



Finding Truth in the World of Opinions: Week 1: Stay the Course

Key Text: Daniel 1, Sunday, April 19, 2020

Daniel and his three friends resolved to stand firm in their love for God in the midst of pagan culture and the pressure to conform.

How do we hold firm to God amid a culture that is drifting away from God? We can gain great insight from Daniel as he lived a culture that needed God and still held on to his resolve.

Setting the Scene:

- During the 17th king of Judah, King Jooiakim, around 600 BC, Judah was conquered, and the best of the best are forced into slavery.
- Daniel and his friends could have given in to despair and sorrow.
- There is tension in how do we respond to shifting culture around us.

In circumstances such as these, the message of the book of Daniel rings out loud and clear, encouraging the faithful to stand firm and assuring them that God and the kingdom of God are at hand.¹

¹¹ **Put on** all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all **strategies of the devil**.¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to **resist the enemy** in the time of evil. Then after the battle, you will still be **standing firm**. Ephesians 6:11-13

¹³ Be on guard. **Stand firm** in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13

1. Stay the Course; God is in Control of this World. (Daniel 1:1-2)

1:2 the Lord delivered Jehoiakim. "Lord" (' adonay) speaks of God's sovereignty over kings and kingdoms, while the repetition of the verb "to give" (natan; NIV: "delivered") in 1:2, 9, and 17 connects the chapter's three sections.²

- Suffering and trials remind us, even more, the importance of being anchored in God's Word.
- Faith is needed in a culture that continues to drift towards secularism.

2. Stay the Course; Culture will Often Try to Rename You. (Daniel 1:3-7)

The Babylonian king was not content to capture the bodies of those who had been deported from Judea; he had to capture their minds as well. And so he set about a process of conditioning and indoctrination.³

- King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to use Daniel's studies to further his kingdom. Still, God wanted to utilize it to promote His: "God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom" and in "all matters of wisdom and understanding."
- God wanted to impart His perspective on what was happening in the land. God wanted more out of Daniel than expertise; He wanted an informed intercessor.
- Three years of culture and language training. The book of Daniel reminds us of the truth that the wisdom of God is stronger than men's; that truth is more potent than falsehood. What will be the source of truth?

The four men also had their names changed. Again, this may seem innocent enough to us whose names often have no deep significance, but in the ancient world, names meant something. Daniel's name was a statement of faith: "God is my judge." Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to Beltshazzar, which in Akkadian means, "The divine lady protects the king."⁴

- **Daniel**- God is my judge, or God has judged.
Beltshazzar- the divine lady, or he protects the king.

¹ Russell, D. S. (1981). [Daniel](#) (p. 18). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

² Pierce, R. W. (2015). [Daniel](#). (M. L. Strauss & J. H. Walton, Eds.) (p. 12). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

³ Russell, D. S. (1981). [Daniel](#) (p. 19). Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

⁴ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/novemberweb-only/147-22.0.html>

- A changing culture moves focus to man rather than God.
- **Hananiah** –The Lord is gracious.
- **Shadrack**- Under the command of Aku. (Moon god)
 - A changing culture that moves the focus of God being good, to God is bad.
- **Mishael** – Who is like God.
- **Meshach** –Who is like Aku.
 - A changing culture tempts us to be fearful.
- **Azariah**- God, has helped, or the Lord is my help.
- **Abednego**- "Servant of Nebo"
 - A changing culture on changing rules rather than a relationship.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted the people he conquered to be assimilated and immersed in their culture. Changing their name was one step toward that goal.

²Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Romans 12:2

- They could change their names, but they could not change their character.
- A Constant reminder of Who we are in Christ is required.
- Even when the culture changes, God will not.
- Culture will try to claim you, but you do not have to allow it.

3. Stay the Course, Your Faith Will Be Tested (Daniel 1: 8-16)

1:8 The Word **determined** means literally "set upon his heart," referring to inner resolve. ⁵

- It is easier to resist temptation if you think through your convictions before it arises. (Job 31:1)
- Essential to see God as a good father. His Word represents love because he cares about our interests.
- Your Conviction will be tested. Your time of trial will become your testimony. Amen!

"By eastern standards to share a meal was to commit one's self to friendship; it was of covenant significance." Baldwin

- Remember, you have the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- We need to pray consistently for courage.

Vs. 15- And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and **fatter in flesh** than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. - NKJV

- Time in the Word will give you courage in the midst of people's opinions of you when you are faced with setback, crisis, or loss.

4. Stay the Course, and God Will Bless You with His Favor. (Daniel 1:17- 21)

- He gave them the ability and wisdom to navigating during challenging times.
- God will provide what we need to do and be who He desires.

Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. ²So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. Romans 13:1-2

One Last Thought: Daniel teaches us that we can be catalyst for change in our community. We can be more concerned with winning the soul of people rather than winning an argument. We can still stay the course and love people as Jesus loves them.

⁵ Rydelnik, M. (2017). [Daniel](#). In E. A. Blum & T. Wax (Eds.), *CSB Study Bible: Notes* (p. 1324). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.