



## **Thriving in Babylon: Why Hope, Humility, and Wisdom Matter in a Godless Culture**

*Larry Osborne*

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# Thriving in Babylon: Why Hope, Humility, and Wisdom Matter in a Godless Culture

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## Thriving in Babylon: Why Hope, Humility, and Wisdom Matter in a Godless Culture Larry Osborne

Meet a man forced to live in a fast changing and godless society. He faced fears about the future, concern for his safety, and the discouragement of world that seemed to be falling apart at warp speed. Sound familiar? His name was Daniel, and with the power of hope, humility, and wisdom, he not only thrived, he changed an empire while he was at it. Though he lived thousands of years ago, he has a much to teach us today.

### Even in Babylon, God Is in Control

In *Thriving in Babylon*, Larry Osborne explores the “adult” story of Daniel to help us not only survive – but actually thrive in an increasingly godless culture. Here Pastor Osborne looks at:

- Why panic and despair are never from God
- What true optimism looks like
- How humility disarms even our greatest of enemies
- Why respect causes even those who will have nothing to do with God to listen
- How wisdom can snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat

For those who know Jesus and understand the full implications of the cross, the resurrection, and the promises of Jesus, everything changes – not only in us, but also in our world.

**Dr. Larry Osborne** has served as a senior pastor and teaching pastor at North Coast Church—one of the ten most influential churches in the country—since 1980. Dr. Osborne is the author of numerous books, including *Accidental Pharisees*. He and his wife live in Oceanside, California. They have three grown children.

## Thriving in Babylon: Why Hope, Humility, and Wisdom Matter in a Godless Culture Details

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## **From Reader Review Thriving in Babylon: Why Hope, Humility, and Wisdom Matter in a Godless Culture for online ebook**

### **Brian Mount says**

Great book, really enjoyed the comparisons Larry draws between Daniel in a Babylonian context and modern day believers. Well done, inspiring for me. Favorite quotes: "Jesus never told us to create a Christian nation, impose our standards on non believers, or preserve a particular culture." "Rightly understood, tolerance is a trait we should all excel in. If tolerance means granting people the right to be wrong, we of all people ought to be known for our tolerance. Unfortunately, that's not what tolerance means today. The word has been redefined. It no longer means granting others the right to be wrong. It now means that nobody is wrong. Those who dare to claim that some behaviors are actually morally wrong are written off as intolerant bigots. And ironically, they become the one group nobody is tolerant of."

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### **Paula says**

I read this book with a group of women from my church, and we all agreed it was an excellent book that both encourages and challenges a person to grow in their spiritual walk. Using Daniel as a role model, Larry Osborne helps you to understand the Christian concepts such as hope, faith, and humility in an easy to understand way, and then teaches you how to can develop these character traits and apply them in your own life, while living in a society that often disrespects Christian values. Whether you are a new Christian, a long time Christian, or an interested observer of culture, this is a must read.

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### **Steve Penner says**

This is a fairly quick read on the life (more than the book of Daniel). As we move into a more Babylon-like cultural moment, it is good to review Daniel's life in Babylon. Osborne does so under the rubric of hope, humility and wisdom, things we need more of. Surely many Christians who still believe either that we still live in the 1950's or that we can recreate them, will find much to be appalled at in this treatment. But the truth is the truth. We don't live in Christian America, but a multi-cultural, pluralistic stew that confounds us at every turn. We don't understand the overt hostility of the culture. Many cry out, "We want our country back!" But unless God does something incredibly miraculous that ain't happening. So maybe we better learn how to live in Babylon. The eternal Jerusalem will show up eventually. Until then we need a lot more hope, humility and wisdom.

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### **Charity Andrews says**

When you think of Daniel, do you think of an old Sunday School story? A flannel board presentation? In his latest book, Larry Osborne digs a little deeper and shows how having a Daniel Attitude is a lot more important than a Daniel Diet (he didn't say that! I did. haha).

With comparisons to life in Daniel's time to life now, this book is full of truths. We would all like to think we

would be strong in the face of trial, but when it's crunch time, we often find ourselves trying to blend in with the crowd. How could he stand up to so much testing? God was his peace and hope.

A great mix of theology, history and what it looks like to love God with all your heart!

Thanks, Litfuse, for this great read! As always, this is my honest opinion. Here's to many more!!

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### **Sandra Devault says**

Osborne's book, *Thriving in Babylon*, is a book that is easy to follow and a fairly quick read. The language and illustrations used allow the reader to follow the author's train of thought without much distraction from the message he delivers. As a reader I did find it helpful that the author chose to provide scripture references where he thought it would be helpful.

There were a few distractions I encountered as I read through the book. I will make every effort to be brief as I share just a few concerns.

- The book of Daniel is one book of the major prophets detailing what was to come and detailing the sovereignty of God in the affairs of man not to offer “us a model for not only surviving but actually thriving in the midst of a godless culture.”
- Though the author acknowledges the sovereignty of God, he then uses the phrase “then God showed up” in several places, as if God’s plan was not working out so well and He had to show up to fix things – the book of Daniel clearly shows that God ordained all that would take place according to His will.
- The book is supposed to be about how to thrive in Babylon but the author draws principles from biblical characters not related to the Babylonian captivity making it seem as though he had these principles in mind before deciding to use Daniel as the basis for his book.
- Living in light of the gospel is how the believer survives and thrives today. But, the gospel is mentioned and discussed only sparingly.

Readers should know that there are some important challenges to our modern thinking that are important for us to read contained in Osborne's book. One challenge as well as reminder is the timeless truth that faithfulness does not guarantee an easy life. Many faithful Christians will endure suffering and hardships in their life as they encounter difficulties common to believers around the world. I recommend reading the book of Daniel at least twice before reading this book so that you have a firm foundation to build upon.

I give this book 3 out of 5 stars.

Many thanks to the Litfuse Chicks for a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. No monetary compensation was received and all views expressed are my own.

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### **Margaret says**

\* I received this book from the publisher via NetGalley to review

An amazing book that I sailed right through chomping on every bit of morsel. I applaud the author and the subject of the book. There are so many wonderful points that resounded deeply within me and reading this book I was constantly thinking about it every chance I got. The author explores living in a modern world in which not all are Christians and yet we Christians have an attitude and self-righteousness that often doesn't reach or respect these people.

Daniel of the Bible is used and expounded upon as a jump off point to illustrate and explore how did he, Daniel, live in such a perverse and ungodly world. He then proceeds to explore faith, bad things that happen to the believer to how we interact and often miss the mark in truly respecting the people around us. Modern day Christianity often seeks to prod, guilt or shout their beliefs and attitudes to the general populace who might not believe and do what we think they should be believing or doing. My least favorite subject, politics was mentioned and explored with such an unique insight and approach in which he discusses how Christian often get into thinking that we are to change the world and the political climate. He mentions that the Apostle Paul encouraged the church to respect and honor the emperor Nero who happened to be in power at the time. Nero was one of the most perverse and insane emperors ever in the history of the Roman Empire.

I constantly highlighted and bookmarked throughout the book that I might as well highlighted it all because the book is one of the best on the subject. This quote is one of my favorites in the book:

*"Frankly, it's here that many of us can miss the boat. The more Babylon-like our culture becomes, the more our resentment builds, resulting in bitterness, slander, rumormongering, and harsh critiques that no one would characterize as a kind and gentle rebuke. Many excuse their words by pointing to Jesus's harsh rebukes of the Pharisees and other religious leaders of His day. But they miss the point. Jesus didn't rail on the sinners of His day. He pursued them. It was the religious hypocrites who were attempting to keep the sinners at bay that he blasted.*

I have thought of purchasing a several copies of this book to hand out to my family. I am blessed by having quite a few Believers in my family but the belief that we as Christians have to take a political and often harsh attitude towards non-believers often alarms me. I also believe that every Christian and church would benefit from reading this wonderful and highly eye-opening book.

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### **Jerry Hillyer says**

I love when a book just sort of 'shows up' and it has immediate relevance to my life or ministry. Such was the case with *Thriving in Babylon*. I was searching through the David C Cook offerings on NetGalley and this book just appeared...I'm fairly certain I heard the sound of 'ahhh' sung by angels as a halo of gold surround the book. Needless to say I was happy to see the book, a book, any book focused on the Book of Daniel.

I have been engaged in serious study of the book of Daniel since sometime in 2014 as I prepared myself to teach an undergraduate level course on the book at a small Bible College located near my home in the Fall of 2015. I mean it must be providence because this is the fourth book on Daniel I have managed to get for review from publishers in the last year (and in fact, I just received a fifth one in the mail today from another publisher). All of the books have had unique perspectives on the Book of Daniel and have lent their insight to me as I sought to understand Daniel.

It does make me wonder though why there is currently so much popular and scholarly level interest in the Book of Daniel--so much interest that one noted author even published a lifestyle book based on something he read in Daniel. It's curious how it seems that perhaps people are slowly beginning to realize that all our American dreams are not quite the stuff that being a disciple of Jesus is made of. Or maybe what people are seeing is that the time is ripe, the axe is at the root, the signs are converging and coalescing, and maybe we imagine we hear just the faintest hint of a trumpet blast being carried by the wind.

This book started out strong with a heavy focus on the Book of Daniel and I was rolling along with Osborne nicely. He is correct: Daniel is neither an adventure story nor a prophecy manual. Where he kind of lost me is when he stated what he does think the main point of Daniel's book is: "When it comes to the book of Daniel, his incredible example of how to live and thrive in the most godless of environments is the main lesson we don't want to miss. It's a template that's particularly relevant today" (Location 128). Unfortunately, this kind of made me yawn a bit because I started sensing where the book was going--a mere manual for living, something the church does not need. Fact is, if we read the Book of Daniel as a book of mere examples for living, however incredible, encouraging, and faithful they may be, then we may as well read it as an adventure story and we probably miss the bigger story he is telling us about ultimate redemption of the world, of His saints, of his Son, and of a victory that even death cannot prevent.

A deeper look at Daniel reveals a deeply theological story, one that is entirely focused on the sovereignty of God over the nations and of how, despite the terribly negative outward appearance of things in this world, God will rescue and redeem his exiles from Babylon, establish his Messianic Kingdom by uprooting, supplanting, subverting, and at times destroying the kingdoms of earth, and establish his Son and People as the rightful heirs and rulers of the kingdoms of earth.

Somewhere in this, yes, we are called to live and thrive. Clearly the prophet Jeremiah, one of the books Daniel read, told the exiles that they should settle down, build houses, raise families, live, and seek the welfare of the city where they were confined, but I doubt Jeremiah did so without first giving those people a picture of the great God who led them there in the first place. I doubt that living and thriving are the main focus of the book--or of any book of the Bible for that matter. I'm not saying they are absent; I am saying they are the trees we see when we take our eyes off the forest.

I absolutely agree that we live in a world of chaos. I agree that for all intents and purposes our times are no different than those of Daniel and that Christians are, by and large, living in the shadow and confines of Babylon. I disagree that we are going to change this world simply by displaying hope, humility, and wisdom--the three ideas explored in the book. To me, however, this sounds like a convenient outline--kind of preacherly (if that's a word). Needless to say, however well he may find these ideas in the Book of Daniel, I was fairly disappointed that this was the route he chose to go. It's not that anything he says in the book is wrong or that it cannot be found in the book of Daniel. It's just that this is not the point of Daniel's book and, therefore, I think Thriving in Babylon was wanting for something more.

So let me wrap up by noting a couple of things that did resonate with me and ultimately were good constructs--even if I think the foundation upon which they were built was a bit beyond the blueprint. First, I agree that '[F]rom the first page to the last, Daniel clearly saw God's hand in everything that happened' (Location 203). I agree. This is laid out for the readers in Daniel chapter 1 and it carries all through the book. He goes on to note that 'God is in control of who is in control' (Location 222). Here I think Osborne nails it and, to this point, he is correct: upon this understanding of God we can indeed thrive in Babylon. I only wish he had explored his point a little more with respect to how Christians respond to the the kings of this world. Daniel is a decidedly political book and I think it needed to be explored, and could have been even at this popular level.

Second, he brings out some import and valid points about suffering in this world and our response to it. Key among his points is this: 'Those who walk away from God in anger and disillusionment in the midst of their suffering never do so because their test was too hard. They do so because their faith was not genuine' (Location 541). Whatever else I may have written, I want to be clear that Osborne has written a good book with much worth lauding. His points about our suffering as Christians in the midst of the Babylonian shadow are important and timely. We do well to listen. Yet we also do well to remember that there is no resurrection needed for those who remain alive. The saints of God will suffer at the hands of kings. Perhaps this timely message needed to be explored a little more.

My main disappointment with this book is that I don't think Osborne handled the Book of Daniel very well. Frankly, it was a huge disappointment. At times, it was like he utterly forgot he was even taking us through the book at all. Besides this, as noted above, I think he failed to get to the heart of what Daniel is teaching us. I get that the book is not designed to be a thorough exposition of Daniel and in this Osborne succeeds. The book of Daniel is a complex book and the character of Daniel--one of only two characters who 'survive' the entire book from start to finished--is a complex character. He has good days and bad days. He spends a lot of time sick due to the visions he has. He has to make difficult choices at times and seems at times to be all about his own self-preservation. Sometimes he doesn't tell the whole truth when interpreting visions and dreams. At times he is utterly brilliant and at other times he seems confounded. Sometimes he appears to compromise a bit and other times he is utterly bold and forthright. It is, therefore, difficult to make Daniel the sort of hero I think Osborne wants him to be.

Daniel is complex and I wish that complexity had been explored with a little more nuance than Osborne did. Again, it's not that anything Osborne said was wrong or out of place. It's just that Daniel is not so black and white as he leads us to believe.

It's a good read for the most part and I didn't disagree with all that much. He says a lot of important and timely things. There are some surprisingly fresh anecdotes and I like that he doesn't fall back on the the so-called standard sermon illustrations--oh thank God for that! I found the book to be honest and readable; accessible and, at times, challenging. It has plenty of Scripture references quoted and/or alluded to (notes are at the end of each chapter.) I also found the book a bit unbalanced. Chapters 1-4 talk about 'Daniel's Story'; Chapters 5-7\*\* discuss 'Prepared for Battle'. He discusses all these things before diving into his thoughts about hope, humility, and wisdom. Chapters 8-13 are 'Hope'; 14-16, 'Humility'; 17-20, 'Wisdom'. It's slightly unbalanced as you can see, it's a small thing to be sure, but it bothered me.

One last thing. Daniel's book warns us over and over again of putting our hope in the kings who derive their position and authority 'out of the earth' or 'out of the sea' (see Daniel 7). Christians in America are particularly susceptible to this scheme of the devil--the one where he tries to convince us that our hope is found in the next great ministry or the next great up and coming politician. We are continually told about how important it is to vote for a particular political party or a particular political candidate. Sometimes we are even told that Daniel himself is a fine example of why Christians ought to be involved in the political process. At one point Osborne makes an utterly brilliant point when addressing this scheme: "[Satan] is still at it. Today, he's convinced many of us to replace our passionate hope in Jesus with a passionate hope in politics or the latest ministry on steroids. It's taken our eyes off Jesus and put our hope in that which can't deliver" (location 1334). Here I think he nails it because it is here, at this point, that I think the point of the Book of Daniel is clearly in view.

What the church needs is a formidable and robust picture of a great God who will wreck the systems born in this world, born of this world, born from this world, and who will set up his own kingdom which is 'not of this world' (Daniel 2; cf. John 18). Daniel gives us this vision--as a prophet should. I find that looking at

mere examples of mere humanity is not enough to strengthen us in our current need. This is why, for example, when John the Revelator was writing to the seven churches in province of Asia who were muddled in persecution and complacency, he began not with a robust picture of an exemplary human being but with a picture of the cosmic Jesus who is the Alpha and the Omega. In short, I think the focus on Daniel as a person is misplaced.

So I'm a little disappointed with this book, but not entirely. There are times when Osborne gets Daniel brilliantly and other times when he falls down. It's a preacher thing to narrow down a book to a set of memorable ideas. In this case, hope, humility, and wisdom are the memorable ideas he wants us to remember. I think we would have been better served if he had asked us to remember that it is God's faithfulness to his people, to his own plans for this world, not his people's mere example, that is why and how and for what we thrive and survive and ultimately own this world and how he ultimately conquers Babylon.

4/5 Stars

\*\*I would make one correction to the book. In chapter 7, he begins with an illustration of living near Camp Pendleton, a US Marine Corps recruit depot in San Diego, California. In paragraph 2, he refers to those who train recruits as 'drill sergeants.' This would be fine if he were talking about Army recruits, but those who train Marines are called Drill Instructors. Trust me when I say this is a big deal to Marines. It should be addressed in future editions of the book.

#### Important Book & Author Things

Where to purchase Thriving in Babylon (Amazon: Kindle \$9.28 ) Christian Book Distributors (Paperback \$9.99) David C Cook (Trade-Paperback \$15.99)

Author: Larry Osborne

Larry Osborn on Twitter

Academic Webpage:

Editor:

Publisher: David C Cook

Pages: 224

Year: 2015

Audience: Mostly Christians, but others too (maybe)

Reading Level: High School

Disclaimer: I was provided an advance reader's copy courtesy of David C Cook via NetGalley.

\*\*All page locations are relative at this point because I'm using an uncorrected proof. Pages should be checked against the final publication for accuracy.

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#### Greg says

This is a great book on discipleship in a hostile culture, and I really appreciated many of the thoughts, probably because they chimed with my own thinking on the topic. Larry Osborne also has a way with words, and there are a lot of great one-liners and quotations in the book ("After all, it takes a mess to have a miracle."); "We're supposed to weep with those who weep. We're not supposed to smother them with banal truisms, out-of-context Bible verses, shallow advice, and links to our favorite podcasts.")

So the book was very helpful, and very readable: it is divided into short chapters and written in a very accessible way.

Why do I only give it a three-star rating? Despite being very readable and helpful, it doesn't really live up to its billing of looking at the life of Daniel and applying it to living in our modern-day Babylon. The writer does touch off from the life of Daniel in most chapters, but then jumps off all over the Bible to make his case, sometimes barely mentioning Daniel. As I'd bought it to help me in preparing a preaching series on Daniel, that was a slight disappointment.

I wouldn't, however, want that to prevent anyone from buying or reading the book: it is a great read, and a helpful book for anyone thinking about discipleship in our current-day world.

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### **Yibbie says**

A wonderfully encouraging dose of Biblical horse sense. Feeling discouraged? Why? No really why? Before you answer that you might want to take a closer look at the life of a man who thrived under worse circumstances than we have faced yet. Yep Daniel. This is an excellent little book to help you apply some rather serious Biblical principles just as Daniel did.

Larry Osborne does a delightful job of poking us where it hurts and making you laugh at the same time. By the way I love his sense of humor.

Now I don't agree with every point, but the vast majority are spot on. There were also a few points that require more study on my part before I can say wither way. It's so worth reading. The only thing I wish is that he had quoted the KJV instead of the NIV or ESV. Still you should read it. Especially now. It will lift your spirits. How could a book that points directly at our Savior not be encouraging? Really read it.

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### **David says**

Osborne offers a succinct but clear relationship between Daniel's experience as a Jew in Babylon and a Christian's experience in the 21st century. Drawing inferences from Daniel's life, he draws out three virtues - hope, humility and wisdom - required in order to 'Thrive in Babylon'. His style is engaging, and his thoughts are generally persuasive. The reader should finish this book encouraged to live an overcoming Christian life in the midst of our own godless society.

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### **Joan says**

If you were to read only one book this year, I would suggest this one be it. I really liked the insights Osborne took from the biblical story of Daniel. Rather than thinking we will escape difficulty, Osborne shows how we can thrive in an adverse culture. This book is very timely and I highly recommend it.

See my complete review at <http://bit.ly/1RF10t7>.

I received a complimentary digital galley of this book through Lit fuse for the purpose of an independent and honest review.

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## **Virginia Garrett says**

Do you ever wonder how we can possibly hope to live godly lives in a godless culture? I know I do! Larry Osborne has as well and he's written an excellent book telling us how it can be done.

Thriving in Babylon, Why Hope, Humility, and wisdom matter in a godless culture by Larry Osborne is a very good read. He uses the book (and character) of Daniel as his backdrop.

So much of what he writes resonates with me and is, in fact, things I had been thinking. I underlined, marked, wrote in the margins, shared on twitter, Instagram, and facebook the wisdom I gleaned.

For example, "Don't we claim to know how the game of life ends? And if we do, shouldn't that affect the way we interpret and respond to the enemy's short-term victories and temporary advances? If our sins are forgiven and our destiny assured, if we are joint-heirs with Jesus, and certain He's coming back to set all wrongs right, then despair and panic over the latest court decision, or even the steady erosion of morality in our culture, hardly seem like appropriate responses." (page 102)

In short I really, really liked this book. I wanted so badly to love it and aside from a few instances I did. But those instances were huge.

For example, The United States of America is a Republic, not a democracy as he states in the book.

The Bible does not say God will not give us more than we can handle. He promises not to give us temptations that no one else has experienced, promises a way of escape and not to tempt us beyond what we can bear.

And finally, Solomon's sacrifice in Gibeon, God didn't "look the other way because He knew His heart was right", He didn't accept the sacrifice and answer Solomon's prayer because "Solomon meant well when he sacrificed on the High places." Solomon sacrificed in Gibeon because that is where the tabernacle was, the ark wasn't there, but the altar was.

I believe those were oversights, and I believe the author accomplished his goal of sharing with us how we can live godly lives in our culture. I give this book 4 out of 5 turning pages.

I received a free copy of this book from Litfuse and the publisher for the purpose of review. All opinions are my own.

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## **Mark says**

As usual, Larry Osborne is wise, thought-provoking, funny and deeply Biblical as he uses the story of Daniel to take a sharp look at the way followers of Christ interact with the culture around them.

My pastor is fond of saying that "preaching against culture is like preaching against someone's house - it's where they live." Larry agrees and does a splendid job of highlighting the myriad ways in which Christians

focus on fixing culture rather than on increasing their influence in the middle of that culture.

Highly recommended

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### **Jeanie says**

What is a Spiritual Babylon? Daniel a Prophet of the Old Testament lived in a godless city of Babylon, where he was stripped of his identity as a Jew. How was he able to thrive and remain faithful in these times? In times of suffering, Daniel remained hopeful, lived in humility, and sought out the wisdom of God. What is biblical hope? How does that look for us today? Our hope is not found in our circumstances but in the character of God.

From God's character we can expect God's discipline. God's discipline begins with those that he calls his own. Not on those that do the most evil. God's discipline is for his children to have a Godly sorrow for sin and repentance. It starts with God's own people; we need to look in the mirror instead of binoculars. Our testing is not for God's benefit, but for own to know the truth of our faith. Our faith is affirmed when our weakness are revealed thru trials and sufferings.

The five qualities of surviving a spiritual Babylon are obedience, perspective, endurance, confidence and courage. As Christians, we should look at obedience as soldiers in the military. Our very lives depend on obedience. As Christians, our perspective may not see the bigger picture of the work of Christ. As Christians, our endurance is not giving up. That pain is gain. As Christians, our endurance produces confidence and courage that is found in Him.

Living in a godless society it is easy to be bogged down by media tactics that create a crisis for monetary gain in which can cause depression. It is advised to take a break from social media outlets and all the news that over floods our minds and grip our hearts. In other words we can lose hope.

The short study of Daniel brings new light to give us hope in God's character which brings us humility as we live out in wisdom.

A special Thank you to David C Cook and Netgalley for ARC and the opportunity to post an honest review.

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### **Danny says**

#### **We can please God**

Outstanding practical help for pleasing God and loving others. Just like Daniel, we can make a difference. "Don't buy the lie that you don't matter. You do. Don't buy the lie that your response to the evil in your workplace, community, family, and our nation doesn't matter. It does. We just have to push the right buttons. They're called hope, humility, and wisdom. It's what Daniel did thousands of years ago. It's what God asks us to do today. It's how he thrived in his Babylon. And it's how we can thrive in our own modern-day Babylon."

