



stand & LOVE
FIRM well

Part 1

**How to be Faithful to God and
Love Well When Engaging
Culture that is at Odds with
Faith in Jesus Christ.**

Daniel 1:1

During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Daniel 1:2a

The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God.

Daniel 1:2b

**So Nebuchadnezzar took them
back to the land of Babylonia and
placed them in the treasure-house
of his god.**

Daniel 1:3

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives.

Daniel 1:4a

“Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men,” he said.

“Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good

Daniel 1:4b

**judgment, and are suited to serve
in the royal palace. Train these
young men in the language and
literature of Babylon.”**

Daniel 1:5

The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

Daniel 1:6

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah.

Daniel 1:7a

**The chief of staff renamed them
with these Babylonian names:**

Daniel 1:7b

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach.

Mishael was called Meshach.

Azariah was called Abednego.

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.

Daniel 1:9

Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel.

Daniel 1:10a

But he responded, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine.

Daniel 1:10b

If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded.”

Daniel 1:11

Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah.

Daniel 1:12

**“Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water,”
Daniel said.**

Daniel 1:13

“At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king’s food. Then make your decision in light of what you see.”

Daniel 1:14

The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

Daniel 1:15

At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king.

Daniel 1:16

So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

Daniel 1:17

God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams.

Daniel 1:18

When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 1:19

The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service.

Daniel 1:20

**Whenever the king consulted them
in any matter requiring wisdom
and balanced judgment, he found
them ten times more capable than
any of the magicians and
enchanters in his entire kingdom.**

Daniel 1:21

Daniel remained in the royal service until the first year of the reign of King Cyrus.

A lighthouse with a glowing light at the top, situated on a rocky island in the middle of a stormy sea. The sky is dark and cloudy with a lightning bolt visible on the right side. The lighthouse is red with white windows and a white top section.

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Principle #1

**Despite present appearances
God is in control.**

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Background

The prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah both spent over 20 years warning the people in Judah that they had fallen under the curse of God and were doomed to Babylonian exile because they refused to repent.

Background

During exiled captivity in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel declared to God's people that they could not sin with impunity. God's covenant had always detailed the consequences of persistent rebellion against God.

Principle #1

**Despite present appearances
God is in control.**

Principle #2

Kingdoms like Babylon, leaders like Nebuchadnezzar, and atrocities like exiled slavery can ultimately serve God's deeper and, at times, mysterious purposes.

Principle #3

In order to remain faithful to God and love well when culture is at odds with faith, you need to get out of your comfort zone and understand that various faithful possibilities are available.

Richard Niebuhr's 5 Models

- **Christ Resists Culture**
- **Christ Wages War Against Culture**
- **The Christ of Culture**
- **Christ and Culture in Paradox**
- **Christ Transforms Culture**

Christ Resists Culture

Culture and Christianity are two different, mutually hostile approaches to the world. As with any assault, the church has a choice of two alternatives: fight or flight.

War Against Culture

This view often takes on the mantle of a holy war as Christians mobilize their forces to resist the encroachment of mainstream culture against the family, society, schools, government, media, etc.

War Against Culture

Most of these efforts target legislation and working through the democratic system, but with dangerously increasing frequency these efforts tend to lead to coercion and even take on frightening dimensions of violence.

The Christ of Culture

In this view, mainstream culture is seen as being equal to Christian truth because it is good and without any conflict to Christian truth. In reality, though, cultural values generally outweigh the values of Christianity.

Christ & Culture Paradox

In this model church and society have separate but legitimate spheres. We obey Christ in the church and the political leaders in our public, community life.

Christ Transforms Culture

**Working from within culture,
Christians operate as agents of positive
change who seek to transform the
values and objectives of culture to the
service and glory of God.**

Principle #3

In order to remain faithful to God and love well when culture is at odds with faith, you need to get out of your comfort zone and understand that various faithful possibilities are available.

Principle #4

The freeing and yet terrifying fact is that there are multiple ways, multiple choices, and multiple approaches to genuinely remaining faithful to God while engaging culture at odds with faith in Jesus Christ.

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Their “Compromises”

- **Willingly left Judah to be slaves in Babylon.**
- **Were educated by their enemies' pagan educational system.**

Their “Compromises”

- **Forced to speak in a foreign language.**
- **Were given new names that dishonored their God.**
- **Made eunuchs?**

Isaiah 39:5

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the Lord Almighty:

Isaiah 39:6

The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord.

Isaiah 39:7

And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

There is no single answer to the question of how to engage a hostile culture for Christ that is appropriate for all people of faith at every stage of life and at every stage of spiritual maturity.

Principle #4

The freeing and yet terrifying fact is that there are multiple ways, choices, and approaches to genuinely remaining faithful to God while engaging culture at odds with Christ.

Principle #5

God is the source of heavenly wisdom; being in relationship with Him empowers us to know the right action for the right situation.

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The Right Way for Daniel

- **Made a Private Request**
- **No Hunger Strike**
- **Asked for Permission**
- **Did not panic/get angry**
- **Re-strategized**

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Principle #6

The struggle to remain faithful to God while loving our enemies well is not about making a hostile culture Christian; it is about being a true Christian in a hostile world.

Principle #7

Even in the midst of a godless country or a godless culture, God gives His people the ability to be faithful as well as to prosper.

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