

## Living Holy in a Godless World

### The Life of Daniel

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### Lesson One: Be Pure

**Bible Passage: Daniel 1:1-20, 6:4-5**

**Bible Truth: Daniel's life was pure and God blessed him.**

**Lesson Objective: That students would desire and commit to purity in their lives.**

#### Before You Begin:

- ◆ blank sheets of paper
- ◆ tape
- ◆ pens or pencils
- ◆ a mug, cup or bowl with leftover food encrusted on the sides
- ◆ a clean dishtowel
- ◆ a chalkboard or something to write on.

#### Opening:

*ILLUSTRATION: A teenager named Ted seemed to have everything going for him. He was very smart, ending up studying law in college. He was handsome and could impress people with his conversation. How do you think his life turned out? How many think he made a lot of money and became famous? (Get a hand raise.) How many think he became a criminal? (Get a hand raise.) At the end of the lesson I'll tell you his story. During this lesson we'll talk about the principles that either made or broke him as a person.*

Let's pray that God will give us wisdom as we deal with an extremely important issue. (Lead in prayer or have someone pray.)

Give students pens and paper and ask them to write the name of someone they respect. Tell them they cannot write down either Jesus or their parents and the person should be someone whose name the rest of the class members will recognize. When they have finished collect and shuffle the papers, then tape one on the back of each student. Explain that they must now try to figure out whose name is on their back by walking around and asking questions of the other students. The answer to their questions can only be "yes" or "no." For example, they should ask the question "Is this person a male?" "Yes" instead of "Is this person a male or a female?" When they have guessed the name on their back, they may remove the sheet but should continue helping others. Give the students a few minutes to complete this activity then ask them to return to their seats. Have them tell the group whose name was on their back and why someone might respect that person. Then ask,

- ◆ *Which of these people do you think could be a good role model for young people's lives and why?*
- ◆ *Do you think it is important to have a role model? Why or why not?*

*In his wisdom God has given us lots of role models to learn from, sometimes showing us what to do and sometimes showing us what not to do. One of the few people in the Bible about whom nothing negative is said, besides Jesus of course, is Daniel. He lived in a world a lot like the one we live in. It was a pagan world full of false gods where people filled their lives with power, money, corruption and sex. In fact the city where he lived, Babylon, is used throughout the Bible to represent the world and it's immorality. If Daniel could live for God in Babylon, you and I can do it in our world. As we study his life we find several keys to his success, principles we can put into practice in our own lives to help us live a more successful Christian life in our world. The first of these principles is "be pure."*

### Interactive Learning

Divide the students into groups of four and give each group a piece of paper and a pen. Tell them they have one minute to come up with the longest list of things that can be impure or contaminated (like drinking water). After a minute compare the lists and have the winning team read theirs to the group.

- ◆ *What makes something impure? (when it is contains contaminates, is not clean).*
- ◆ *Look at your lists, how would these things be better or function more effectively if they were pure?*

Based on their responses, reiterate how purity makes things perform better, or be more effective, or pleasant. Explain that together you will now look at some specific ways in which Daniel kept his life pure.

### Bible Application

Divide the students into four groups. Explain that each group will be acting out an episode in the life of Daniel, according to the following instructions: Group 1--Daniel 1:3-16 in its original setting; Group 2--Daniel 1:3-16 but set in modern times with contemporary issues; Group 3--Daniel 6: 1-5 in its original setting; Group 4--Daniel 6: 1-5 set in modern times. (If you have less than 12 students only divide them into two groups and have them do the "present day" dramatizations.) Give the students a few minutes to prepare their skits and then have them present them before the rest of the class. Afterwards thank them for their participation and ask:

- ◆ *What commitment did Daniel make as a young man? (1:8 not to defile himself with the kings' food).*
- ◆ *What did God do for Daniel and his friends? (1:15, 17 He gave them health and outstanding intellectual development).*
- ◆ *What did all of Daniel's coworkers know about the way he lived and worked? (6:4 his life and work were above reproach. He was faithful and honest, without any error or fault).*

- ◆ *We see throughout the story of Daniel that he is in very important positions in the government. What, if any, do you think is the relationship between the way Daniel lived and the responsibility and wisdom that God gave him?*
- ◆ *If Daniel had lived in an impure or corrupt way, how do you think these stories would be different?*

## Commitment

**Illustration #1** - Tell the students that you want to tell them a story about a mug (cup or bowl.) Try to make the story as personal as you can (Do not read directly off this sheet!), although of course the students will sooner or later realize it is just a story.

*I really love this mug. Isn't it great! (showing them the outside of it.) I just got it a few months ago when I saw it on the shelf in the store and thought it was just perfect. It is perfect for my coffee in the morning, at lunch it keeps my soup really hot, and at night I often use it for my milk or hot chocolate. I want everyone to appreciate just how attractive and wonderful my mug is so I keep it in really good shape. (hold the mug up proudly, but only showing the outside.)*

*If any food ever spills on the outside I quickly wipe it off before it gets dry and crusty. I never worry about cleaning the inside, because of course no one ever sees that. Sometimes my hot chocolate at night tastes like tomato soup from lunch, but hey, it's my mug and I can do whatever I want with it, right? See, here is the special towel I use to polish the outside (show the towel and start rubbing vigorously the outside of the mug.)*

*I need to get it all polished up because today my [choose girlfriend/boyfriend /mother/father] is coming over and I want to serve them in my favorite mug. Don't you think he'll / she'll like that? (give the students a chance to respond, hopefully negatively) Why not? (they should say something like, "because it is dirty." then respond, offended and polishing the outside with your cloth) Dirty? It's not dirty, it is very clean. (And they should reply that it is dirty on the inside, where it counts)*

*You know I'm not the first one to tell this story, would someone please read for me Matthew 23: 25-28. So as we begin to try to figure out how to follow Daniel's example of purity in our lives, Jesus warns us not to concentrate primarily on the outside, on what other people see, but to first clean up the inside.*

**[Alternative illustration: A few days prior to the session, put a small amount of raw meat in a plastic bag and leave it in the warm weather so that it gets stinky. Just prior to the session wrap two "gifts", each looking equally attractive on the outside. One will contain rotten meat (still wrapped in plastic so that nobody can smell it). The other will contain some candy or some other desirable gift. At this time in the session, ask for two volunteers to each open a gift. But first let all the students look at the gifts. Ask, "Do they both look nice on the outside? Do you want to guess what is on the inside?" Then have them open the "gifts." When the candy is opened, distribute it to the group. When the rotten meat is opened, let everyone express their disgust (but don't let them throw it around!). They should get a laugh out of it. Then clearly make the above point from Matthew 23. ]**

**ILLUSTRATION:** *Most people don't see the importance of keeping the inner person pure. They think, "As long as I don't hurt anybody, I should be able to do whatever I want in my mind or personal life." At the beginning of the lesson we introduced a guy named Ted. His full name is Ted Bundy. His life shows what can happen to a person who lets his inner life get out of control. As a handsome, eloquent, former law student with an IQ of 125, you'd have thought Ted had it all together. Who would have ever thought that he would one day fry in the electric chair for brutally murdering over 30 women and girls? What happened? According to Bundy, he had given in to his inner lusts, becoming a pornography addict. In his own words, violent pornography "molded and shaped my thought processes...it crystallized it inside and I got to the point of acting it out." (p. 80) Are you giving impure thoughts like hatred or lust or envy free reign in your mind? I'm sure that as a child and teen Ted never dreamed his life would become so horrid. What can we do to make sure that we don't become horrible adults?*

Ask someone to read Mt. 15: 16-19.

- ◆ *What is the first thing that has to be pure in us? (our hearts) [on the chalkboard write, "pure hearts"]*
- ◆ *How do our hearts become pure, Psalm 51:7-10? (God cleanses sin from our hearts when we repent of our sin) [write the answer(s) on the board]*

*If we do not go before God humbly confessing our sin and asking him to forgive us and purify our hearts, any "cleaning up" we do on the outside is like wiping the outside of the cup. And once we focus on cleaning up our hearts, that purity will naturally flow into the other areas of our lives: our thoughts, our words, and our deeds [write on the board "pure thoughts," "pure words," and "pure deeds"]. Jesus said in John 14:23 that he would come and make his home in anyone who loves him and keeps his words.*

*Let's take a minute and see exactly how God says we should be pure in these areas.*

- ◆ *What are our thoughts to be like based on Phil. 4 8? [write answers on the board]*
- ◆ *What about our words, Eph. 5: 4 and Col. 3: 8-10? [write answers]*
- ◆ *In Galatians 6 Paul tells us 9 "fruits of the spirit" and 17 "works of the flesh." Without looking them up can anybody remember or guess any of them? [write their answers on the board, then have someone read the passage and fill in the missing ones]*

*Do you see how these flow from the inside out? (If your mind has been focusing on things that are praiseworthy, and your mouth follows by giving thanks for good things in people, you will not be a source of jealousy or dissention in the church, but will create peace.)*

**Action Points:**

- 1) *Write down on a sheet of paper some areas where you're letting impure thoughts run free. (Don't worry! I won't take this up! If it's too personal, just use initials.)*
- 2) *Take a moment and ask God to forgive you for allowing this impurity in your life.*
- 3) *Now look up I John 1:7 and write it over your list of bad thoughts.*
- 4) *To symbolize the fact that Jesus' blood cleanses all our sin, mark over your listing of impure thoughts, then tear up the sheet and throw it in the trash.*

*5) I challenge you to do this each time you deal with impure thoughts. We can't keep impure thoughts from coming into our minds, but we can keep from dwelling on them. As one person said, "You can't keep a bird from flying over your head, but you can keep it from building a nest there!"*

## Closing

**In closing, reiterate that the goal of these studies is to help us know how to live a successful Christian life, a life that pleases God in our world. So ask them how they think living a pure life, from the heart out, will be helpful as they strive towards that goal. Get several responses from various students. Then close in prayer asking God to help the students seek pure hearts before Him.**