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SESSION 10 **LIVING AS A MINORITY IN A MAJORITY WORLD**

Daniel 1:1-21; 2:46-49; 3:1-18

...O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...

INTRODUCTION

Would you stand for what was right even if you had to stand alone? Would you speak out for truth even if yours was the only voice heard? Would you sacrifice success for the sake of maintaining your integrity? Would you stand resolute in your convictions even if the penalty were death?

Daniel refused to compromise his integrity. He would not defile himself or His God under any circumstances, even if it meant death. He would walk through the furnace of affliction before he ever bowed his life before a king other than the one true God. He stood up and spoke out, and God honored him for it.

Christians live as minorities in a majority world that is hostile to the message of the gospel of Christ. The stream of thought that flows through the majority runs away from the throne of God. It is in this cultural flow that followers of Christ daily are swimming upstream. How do we survive in this tension without compromising our integrity or the integrity of the truth we are convinced of?

In this session we will study Daniel chapter 1 and explore how Daniel survived and flourished in the courts of a pagan king without compromising the integrity of his faith or his God. We will then highlight seven key principles we learn from Daniel for how we too can live as minorities in a majority world that is set against us.

The Choice Young Men

- 1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.
- 2 The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.
- 3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles,
- 4 youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.
- 5 The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.
- 6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.
- 7 Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

Daniel's Resolve

- 8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.
- 9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,
- 10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."
- 11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,
- 12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.
- 13 "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."
- 14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.
- 15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.
- 16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.
- 17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.

- 18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.
- 19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service.
- 20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.
- 21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

(2:46-49)

- 46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense.
- 47 The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."
- 48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.
- 49 And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king's court.

- 1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.
- 2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.
- 3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
- 4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language,
- 5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.
- 6 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."
- 7 Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Worship of the Image Refused

- 8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.
- 9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!
- 10 "You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.
- 11 "But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.
- 12 "There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."
- 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.
- 14 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?
- 15 "Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well "But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

- 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.
- 17 “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.
- 18 “But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

NOTES

Seven principals for living as a minority in a majority world:

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. In what area of your life (i.e. work, family, recreational activities) are you in the minority as a Christian? In what ways is it difficult? How do you handle it?*
- 2. Which of the 7 principles discussed in this session stood out to you the most? Why?*
- 3. Why does Tommy Nelson use the illustration of the National Enquirer magazine in this session? What point was he communicating?*

**“A conviction is not an opinion. An opinion you hold.
A conviction holds you.” - Tommy Nelson**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

4. *Daniel thrived in the position he held for a pagan king but he never compromised his faith in God. Have you been tempted to compromise your Christian beliefs in order to succeed in your career? How do you handle those pressures?*

“Christianity is not best because it works; Christianity works because it’s best.” - Tommy Nelson

5. *In Romans 12:2 the Apostle Paul wrote, “...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” Why is the renewing of our minds so critical to following the good, acceptable and perfect will of God?*

“What God wants you to do is to use the influence you have. Daniel probably did not have much influence down in Babylon at first, but God soon gave him more because he was faithful and used what he had.” - Dwight L. Moody