



## Chapter 2: Dealing with Difficult People

### Collect:

God our Father  
Who gave wisdom and insight to your servant Daniel  
To understand your greatness and your design for the world  
Grant us, the help of your Holy Spirit  
That we may also come to know your purposes  
Revealed in Jesus  
And continue your faithful servants to the end of our lives.

**Amen**

### Introduction to reading

This month we're looking at the book of Daniel. Daniel was a young man who lived in BC. If he'd had his way, he'd had lived a quiet devout Jewish life in Jerusalem with his family. But as a young man, the Babylonian army took Jerusalem and carried him off into exile. Everything seemed lost. All hope

was gone. Thousands of their neighbours were lying dead in the streets. He was hungry, weak – but he had to walk hundreds of miles in chains to a foreign land. The culture of Babylon was alien, its gods, its food, its language. The job eventually assigned to him was one he didn't want – handling Babylon's administration. This was Daniel's life – not what he would have chosen. When we have to live with a life we wouldn't choose, when we feel that the values we want to live by as Christians are not respected by the wider society, the story of Daniel and his friends is a great inspiration. This week a crisis hits at Daniel's work.

### Sermon:

From time to time I get brochures offering me all kinds of professional training at exorbitant prices. The one that always fascinates me is the one entitled "Dealing with difficult people". Most of these courses focus on techniques of communication and seek to answer the question, "How can I get what I want out of this situation or person?" Few actually go any deeper than techniques.

### 1. The King asked the magicians what his dreams meant

This was a crisis situation because if they didn't answer they were all to be executed. Now there's a difficult person to deal with if you like. Daniel was good at communication. He responded to the fury of Nebuchadnezzar with great tact. But he went beyond techniques to wisdom. He did not just ask what he wanted, he sought to understand the King too. He started by finding out as much as he could and asking for time – a very wise thing to do if you've been threatened with being cut into little pieces.

## **2. Daniel and his friends prayed for God's help.**

When we are in a crisis situation, we often find it difficult to look beyond ourselves. "Why me? This isn't fair. This shouldn't be happening. How dare they do this to me."

When I was teaching, I had two pupils whose very names sent shivers down my spine. Their behaviour in my classes was totally unreasonable. I tried detentions, I tried reasoning, with them. It didn't work. That was just looking at it from my perspective – I needed the bigger picture of their lives, the school, their culture.

There is nothing like the prayer of a small community to help you find wisdom in a difficult situation. It is in prayer that we realise who we really are and what is really important as we stand before our Creator. It is in prayer that we can start to see our lives in perspective – and it releases the imagination and creativity that we need in times of crisis. My breakthrough came in a retreat house when I realised two things:

- 1) God was bigger than this situation – and I could trust him. I didn't need to lose sleep over it.
- 2) I needed to swallow my pride and seek the help of particular other teachers

Now that worked.

## **3. Daniel asked his friends to pray too.**

Daniel's breakthrough was similar in that God gave him a practical answer – he revealed the meaning of the dream. But also he gave Daniel a bigger vision of God – which enabled him to see the whole situation in perspective. Even before

Daniel told the King the meaning of his dream

- The King Praised God
- The King gave Daniel and his friends important jobs.

Daniel's prayer is full of a new perspective – and it is that perspective that gave him courage to speak out and tell the King not only his dream but who it came from.

*God is wise and powerful!  
Praise him for ever and ever.  
He controls the times and seasons;  
He makes and unmakes kings;  
It is he who gives wisdom and understanding.  
He reveals things that are deep and secret  
He knows what is hidden in darkness,  
And he himself is surrounded by light.*

Archdeacon Sally Gaze

For more resources on Daniel go to

[www.light-wave.org/onlineworshipresources](http://www.light-wave.org/onlineworshipresources)

