped.

- In a journal, write down what you think it means to live in a countercultural way today. What other Scripture passages speak to our calling to live set apart?

Read Daniel 1:17–20.

Daniel found favor in the eyes of the king, who, after interviewing him, immediately set him to work in his court. Scripture records that in every matter of wisdom the king questioned Daniel and his friends about, the king found them ten times better equipped than his magicians and enchanters. In every matter, Daniel would have to choose to rely on the Lord and stay faithful.

Read Daniel 2:14.

God blessed Daniel with remarkable gifts and skills to use for His glory in a pagan land. He practiced godly leadership traits such as wisdom and tact (v. 14), which saved several lives, including his own. When Daniel was given a position of authority, he also put his gifted, godly friends in places of influence. Imagine how they were able to impact Babylonian society!

- What gifts and skills has God given you? Journal how you are using them and ways you could use them to bring Him glory. What about your friends? How you could encourage them to use their gifts and skills to glorify God and serve Him well?

Read Daniel 6:1–5.

We know Daniel was not perfect, but he did live a life of such integrity that people couldn't find a case to bring against him. The word *holy* means “set apart,” and Daniel consistently lived a holy life.

Apply

Daniel 1:21 notes that Daniel remained there “until the first year of King Cyrus,” when Cyrus issued a proclamation that he would help the exiles return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1). This means Daniel lived in captivity for the entire 70 years mentioned in Jeremiah 25:11. He stayed the course where God had placed him.

No matter where we find ourselves, God gives us His Word and His Spirit to help us live faithfully. Because of God's faithfulness to us, we can faithfully serve Him all of our days and in every situation. Because of the integrity we will show as we persevere in faithfulness, those who haven't yet known the Lord will see Him in us.

In the beginning of Daniel's journey, he found himself in a pagan land. It would have been easier to yield to the Babylonian ways, but Daniel's faithfulness made an impact on the whole land and King Nebuchadnezzar. Scripture records that Nebuchadnezzar responded, “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just” (Dan. 4:37). If we are faithful like Daniel, we will give the world a reason to praise God too.

Follow Up

Be diligent about pursuing holiness by fleeing sin and finding forms of accountability. Seek integrity in your work as you develop your skills and steward your gifts faithfully.

Commit to Memory

Verse: **Daniel 1:8**

Challenge: **Daniel 1:17–20**

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ENA REDDING* lives in the Middle East where she strives to live faithfully and loves to see disciples made and watch them grow in their faith.

**Name changed.*

Moving three times during the first two years of my family's missionary career in Zimbabwe as we waited for our missions house to be built was not easy. The last temporary place we stayed was a one-bedroom cottage on a tobacco farm miles from where we would live. We set up beds for our two young children in the "hall," which also served as the living room, with two chairs and a table.

Those months were hard. Clothes were washed by hand, cooking was challenging, and the only place the children could play was in the dirt outside the cottage. One of the few happy things I remember about that time was receiving an unexpected package from believers in the United States. It felt like Christmas!

I love that the Apostle Paul shared requests in his letters and gave thanks for how those needs were met:

- He requested prayers that he would share the gospel clearly and fearlessly (Eph. 6:19).
- He commended the household of Onesiphorus for refreshing him (2 Tim. 1:16).
- He thanked the church in Philippi for the gifts the believers sent him (Phil. 4:18).
- He recognized Epaphroditus for personally ministering to his needs (Phil. 2:25).
- He asked Timothy to come soon and bring his cloak, as well as the books and parchments he had left behind with a friend in Troas (2 Tim. 4:13, 21).

As Paul needed prayer, refreshment, support, and personal items, so do missionaries today.

What if every woman in myMISSION or every myMISSION group adopted a missionary or missionary family for a year? Imagine the impact of the prayers, the love, the encouragement, and the support this would provide to those who are serving on the front lines of missions.

Where to Start

Finding a North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionary to adopt is easy.

- Visit missionaries.namb.net.
- Search this list of missionaries and chaplains by name, job title, birth date, state or province, or other variables. I selected my birth date and home state and received four choices.
- Click on a profile to learn more. This page will display an overview of the missionary and his or her work. The contact information is hidden. You will want to look for a small circle PDF icon below the "Participate" box on the right. Click this circle for more information. If contact information is available, you will find it in the bottom left-hand corner.

Because of security concerns, contacting an International Mission Board (IMB) missionary to adopt is a little more challenging but not impossible. Choose a country or the name of a missionary you know, then write an email to info@imb.org and share the following:

- your interest in praying for and learning more about a missionary
- the missionary or country you have chosen
- any other details about the type of missionary you are looking to connect with (single or married, job description, etc.).

IMB will then pass this information on to a missionary or missionary family, and, if they agree, they will contact you.

Another option is to ask your church leadership whether IMB has assigned your church to a missionary through the IMB Church Connections initiative. If so, the leadership should have contact details for that missionary.

Blessing Your Missionary

Ask your missionary or missionary family to sign you up for any newsletters or other communication they share with prayer partners. Praying faithfully for these God-sized requests is an excellent way to support their work. When I send out a prayer letter, it thrills me when people respond. These often come at a time when I most need encouragement.

Consider these ideas for sending tangible gifts to NAMB missionaries within your budget and ability:

- Send a monthly email to your missionary.
- Send monthly cards or small gifts, such as for birthdays and special occasions or encouragement cards with a gift card enclosed.
- Establish a quarterly video chat.
- When a need arises, provide specific items the missionaries request. (Pay attention to brands, if named.)

There is no easy answer for “how” to send a gift to an IMB missionary. You will need to ask the missionary about the best way to handle this. Since some countries charge so much for customs, or the cost of mailing packages overseas can be so expensive, sending things through the mail may

not be feasible. Some countries do not have tight security on their mail, so the items may never arrive. Instead of mailing items, consider alternative ways to offer support:

- Provide digital gift cards.
- Send a gift to your missionary with someone headed to his or her country or city.
- Use reliable websites or apps to send funds to assist with personal needs, a night out, or a holiday on the field.
- Send emails and messages.
- Schedule video chats.

When your missionary is home on stateside assignment, you can find opportunities to bless him or her in more personal ways. Or consider joining your missionary for a short time on the field to participate in his or her ministry. This will give you a better understanding of what his or her ministry is like and help you pray for your missionary and his or her work in a more informed manner.

Start Today

December is a busy month, so don't let today slip by without taking your initial step in identifying a missionary to adopt. Begin praying about ways God would lead you, your family, or your myMISSION group to engage with a missionary.

DONNA FORT is an IMB missionary who has been the happy recipient of your prayers, emails, personal gifts, and sacrificial giving through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.