

# GUIDE QUESTIONS

(NUMBERED ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF DEPTH AND READINESS TO SHARE)

1. On a scale from 1-10 (1 being never/not at all and 10 being always/extremely) how would you rate the level of excellence in the work you do or produce every day? Why have you rated yourself this way?
2. How would you describe what excellence looks like in your every day life in doing what you do daily?
3. In order to be excellent Daniel and his three friends had to do certain things, which also included a deep devotion to God, which enabled them to never compromise. What are the things that you see in their lives that enabled them to be excellent? How do those things compare to the things that count for excellence in your every day life?
4. If integrity means to be the same person no matter who you're with and where you are, would you consider yourself a man/woman of integrity? Why/Why Not?
5. Do you surround yourself with people who carry themselves with excellence? Why/Why not?

If you are not yet a follower of Jesus, would you choose today to trust him? Will you enable him to have all authority as the one who calls the shots in your life? Would you like to enter into a saving relationship with God through Jesus?

Ask your Life Group leader to lead you in prayer to receive Christ. You can pray this prayer:

*Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite you to be the master of my life. I want to trust and follow you as my Lord and Saviour. I declare that I am yours and you are mine. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



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## PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we begin the new week and a new year, we ask that you would allow us to serve you in total excellence. We ask that you would remove all distraction, hindrances, break any strongholds, and let us serve you selflessly. Lord, let us seek your guidance in all things, so we can give you our very best in everything. If we get to a place where we are not giving you our best, please correct us and lead us back to the path of excellence. Father, we ask that you would strengthen us in our moments of weakness. Let us be so empty of our own desires so that you can fill us with your Holy Spirit and your perfect will for our lives. We repent of all of our sins and anything that would keep us from serving you wholly. All this we ask in your Son, Jesus' name, Amen.

[\*Ebony & Ivory, A Prayer for Excellence\*](#)

## WARM UP

(OPTIONAL)

If there was one skill you wish you could have, what would it be and why?

## PRAYER

## WORD

<sup>8</sup> But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. <sup>9</sup> And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, <sup>10</sup> and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." <sup>11</sup> Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." <sup>14</sup> So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup> At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. <sup>16</sup> So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

<sup>17</sup> As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. <sup>18</sup> At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. <sup>20</sup> And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

### DANIEL 1:8-20

"Was it good (or at least acceptable) in God's eyes for Daniel and his friends to study astrology? Could they learn to use knowledge of the skies without becoming ensnared by the superstitions in which it was couched? Is it good for Christians to study marketing? Can we learn to use knowledge of consumer behavior without becoming ensnared in the practice of deceptive advertising or exploitative promotions? The Book of Daniel provides no specific guidelines, but it suggests some vital perspectives:

- Christians can embrace education, even if it is conducted outside the bounds of Christian accountability.
- Christians can embrace work in non-Christian and even hostile work environments, with suitable safeguards.
- Christians who work or study in non- or anti-Christian environments should take care to avoid uncritical assimilation into the surrounding culture. Safeguards include:
- Constant prayer and communion with God. Daniel prayed three times daily throughout his career ([Dan. 6:10](#)) and with special commitment during difficult times in his work ([Dan. 9:3-4](#), [Dan. 9:16-21](#)). How many Christians actually pray for the specifics of their work lives? The Book of Daniel constantly shows that God cares about the specific details of daily work.
- Firm adherence to material markers of the faith, even if they are somewhat arbitrary. Daniel avoided eating the king's rich food and wine because it would have compromised his loyalty to God. We could argue whether this particular practice is universally required by God, but we cannot doubt that a living faith requires live markers of the boundaries of faithful behavior. Chick-fil-a draws the line at opening on Sunday. Many Catholic doctors will not prescribe artificial contraception. Other Christians find respectful ways to ask their colleagues for permission to pray for them. None of these can be taken as universal requirements, and indeed all of them could be argued by other Christians. But each of them helps their practitioners avoid a slow creep of assimilation by providing constant, public markers of their faith.

- Active association and accountability with other Christians in the same kind of work. "Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon" ([Dan. 2:49](#)). But few Christians have any forum where they can share concerns, questions, successes, and failures with others in their field. How are lawyers to learn how to apply the faith to law, except by regular, intentional discussions with other Christian lawyers? Likewise for engineers, artisans, farmers, teachers, parents, marketing managers, and every other vocation. Creating and nurturing these kinds of groups is one of the great unmet needs of workplace Christians.
- Formation of good relationships with non-believers in your workplace. God caused the official overseeing of Daniel's diet to show him favor and sympathy ([Dan. 1:9](#)). Daniel cooperated with God by respecting the official and looking after his welfare ([Dan. 1:10-14](#)). Christians sometimes seem to go out of their way to antagonize and judge co-workers, but God's command is, "If it is possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all" ([Romans 12:18](#)). An excellent practice is to pray very specifically for God's blessings for those among whom we work.
- Adoption of a modest lifestyle, so that attachment to money, prestige, or power do not stand in the way of risking your job or career if you are pressured to do something contrary to God's commands, values, or virtues. Despite reaching the pinnacle of Babylonian education, position, and wealth, Daniel and his friends were constantly ready to lose everything in order to speak and act on God's word ([Dan. 2:24](#), [3:12](#), [4:20](#), [5:17](#), [6:10](#), [6:21](#)).

Daniel managed to walk the tightrope of partial cultural assimilation without religious and moral compromise. The stakes were high. Daniel's career and even his life were on the line, as was the life of the chief Babylonian official, Ashpenaz ([Dan 1:10](#)). Yet by God's grace, Daniel remained composed and maintained his integrity. Even Daniel's enemies would later admit that "they could find no grounds for complaint or any corruption, because he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was found in him" ([Dan. 6:4](#)).

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## NOTES