

Mastering Perspective

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In my early teens, I had a horse with a heart of gold - she would run hard all day long if I wanted her to. She was a great horse with one little problem - she suffered from Haybalaphobia. She lived in mortal fear of hay bales. I cannot count the number of times that, as I rode past a hay bale, she would glance at it out of the corner of her eye and bolt sideways, leaving me to hang in midair for a millisecond before I crashed to the ground.

Horses' eyes are literally on opposite sides of their heads. In other words, whereas your two eyes merge what they see into one panoramic view, horses have two fields of view and apparently process those two fields separately.

The Random House dictionary defines perspective as a technique of depicting volumes and spatial relationships on a flat surface. In other words, seeing how objects relate to one another. It could be said that horses have a horrible lack of perspective!

Daniel was a master of perspective. From his early teens, he lived in two realities - one immediate, the other, transcendent. This ability to look at two seemingly opposite things and navigate between them made Daniel a leader whose example we can all follow. A captive body with a free spirit.

From the day he was hauled from his home, shoved into line on the slave train of camels and foot soldiers and marched to Babylon right up until the end of his life, Daniel was physically a captive of Babylon. It's not clear in scripture, but we can assume because of his age at specific events that he died a captive of his enemy. From his early teens he lived under a life sentence - sometimes shackled, sometimes free to wander the courts, but always captive...at least on the outside.

On the inside, his mind raced with the freedom of a man who knows his God. Nebuchadnezzar might have controlled Daniel's physical location, but he couldn't chain Daniel's spirit. Daniel never resigned to thinking of himself as a slave...an ambassador of the Lord on long term assignment, perhaps, but never a subject of an earthly king. When offered the best food the kingdom had to offer, Daniel thought differently about what he should be eating and started a fast. When offered the choice of praying with the lions or being left alone, Daniel chose a life of prayer. He might be forced to submit physically, but he never bowed his heart to other gods.

It's easy to think of ourselves as captives of our culture. One cannot so much as navigate a retail store without seeing images that are better left unseen. Many of you attending universities sit under ungodly teachers every day. The vast majority

of messages we receive from the media, from secular leaders and from our unsaved friends resonate with the voice of the enemy saying you are mine....I am everywhere you go...you might as well surrender.

A leader who aspires to develop a Daniel spirit keeps this in perspective: You may live in a body that is physically restricted to a world permeated by the spirit of this age, but your mind - and your spirit - are yours to do with what you will. You may be forced to be exposed to ungodly influences but you're not forced to acquiesce. Your body is presently captive in this world - and very well may be until it outlives it's usefulness - but you have a spirit that will live forever. In light of that perspective, which of those two - your flesh or your spirit - do you want to feed the most? A royal appointment with a humble heart.

In many ways, Daniel was a troublemaker. He wouldn't eat what was put in front of him. His friends refused to bow when told. Even as an old man - decades after being removed from his culture and family - he wouldn't stop praying. In another respect, he was a model prisoner. He had invaluable insight and could interpret the king's dreams when the sorcerers were ready to give up. He could read the handwriting on the wall. He seemed to tap into wisdom at a level higher than any of the king's men.

You can be a Daniel. The similarities of a Christian young adult in this age and the life of Daniel, five centuries before the birth of Christ, are uncanny. The rising tide of ungodly culture, the pressure to bow before man made idols, the opportunity to make something of yourself in a system that thinks nothing of your God...it's all there, just as it was for Daniel.

Just as all the pressures are in place, so is the power of God. Just as you face the onslaught of the enemy like Daniel did, you can receive the inner strength to stand in the face of pressure and actually be a voice for good rather than just a victim. Learn to see things with the perspective of eternity - to live with a free spirit even if your body is shackled, to live in humility even when facing promotion - and the life of Daniel can be yours, too.