The stories in the book of Daniel include a battle between the true God and the false gods of Babylon; in the end the rulers of Babylon and Medo-Persia acknowledge that the Hebrew’s God is superior to their heathen deities (Lucas 2002:56, 57; Dillard and Longman 1995:348, 239). The stories in the first six chapters of Daniel indicate God’s purpose to bring salvation to these pagan nations, but it is through the testimony of Daniel and his friends that the believers share their faith so that those who listen may understand God and enjoy his blessings. This short article describes several of the principles of witnessing that are found in the book of Daniel, gives examples of how Daniel and his friends witnessed about their God, and suggests several factors that should be present in those who represent God. I will begin with a look at the eschatological context of the first six chapters in order to appreciate the importance of Daniel’s witness.

Prophetic and Missiological Connections between Daniel and Last-Day Events

The first six chapters of the book of Daniel record the story of four young men exiled in Babylon and include elements that can be related to the conditions some present-day Christians face in giving their testimony.

The four young men had a religious background based on a deep faith in Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews. They found themselves in a heathen environment that was steeped in idolatry, but they also had to learn to live with their captors who put great pressure on them to adopt the Chaldean faith and customs. The young men were expected “to learn the
Table 1. Parallelism between Daniel 1-6 and Final Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DANIEL AND FRIENDS</strong></th>
<th><strong>FINAL EVENTS</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taken to Babylon (1:1, 2)</td>
<td>The children of God will live in a confusing world during the final days (Rev 14:6, 7; 18:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithfulness shown by not eating the king’s meat (1:8)</td>
<td>God has a unique message of holistic health (physical, mental, and spiritual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The four brilliant young men stand out among their peers (1:17, 20)</td>
<td>Every Christian must stand out by their capacity and intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel has divine “understanding in all visions and dreams” (1:17). Through a divine revelation he was able to communicate and interpret the king’s forgotten dream</td>
<td>God’s people must know, study, and share the prophecies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The three young men are challenged to worship an image made by the king. They did not bow down before the statue</td>
<td>The children of God will be challenged during the last days to worship the “image of the beast,” set up by the second beast in Rev 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel interprets the dream about a big tree being cut down and exhorts the king to change his proud behavior (4:27). In the next story, Daniel again rebukes a king (5:17-28)</td>
<td>God’s movement during the last days has a message of exhortation that needs to be proclaimed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 reports an orgy in which the sacred vessels of the temple in Jerusalem are used to drink wine and to feast</td>
<td>Revelation presents a great spiritual harlot with a “golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication” (17:4) in her hand. Those that dwell on earth are made drunk by this wicked woman (17:2; 18:3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel is imprisoned by the only possible cause in his life: his religious convictions (6:4)</td>
<td>The raison d’être for the last controversy is worship (Rev 13:15-18; 14:7). The remnant people during the final days are faithful and keep the divine commandments (12:17; 14:12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Babylonian way of life, adopt a Babylonian profession, and confess Babylonian allegiance” (Fewell 1991:17, 18).

It seems that the books of Daniel and Revelation not only have a prophetic connection with each other, but they also have missiological implications about who God is and how believers should interact with non-believers, especially those in power. Babylon, during the time of Daniel and his friends, was the most advanced kingdom of its day, so implications can be drawn on how to relate to the powerful kingdoms of today.

The environmental and cultural pressures the young men underwent are parallel to the secularization pressures facing the global church today. Present-day believers are immersed in a religious and philosophical Babylon. Daniel and his friends present a valuable witnessing model for those living during the time of the end for the book of Daniel was given for the time of the end (Dan 12:4) to those people who would live among spiritual Babylon (Rev 17). Notice the parallelisms found in the first six chapters of Daniel as compared with the final events listed in Revelation.

The parallelism in table 1 shows how today’s believers are faced with circumstances that test their faith. Daniel and his friends show one way people can be a light in darkness. The first chapter of Daniel presents the struggles and challenges of being exiled from known and important traditions of a nation. There is no direct confrontation by their captors directed against their faith; there are just subtle invitations to adjust to the new customs in Babylon. In chapters 2, 4, and 5 the struggle is not provoked by the men’s faith, but by the king’s need to know the answer to dreams and writing on a wall. The situation is totally different in chapter 2 with its story of the golden image and the fiery furnace. There is a direct provocation against faith in the True God, a conflict where only two options are possible: obey or die. This is a clear example of the final crisis that awaits Christians during the last days. The story of the old prophet in the lions’ den points out the reality that every child of God
must face. “And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). By his faithfulness, even in the face of death, Daniel witnesses and reveals God’s character when confronting unbelievers. In chapter 1, the problem Daniel and his friends faced is more or less a private matter. In chapter 3, the challenge is a public one. But in chapter 6 the struggle is between two extremes: Daniel could have found a more secret and private place to pray where no one could have seen him, or he could continue to live his faith as a public display of his worship of the true God. As pointed out by Goldingay: “When prayer is fashionable, it is time to pray in secret (Matt 6:5, 6), but when prayer is under pressure, to pray in secret is to give the appearance of fearing the king more than God” (Goldingay 1989:131). When faith is threatened, that becomes the best time for witnessing.

With this as a background and in view of the parallelism between the first six chapters of Daniel and last-day events, I am now ready to suggest some principles for witnessing as found in this section of the Bible.

**Literary Genre and the Purpose of Structure in the Narratives of Daniel**

Ernest Lucas, when he analyzes the literary genre in the Daniel narratives of chapters 1-6, classifies them as “court narratives” and notes the following characteristics (Lucas 2002:26):

1. Court stories of answers as found in Dan 2, 4, and 5. The stories of Joseph and Esther could be included as part of the same type of genre. These stories would include the following:
   a. The king is faced with a problem that he cannot resolve.
   b. The king’s wise men fail to solve the problem.
   c. The hero is called and succeeds.
   d. The hero is placed in or restored to a high position.

2. Court stories of conflict as found in Dan 3 and 6. Basic elements are:
   a. The heroes are going through a prosperous stage.
   b. The heroes are put in danger, usually due to a plot.
   c. The heroes are condemned to death or prison.
   d. The heroes are liberated through unforeseen circumstances.
   e. The heroes are restored to their honorable positions or they are promoted.

3. Dan 1 can be seen as a variant of a court story of answers. There is a need to remember that this narrative serves as an introduction for the whole book as well as an introduction to the rest of the narratives.

The genre described above and the general characteristics found in it suggest that there is a clear purpose for each of the six stories in Daniel. Each story ends with the believer being exalted because of his
faithfulness and because of the good example lived out before the monarch and his court. Lucas recognizes that God’s presence in these narratives is often hidden, but is evident behind the text. For example, in chapter 3, King Nebuchadnezzar is the main character in the story; the Chaldeans play the role of “agents” and the young Jews are the “type characters” who symbolize faith in the God of Israel. Lucas concludes his study by declaring that “this analysis brings out the fact that the real ‘contest’ in the story is not between the Jews and the king, or between the Jews and the Chaldeans. It is between Nebuchadnezzar and the God of Israel, who does not appear in the story as a character” (Lucas 2002:87). Therefore, there is a clear purpose in each story: to exalt God’s name among heathen people. The following table highlights the testimonies given by Daniel and his friends in each of the six stories (all scriptural references are from the KJV).

The witnessing characteristics found in table 2 are also found in other places of Scripture, for God uses human beings as his agents to spread knowledge of him through the faithful examples of his followers. In each one of the stories the young men demonstrated some virtue that made them stand out from the crowd and that provided a starting point to resolve the drama (chaps. 2, 4, and 5) or that provoked a crisis (chaps. 1, 3, and 6). God worked through his faithful witnesses in miraculous ways to impress the king and his court. In some cases the king responded by worshiping or recognizing the greatness of God (chap. 2) or by sending out an imperial decree praising the Hebrew’s God (chaps. 3 and 6).

Daniel and his friends employed different methods of witnessing. In chapter 1 the four men gave a silent testimony by how they lived their lives, but in chapter 3, Sadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego talked directly to the king about their faith. After being thrown into the furnace as martyrs (in Greek this word means witness) God saved their lives. Then in the next chapter the story indicates a deep friendship between Nebuchadnezzar and
**Table 2. Comparison of Daniel and His Friends’ Testimonies in Dan 1-6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WITNESS</th>
<th>CHAP. 1</th>
<th>CHAP. 2</th>
<th>CHAP. 3</th>
<th>CHAP. 4</th>
<th>CHAP. 5</th>
<th>CHAP. 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah</td>
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<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TYPES OF TESTIMONY**

**Commitment and/or testimony of the messenger**

- They promise themselves not to become impure by eating the king’s meat, v. 8
- They do not worship the golden image made by the king, vv. 16-18
- Daniel advises the king to get rid of his pride, or he would be punished, vv. 19-27 which occurs in vv. 28-33
- Daniel rebukes the king and interprets the writing on the wall, vv. 17-28
- Daniel has an excellent disposition (v. 3) and “they could find none occasion nor fault” against Daniel

**GOD BLESSES THE TESTIMONY**

**Miracle**

- God gives knowledge and wisdom. They are found ten times better than the rest, vv. 17, 20
- God keeps them safe from the fiery furnace and the Son of God walks among them, vv. 23-28
- God fulfills the prophecy of his servant
- Daniel is delivered from the lion’s den by the angel of God, vv. 18-23

**RESPONSE TO TESTIMONY**

- The king does not find anyone better than Daniel and his friends, v. 19
- He calls the young men “servants of the Most High God,” v. 26. Issues a decree exalting God’s power, vv. 28, 29
- He blessed, praised, and honored the Most High, v. 34.
- There is no specific record of the king’s reaction
- A decree is issued exalting Daniel’s God as a God that delivers and has dominion unto the end, vv. 25-27

**RESULTS OF TESTIMONY**

- They are placed among the king’s counselors and wise men, vv. 19, 20
- 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, v. 48
- “Then the king commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom,” v. 29
- “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian,” v. 28
Daniel that allows the prophet to bluntly tell the truth to the king because of the confidence and trust that existed between them. This is an excellent example of friendship evangelism.

These six chapters in Daniel show us how a life dedicated to God can make the difference and how God uses the faithful witness of his people to totally change the perspective of previously pagan people.

Finally, with the exception of the events in chapter 4, the kings in the stories recognize the prophet and his friends, exalt them, and promote them to honorable positions in the government.

**Testimonies and Reactions in Daniel**

It is interesting to note that in the book of Daniel only in 1:2 and chapter 9 is God called Adonai, ‘The Lord’. In the other places in Daniel the word generally used for “god” is elohim. In Scripture the usage of ‘The Lord’ emphasizes the fact that it is the God of Israel who is acting or who is being requested to act. Even so, the personal name of the God of Israel, Yahweh is not used, perhaps to show that God is not a God that belongs to a single nation (Lucas 2002:56).

This suggests that Daniel and his friends were intentional in sharing their faith by using words that would not give the impression that the God of the Hebrews could not also be the God of Babylon or Medo-Persia.

The purpose of the testimonies in Daniel have the objective to make the king, and through him his servants, recognize the greatness, power, and wonder of the Hebrew’s God. In the decrees given by the kings as a result of the witness of the young men it becomes clear that Nebuchadnezzar and Darius did come to appreciate and exalt the name of God.

Chapter 1 emphasized the great truth that many times the quiet testimony given through faithfully living one’s faith even in small matters becomes publicly recognized. Witness includes example and not just active proclamation. The stories in chapter 2 and especially in chapter 3 point out that Nebuchadnezzar’s response to the events is not a conversion to monotheism, but partial movement in that direction. Ernest Lucas reminds us that “we live in a society obsessed with ‘measurable outcomes’ and success. Again, we can let this dominate us in the church in a rather crude way. However, we see in this story that the true reward of faithful witness to God is not to be found in its results (the king is only ‘half-converted’ in the end) but in the experience of knowing the presence of God in the midst of the heat of the struggle” (Lucas 2002:96, 97).

Jacques Doukhan also suggests that “the behavior of the Jews reminds us that the silent witness often speaks louder than even the most moving testimonies. Authentic experience has no
use for words. Where salvation and truth are concerned, when we deal with what is essential too many words can be suspect” (Doukhan 2000:54, 55).

Nebuchadnezzar’s story in the book of Daniel illustrates how God seeks to reach out in love to the powerful and the heathen in our world. The first four chapters in Daniel reveal a process of conversion that is typical of the development of faith in a catechumen. In the first story, the four young men just stand out and impress the king. They interact with the king, but there is no mentioned of any particular reaction on the king’s side. In the second story there is more direct contact between the heathen king and the messenger (Daniel) of God due to the circumstances. Daniel shares his faith in a God who can reveal secrets (a divine message sent through a dream) by giving an explanation of a dream. The next story about the young men being delivered from the fiery furnace plays an important role in giving a testimony to the king, but again the event does not lead to conversion to monotheism. After living as an animal for seven years and facing a humiliating experience, chapter 4 finally shows Nebuchadnezzar’s recognition and acceptance of divine sovereignty.

In another way the stories in chapters 4 and 5 remind us that many times those who should give a witness hold back in order not to harm someone’s feelings or so as not to go against someone’s convictions. In reality faithful witnesses are called to exhort anyone who may listen to them or anyone who may be influenced by them. Daniel witnessed to the powerful King Nebuchadnezzar, lord of the great Caldean Empire by telling him to review his behavior. Later, in the same manner he reminded Belshazaar that his behavior was irreverent and inconsistent with what he knew about Nebuchadnezzar’s journey to acknowledge God.

Chapter 6 concludes with the decree of Darius the Mede. The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary says: “In similar manner, in consequence of the miraculous preservation of Daniel in the den of lions, Darius gave out an edict commanding all the nations of his realm to fear and reverence Daniel’s God. We need not necessarily conclude

The first four chapters in Daniel reveal a process of conversion that is typical of the development of faith in a catechumen.
from this that the king personally departed from the polytheism of the Medes. Darius acknowledged the God of Daniel as the living God, whose kingdom and dominion are everlasting, but it is not stated that he acknowledged Him as the only true God” (1955:4:814).

**Conclusion**

The book of Daniel has many examples of various kinds of witness. The four young men shared their faith in ways that the heathen were faced with the challenge to choose between their national conception of deities and the God worshiped by the four exiles. God used the captivity to bring a powerful testimony to the center of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian nations. The failure of God’s people that resulted in the exile of Daniel and his friends was not an obstacle for the Lord to accomplish his purpose of revealing his character to the nations.

God calls and uses human beings like Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah. God’s agents must have a spirit of service and a desire to please God through their lives so that they can be faithful witnesses. God enables his witnesses to do the work that he gives them to do. God still performs wonders and miracles like those performed through Daniel and his friends to vindicate his witnesses before the world, but more importantly to show the divine character before all of humanity.

“Great light shone forth from Daniel and his companions. Glorious things were spoken of Zion, the city of the Lord. Thus the Lord designs that spiritual light shall shine from His faithful watchmen in these last days. If the saints in the Old Testament bore such a decided testimony of loyalty, how should God’s people today, having the accumulated light of centuries, shine forth, when the prophecies of the Old Testament shed their veiled glory into the future” (White 1955:1169).

**Works Cited**


