

So What's an Excellent Spirit?

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. - Daniel 6:3

Let's face it. He was in a horrible and terribly bad spot.

The Bible recounts that Daniel was captive to the invading, pagan King Nebuchadnezzar and carried away to Babylon. Essentially, he was a slave. Kept as a vassal advisor to the royal court of Babylon and later to the Medes, Daniel was subjected to the cruelty of political intrigue and ridicule.

Amazingly, in spite of the extreme conditions of his captivity, somehow, some way, against all odds, Daniel was able to personally maintain an excellent spirit. In the Strongs, this spirit of excellence is defined as a pre-eminent, surpassing, extreme, and extraordinary spirit. It's not the norm for any man to have a quality such as Daniel's.

Daniel 5:11 tells us that "light and understanding and wisdom... was found" in Daniel. This could reasonably be discerned to mean that his wisdom was not self-proclaimed, but that it was "discovered" by his captors as a result of God's favor and providence. Time proved that he most certainly was the right man, with the right spirit, for his hour.

Two other noted considerations about Daniel's circumstance that can be deemed remarkable: The first is that Daniel's excellence is not just implied, but it's stated outright as a distinct observation in at least three separate instances (Daniel 5:12, 5:14 and 6:3). The second observation is that Daniel apparently never needed to defend himself against his antagonists. In fact, God's vengeance was even swift at times, giving us an immediate glimpse of divine justice in what otherwise is an unjust world (Daniel 6:24).

As all children of God will endure adversity, inequity, or persecution, the ability to maintain an excellent spirit is a singular virtue that can't be denied. While it might be suspect to some and still confusing to others, it will always be admired by most. Who among us wouldn't want an excellent spirit?

The descriptions that follow are the results of my attempt to identify Daniel's extraordinary personality traits by a simple examination of scripture. Not having the opportunity to meet with him personally, this list obviously cannot be exhaustive. Nevertheless, in the spirit of Matthew 5:48 and 1 Corinthians 12:31, here are the most evident traits that these scriptures reveal about this great man's character.

Scripture reveals that Brother Daniel was:

1. **Determined** - Daniel 1:8

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

2. **Respectful**

3. **Humble** - Daniel 1:11-12

*Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, **Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.***

4. **Reasonable** - Daniel 1:13

*Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: **and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.***

5. **Diplomatic**

6. **Wise** - Daniel 2:14-16

*Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, **Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.***

7. **Responsive**

8. **Enjoining**

9. **Compelling** - Daniel 2:17-18

*Then Daniel went to his house, **and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.***

10. **Reverent**

11. **Worshipful**

12. **Thankful** - Daniel 2:20-23

*Daniel answered and said, **Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever:** for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. **I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom** and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.*

13. **Confident!** - Daniel 2:24

*Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: **he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation.***

14. **Deferential** - Daniel 2:25-30

*Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; **But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets,** and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. **But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living,** but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.*

15. **Obeisant** - Daniel 2:37

Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

16. **Unassuming** - Daniel 2:48-49

Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

17. **Reliable** - Daniel 4:8-9

But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying, O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

18. **Judicious** - Daniel 4:19

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

19. **Selfless** - Daniel 5:17

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

20. **Bold!**

21. **Courageous!** - Daniel 5:22-28

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

22. **Faithful**

23. **Blameless** - Daniel 6:4

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. -Daniel 6:4

24. **Resolved**

25. **Consistent** - Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

26. **Merciful**

27. **Forgiving**

28. **Magnanimous**- Daniel 6:21-22

Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

Besides the book of Daniel, Proverbs 17:27 tells us that the possession of understanding is another trait of spiritual excellence:

He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

It would seem that a foreign, conquering king would be wary of the advice of a captive advisor, but his excellence of spirit and apparent lack of guile made Daniel an indispensable source of wisdom to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel's wisdom was apparently unknown to the foolish successor, Belshazzar. Thankfully Belshazzar had a queen who knew of the great prophet according to Daniel 5:12.

Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

As Belshazzar was subsequently and swiftly overthrown by the invading Medes, it's likely that word of Daniel's renowned "excellence" preceded him since he was subsequently retained as a "president" or overseer in the court of the victorious King Darius according to Daniel 6:1-3.

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

It's a striking realization to understand that the majority of Daniel's life was spent in the highest offices of two world powers spanning approximately 70 years. Proving the veracity of Proverbs 18:16, his gift certainly made room for him, and brought him before great men. Daniel served as a court advisor to four separate Kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus, (Daniel 1:20; 5:29; 6:1-3; 6:28). Also of note are the five scriptural citations where his captors credited Daniel with a spirit that was not of this world. They used the term, "the spirit of the holy gods," (Daniel 4:8; 4:9; 4:18, 5:11 and 5:18) which is terminology revealing pagan understanding. We know that there was a single source that should be credited for Daniel's excellent spirit. At every turn Daniel gave credit to his God, noting an upper case "G" every time Daniel is quoted giving the glory to, "...my God." While over the years the Judeo-Christian world has appropriately given honor to brother Daniel, his remarkable life brought glory to our great, magnificent, and singular God, who alone is without equal!



So what exactly is an excellent spirit? At present, it's only the evidence that we can point to. Daniel possessed character traits that were the evidence of an excellent spirit. The character traits numbered above are simply a few obvious markers or identifiers, if you will, of a quality that was likely pursued with relentless purpose. It's never accidental. In Daniel's case there is probably much more that could be added to the list. But for anyone to earn such distinction it would seem that an individual would not just possess these traits, but also the wisdom, skill and readiness to wield the appropriate response at the appropriate moment. There was such an apparent desire for these virtues that Daniel was given to prayer at least three times a day. The prayer time spent with Divinity deeply affected his humanity. This ability to gain and maintain such a spirit has evidently been a rare and even elusive quality throughout the history of mankind, but Daniel did exactly that. He gained and maintained an excellent spirit that encompassed approximately 70 years of service.

That Daniel was able to accomplish this without the seeing the prophetic fulfillment of Joel 2:28 is beyond amazing and leaves the latter-day Christian with even less excuse. It's simply too easy to fall prey to the traps of bitterness and cynicism, *especially* without the evidential gift of the Holy Ghost. It takes a bigger man, a greater man, such as the likes of Daniel, to pursue the high road of spiritual excellence. His was a desire to be better, not bitter.

In light of our current times, please, God grant us all the desire and the ability to strive for that degree of excellence, especially in light of the days that lie ahead of us.



Submitted in memory of our remarkable friend
Timothy L. Copeland,
January 02, 1954 - May 13, 2023.
A preferred man, because an excellent spirit was in him.

L. Montano
May 21, 2023