

The Secret of Prophetic Understanding



Week One

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
Daniel 1

TEMPERANCE TABOO

Temperance is a word that is almost frowned upon in the 21st century and standards of diet in a religious context are viewed as legalistic. We live in a culture in Christianity where you can do anything you want with your body because after all “it’s my body.” In the Christian community, the idea that one is saved almost gives license to eat and drink any way that one wants to. Truth be told the idea of temperance is viewed with raised eyebrows even in our community of faith. Yet should it be? Does temperance have a place in the Christian experience?

Contained within chapter 1 of Daniel is the theme of temperance. From our cultural perspective, beginning a prophetic book with the theme of temperance is a peculiar one. Yet in Daniel 1, temperance lays the groundwork for intellectual and spiritual understanding that is critical to the rest of the book of Daniel.



inScribe

Write out Daniel 1 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out Daniel 1:8, 17. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Daniel 1. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

What area do you need to manifest temperance in?

What other areas correlate the physical with the spiritual as well?

CAUSATION AND CORRELATION

Daniel and his three friends were taken captive by the Babylonians. Yet this was not an ordinary captivity behind bars. They were put into the University of Babylon to be educated to fill the highest positions in King Nebuchadnezzar's court.

Imagine the first day when they were ushered into the Babylonian cafeteria. It featured the finest gourmet cooking and fine dining experiences from the chefs of the king himself. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Dan. 1:8).

It cannot be overstated that there would be no book of Daniel had the Hebrews eaten of the decadent delicacies of the king. The four Hebrews were found to be physically superior to the other students as a result of their habits of temperance. However, the chapter points to another principle that is connected to temperance—one that is beyond the physical dimension: "Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Dan. 1:17).

Daniel 1 brings out a correlation between Daniel's remarkable temperance stance and his remarkable spiritual understanding. Furthermore, the chapter brings out a causation between Daniel's temperance and his academic excellence when the king found them to be ten times wiser than everyone else. Indeed, the emphasis of the chapter in terms of temperance is its connection with spiritual understanding: "As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill of all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Dan. 1:17). In other words, temperance has natural, physical, intellectual, and spiritual benefits. Temperance for the glory of God has supernatural benefits that are added.

The book of the Daniel is a prophetic book. Chapter 1 begins with a temperance test and ends with unprecedented spiritual understanding. The lesson is apparent: *In order to understand the prophecies of Daniel, we must practice the temperance of Daniel.*

A DEEPER LOOK INTO CHAPTER 1

What is Temperance?

Ellen White stated that temperance is “to dispense entirely with everything hurtful, and to use judiciously that which is healthful” (Patriarchs and Prophets, 562). In other words, temperance is abstaining from the bad and moderation in the good.

What was the issue with the Babylonian diet?

1. The drink provided was alcoholic. The word for “wine” in the Bible can refer to fermented or unfermented grape juice. And the Bible is clear in its stance on the fermented: “Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper.” (Prov. 23:31–32). This text does not refer to regular grape juice!

2. The food had been offered to idols.

3. The blood had been not drained in slaughter. “You must not eat meat that still has blood in it” (Lev. 17:12, NIV).

4. The Babylonian diet included unclean meat (Leviticus 11).

What was the Daniel diet?

“Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink” (Dan. 1:12, KJV). The term pulse has roots from the word for seed and is a reference back to the diet in Genesis. “And God said, ‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.’” (Gen. 1:29). The book of Daniel begins with Daniel and his three friends choosing the Edenic diet.

We are not saved through vegetarianism or veganism. However, the book of Daniel does reveal the correlation between diet and spiritual understanding. The key to understanding the prophetic books of Daniel is not limited to the intellectual dimension alone, but also includes the physical dimension—namely, what we choose to ingest into our bodies.



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Which area in your physical dimension needs some spiritual attention?



What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Genesis 10:8–10; 11:1–9
Leviticus 11
1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:31

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Daniel 1?

Review your memorized verse from Daniel 1.

RELATIONAL RESPONSE

Romans 12:1 says: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Paul framed temperance in the context of a relational response, not a transactional context.

The text uses the word therefore, implying a concluding statement. In other words, Paul has just spent the whole beginning of the book of Romans bringing out the “mercies of God” in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Salvation is free and cannot be earned. Then after Paul has spent the bulk of the book of Romans expounding on the “mercies of God,” he says “therefore present your bodies a living sacrifice.” In other words, our bodies are given to God as a response to the “mercies of God.”

Temperance is not a means of salvation. Temperance is a response of the heart that has been touched by the “mercies of God.” Our bodies are to be given to God as a “living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.” Temperance is the means through which we respond to God’s love. Paul then ends the verse with “which is your reasonable service.” In light of God’s mercies, giving our bodies to God is “reasonable.” Temperance does not earn our salvation; temperance is our reasonable response to salvation.



inVite

Meditate on Daniel 1 again and look for where Jesus is.



What is Jesus saying to you through Daniel 1?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

After this week's study
of the chapter, what are
personal applications you are
convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications
you must make in your kitchen,
cafeteria, and refrigerator?

How is temperance much more
than dietary changes?

AT THE COURT OF BABYLON

At the court of Babylon were gathered representatives from all lands, men of the highest talent, men the most richly endowed with natural gifts, and possessed of the broadest culture that the world could bestow; yet among them all, the Hebrew youth were without a peer. In physical strength and beauty, in mental vigor and literary attainment, they stood unrivaled. The erect form, the firm, elastic step, the fair countenance, the undimmed senses, the untainted breath—all were so many certificates of good habits, insignia of the nobility with which nature honors those who are obedient to her laws.

In acquiring the wisdom of the Babylonians, Daniel and his companions were far more successful than their fellow students; but their learning did not come by chance. They obtained their knowledge by the faithful use of their powers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They placed themselves in connection with the Source of all wisdom, making the knowledge of God the foundation of their education. In faith they prayed for wisdom, and they lived their prayers. They placed themselves where God could bless them. They avoided that which would weaken their powers, and improved every opportunity to become intelligent in all lines of learning. They followed the rules of life that could not fail to give them strength of intellect. They sought to acquire knowledge for one purpose—that they might honor God. They realized that in order to stand as representatives of true religion amid the false religions of heathenism they must have clearness of intellect and must perfect a Christian character. And God Himself was their teacher. Constantly praying, conscientiously studying, keeping in touch with the Unseen, they walked with God as did Enoch.

True success in any line of work is not the result of chance or accident or destiny. It is the outworking of God's providences, the reward of faith and discretion, of virtue and perseverance. Fine mental qualities and a high moral tone are not the result of accident. God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them.

While God was working in Daniel and his companions "to will and to do of His good pleasure," they were working out their own salvation. Philippians 2:13. Herein is revealed the outworking of the divine principle of co-operation, without which no true success can be attained. Human effort avails nothing without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God's grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort.

As the Lord co-operated with Daniel and his fellows, so He will co-operate with all who strive to do His will. And by the impartation of His Spirit He will strengthen every true purpose, every noble resolution. Those who walk in the path of obedience will encounter many hindrances. Strong, subtle influences may bind them to the world; but the Lord is able to render futile every agency that works for the defeat of His chosen ones; in His strength they may overcome every temptation, conquer every difficulty. (*Patriarchs and Prophets* by E. G. White, pp. 486–487)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



How does viewing temperance as a response to God's love change my perspective of temperance?

Why doesn't God simply bless everyone like He does Daniel? Why do you think cooperation is important to God?

What are instances in your life where you have experienced how your diet has impacted your mind? How does temperance affect one's spiritual perception?

What are instances in your life where you have reaped the natural benefits of temperance?

How does our popular culture view temperance?

Have you ever experienced or seen where diet has been viewed as a way of earning salvation?