



Ten Commandments 1: Honor God

Daniel and the first four Commandments

Note: Scripture used in this Bible Study is from the New King James Version.

Is God pleased with our religious behavior?

Many people mistakenly believe God cares only about religious behavior. They suppose God will be pleased if they go to church on Sunday or give an occasional offering. Nothing could be further from the truth. The first four of the Ten Commandments set forth God's timeless commands for relating to Him. They reveal that God's involvement in our lives is comprehensive. An appropriate response to God's Commandments shows in our daily conduct.

Live for God Consistently (Dan. 6:1-9)

Centuries after Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, Daniel modeled behavior that honors God by living consistently for Him. Others took note of this behavior...

Dan 6:1-9

- 1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom;
- 2 and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss.
- 3 Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.
- 4 So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.
- 5 Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."
- 6 So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever!
- 7 "All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.

8 "Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

9 Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

Who was Daniel? What do we know about him?

Daniel was born and reared in the ancient nation of Judah. When he was a young man, his country was conquered by the Babylonian Empire. Daniel was taken as a prisoner to the city of Babylon. Babylon is located in modern Iraq and was about 1,000 miles from his home and family. Despite the tragedy he had experienced, Daniel determined to live for God.

How did Daniel first demonstrate his determination to live for God?

He rejected food and conduct that conflicted with the teaching of Scripture.

What role did Daniel have in the Babylonian government?

God blessed Daniel and he became an important civil servant in the Babylonian government. He became an important advisor to Nebuchadrezzar, the king, when God revealed to him both the dream and meaning of a dream that the king was perplexed about.

What happened to Babylon?

It was overthrown by the Medes & Persians. Daniel was an old man and still living in the city of Babylon when Persia captured it. In these new circumstances Daniel remained faithful to the Lord. Then the Persians recruited him into the administration of their empire during the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

v1-2 – What did Darius do to organize his government?

Darius wanted a strong central government and organized his vast empire into districts. He appointed 120 "satraps" to govern the districts. The title "satrap" means "protector of the kingdom." Three "administrators" had complete authority over the numerous satraps and were accountable only to the king. Despite his advanced age and foreign birth, Daniel was appointed to be an administrator.

v3 – What did Darius want to do with Daniel?

Promote him over his peers by placing him over all the government

Why did Darius want to promote Daniel?

Because of Daniel's superior work and the "excellent spirit" that was in Him.

What does it mean he had an excellent spirit?

Certainly the spirit of God was in him and this has by-products that people notice...

Gal 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

v4 - What did the governors and satraps seek to do when they got wind of Darius' intentions?

Daniel's political enemies were jealous and sought to discredit him.

v5 - What did Daniel's enemies find to accuse him?

Since Daniel's job performance was exemplary, there was no basis for accusing him of negligence or corruption. The sole path for implicating Daniel was his religion (v5).

Why would using Daniel's religion be a good way to single him out?

Apparently Daniel was the only significant person in the king's government who worshiped only one God.

How could Daniel's enemies use his religion to find him guilty of something?

His enemies knew if legislation was enacted that mandated the worship of a deity other than Daniel's God, then he would violate the law.

v6 - What did Daniel's enemies do to set a trap for Daniel?

They approached the king with an idea for a new ordinance.

How was the appeal of Daniel's enemies effective with the king?

Their proposal appealed to the king's vanity and their flawless manners hid their treacherous purpose. "King Darius, live forever" was the appropriate protocol for greeting such an absolute monarch.

v7 - What kind of political power did Daniel's enemies have?

The list of officials in verse 7 indicates the conspiracy against Daniel included officials at many levels of government. It also alerted the king that the group represented the opinion of many in his government.

What was the purpose of the 30 day limitation?

The devious requirements of the legislation may not have seemed unreasonable to this powerful ruler.

What punishment did the proposed law have?

During that era of history the Persians captured lions for exhibition and other service. The Hebrew word for "den" suggests a pit. It was presumably a large pit with numerous rooms in which the captive lions were kept. Depriving the beasts of food provoked them into becoming instruments for gruesome death.

Why do you think that the conspirators thought that this trap would be effective with Daniel?

The conspirators apparently were convinced of the genuineness of Daniel's faith and knew he would not waiver. And if he did, they could expose his hypocrisy.

v8 - What else did the conspirators do appeal to the king about?

That Darius enact the legislation in writing. "The law of the Medes and Persians" denotes the legal code of the Persian Empire. This law was binding on king and commoner alike. It could neither be changed nor ignored.

Pray Frequently Even When Challenged

Dan. 6:10-13

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

11 Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

12 And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

13 So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

v10 - What did Daniel do when he learned that King Darius had approved the decree?

Daniel home and prayed... The passage of the new law neither altered Daniel's religious behavior nor caused him to hide his faith.

Why did Daniel defy the king's decree?

- Praying on his knees three times a day was his custom since his early days.

- I'm sure Daniel saw the spirit behind the law and knew that his faith was being challenged.
- When two laws were found to be in conflict, Daniel chose to obey the law of the higher King. Daniel deliberately defied a law that was incompatible with the law of God.
- Daniel had a personal relationship with God so he knew the reality of God as he knew the reality of King Darius.

Why do you think prayer was such an important part of Daniel's life?

- His exile and the destruction of Solomon's temple stripped his religion of its recognizable external form. Rather than becoming disillusioned with religion, Daniel found solace in prayer.
- The events of Daniel's life forged an absolute faith in God.

Why did Daniel go home to pray?

- It is where he prayed. Praying at the same time and place as part of a routine helps to be in the right mind-set for prayer. It also makes it a priority in our life.
- He went home to be away from the distractions and demands of the world.

Why did Daniel kneel down to pray?

He was humbling himself before God. One's posture also helps us get in the right mind-set for prayer. It is important to recognize to Whom we are praying, Almighty God.

Why did Daniel face Jerusalem when he prayed?

The significance of facing Jerusalem was two fold. First the city had been the site of the holy of holies, which was the symbol of God's presence among His people. Second, in his dedication of the temple, Solomon committed Israelites to facing the temple during prayer (1 Kings 8:35,38,44,48).

Why does it say that Daniel gave thanks to God? What did Daniel have to be thankful about in his predicament?

Daniel's habit of praying repeatedly produced an amazing attitude in him. Despite having lived most of his life in exile, he continued to thank God. When a person spends time in prayer, he or she gains a new perspective on a situation (God's eternal perspective)...

Rom 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Daniel knew God and knew that God was in control of even this situation.

v11-12 – What did the conspirators do?

The conspirators watched Daniel carefully. They went as a group to confirm his actions and discovered he was continuing to pray to God. Immediately they confronted Darius. In a rhetorical question they repeated the law's content including its penalty.

How did King Darius respond to the conspirators?

The king acknowledged the law had been enacted and recalled its irrevocable character.

13 – How did the conspirators accuse Daniel?

They reported that Daniel broke the law.

What was the significance of referring to Daniel as “one of the exiles from Judah”?

The term, “one of the exiles from Judah” distinguished him from other government officials. It was a way of marginalizing him before the king.

Daniel 6:14-18 mostly deals with Darius' own anguish over having to carry out the law and throw Daniel into the den of hungry lions...

Why did Darius have anguish over carrying out the law?

Darius did not want to execute Daniel. However under Persian law no pardon was possible for Daniel.

Trust God Even When Threatened

Dan. 6:19-23

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"

21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!

22 "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."

23 Then the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

v19-20 – What did King Darius' behavior reveal about him?

He was concerned about Daniel and was anxious for this incident to be over.

What was going through the King's mind? Did he really expect Daniel to be alive?

- His actions probably resulted more from grief than from genuine anticipation of seeing Daniel again.
- His anguished (or lamenting) voice divulged he did not expect an answer to his inquiry.
- His words almost mocked Daniel's faith. The force of Darius' question in verse 20 is, Who is stronger, God or the lions?

v21-22 - How did Daniel respond to Darius?

- From the darkness of the pit came a sound, the familiar voice of Daniel. The usual royal greeting, "O king, live forever!"
- He immediately attributed his deliverance to God.
- Then he asserted his innocence of all crimes against the king.

What did Daniel's reply reveal about him?

That not only was he alive, but he was calm and composed. Being among starving lions all night had not harmed Daniel physically or emotionally. If anything, spiritually it produced benefit.

Why had the lions not harmed Daniel?

Because he had trusted in God. God has promised never to leave or forsake His people. Therefore circumstances become irrelevant. God provides exactly what is best in every situation.

How do we know that Daniel surviving the lions was a miracle?

His testimony (v22) and the proof that the lions were hungry (v24).

How did Daniel honor God in this situation?

We honor God when we trust Him in threatening situations from which there seems to be no escape.

v23 – How did Darius react to learning of Daniel's condition?

The king's attitude turned from gloom to joy. He ordered that Daniel be taken up from the lions' den.

Why could the king order Daniel to be removed from the lion den at this point?

The king was free to do so because technically he had fulfilled the law. Daniel had been thrown into the lions' den.

Encourage Others to Honor God

Dan 6:24-28

24 And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions-- them, their children, and their wives; and

the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

25 Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.

26 I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; his kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end.

27 He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

v24 - What did King Darius do to those who conspired against Daniel?

The king acted swiftly. He ordered the execution of the men who had conspired against Daniel.

Why did Darius sentence their entire families to die?

This was the custom in the ancient world, the entire family of the guilty person was sentenced to die. The idea was to leave no relatives to harbor revenge.

v25-27 - What had Daniel's example cause the king to do?

Daniel's example caused the king to acknowledge the deity and greatness of God.

How do you think this incident effected Darius?

The event made an incredible impact on Darius. His stance toward God changed. He no longer questioned God's power to act. He knew from experience that God does intervene in people's lives and that He does what no other can do!

Does this mean that Darius became a believer in God?

People can witness great miracles and this does not cause them to believe in God. It helps but the Bible is full of stories of people rationalizing away miracles and not repenting toward God.

How can people witness miracles and not repent toward God?

There are many unexplained things. People make a choice to ignore God's actions so that they may retain control of their lives. If they repented toward God, they would have to yield themselves to God.

What value did the king's witness have?

- It could be used of God to help others to believe.
- While the king's decree for his citizens to fear God does not constitute complete faith in God, it certainly

was a step in that direction. (The biblical narrative does not imply Darius rejected the traditions related to being a Persian king.)

Honor God Through Worship (Ex. 20:3-11)

The Ten Commandments are familiar to most people. These divine laws are recorded in Exodus 20:3-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21. Quotations and references are found in various other passages in both the Old and the New Testaments. The first four Commandments pertain to honoring God...

We honor God by worshipping Him. What does it mean to worship God?

Not substituting anything for Him.

Exod 20:3-11

- 3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.
- 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;
- 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,
- 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.
- 7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.
- 8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
- 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.
- 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

v3 - What is the First Commandment?

The First Commandment prohibits the toleration of other gods. The verb for "have" (Ex. 20:3) has the sense of "to come into being." Hence the idea is that we are not to permit another entity to become our deity.

How does the first commandment dispute the common world view that the monotheism of Israel was an evolution of religion?

The first commandment was a revelation from God. Israel was never to add additional gods to the one true God who had revealed Himself at Sinai.

What is the real issue behind not having any gods before the God of the Bible?

The true issue concerns commitment and loyalty. The commandment insists God's people acknowledge and worship nothing else as God. We are to be loyal to Him alone.

v4 – What is the Second Commandment?

The Second Commandment (Ex. 3:4-6) forbids substituting anything for God, including religious ideas fabricated by human beings for authentic truth revealed by God.

What is included in the Second Commandment's prohibition?

"In the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below" should be taken in the widest possible sense. It includes the whole of creation and everything produced by created beings.

Our society today does not generally use facimiles of gods in their worship so how could this apply to today?

- People use materials God created when they fashion idols or fabricate religious theories. Idols are an attempt by a created being to improve on what the Creator did!
- This is called "idolatry".

What are things that people routinely worship instead of God?

Money, a job, self, etc... Anything created that man looks to for salvation other than the Creator is idolatry.

v5 – Why does it say "the Lord your God" instead of just "God"?

The second person pronoun "your" designates a personal relationship with God. "

v5 – Why did God make this commandment?

A jealous God" stresses that God is not willing to share His worship and love with any other being.

v5-6 – What will God do to those who hate Him?

Punish them and their children to the third and fourth generation.

v5-6 – What will God do to those who love Him?

Show mercy to a thousand generations of descendants.

What is the reason for the difference in God's punishing and showing love here?

God's nature is to forgive. He prefers to give mercy than to execute punishment

How do you reconcile this passage in Exodus which seems to say that God will punish people for the sins of their parents with many passages which indicate personal responsibility such as Ezek 18:20?

Ezek 18:20 - The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

- God has held us accountable for the sin of our ancestors in that we are born in sin but God created us in His image so we can choose to receive this way out that God made for us.
- Also, I believe that there are generational sins, note that children of alcoholics are often alcoholics themselves, children of wife beaters are often wife beaters themselves, etc. We inherit a propensity to fall victim to the same sins of our parents.

v7 – What is the Third Commandment?

The Third Commandment forbids the misuse of God's "name".

What does it mean to take God's name in vain?

Certainly to use God's name in profane swearing.

Given that: In ancient Hebrew thought, a name was more than a label of identification. It represented one's character. God has revealed Himself to humanity through His names. Some names suggest the complete mystery and profound otherness of God. Other names declare specific facts...

What else does taking God's name in vain mean?

The word for "in vain" designated anything worthless or imaginary. Thus using God's name lightly does not take God seriously. It is equivalent to calling His nature worthless. In one sense abuse of God's name calls God's reality into question.

v8-11 – What is the Fourth Commandment?

The Fourth Commandment requires one day of rest each week.

Why did God make this commandment?

It is following the example God established when He created the world.

What are the benefits to resting on the seventh day?

- From a practical viewpoint humans (as well as animals and machines) all require periodical maintenance for optimum performance. Failure to observe God's schedule produces stress disorders and medical diseases.

- From a spiritual perspective we need to take one day each week for worshipping God. By doing so, we express gratitude for everything we have and acknowledge our dependence on Him.

Why did God rest on the seventh day of creation, was He tired?

God was not tired. He did this to set the example for us because we would need it both physically and spiritually.

How do we honor God by obeying the first four commandments?

1. It shows we have embraced the truth that there is only one God who matters.
2. It shows that we trust only in God and only worship Him.
3. When we only use God's name appropriately, it shows we have embraced the truth that God is who He says He is.
4. Devoting one day a week to God not only shows our gratitude for His creating us, it has physical and spiritual benefits for us as well.

Why did God give us the Ten Commandments?

- God gave us these commandments because he loved us, obeying them will save us from consequences to sin.
- If we are honest with ourselves, the ten commandments reveals that we are powerless to save ourselves and this should turn us to God for salvation.