



The subtitle for our series in the book of Daniel is "10 Commitments to Make When Life Closes in". So far, we've highlighted the following commitments: (1) I Will Live as an Exile, (2) I Will Not Be Defiled, and (3) I Will Trust God for What I Need. We'll discuss our fourth commitment today: "I Will Not Bow Down." This is the decision Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego made in Daniel 3. Similarly, we'll face moments when we have to choose to either stand up for our faith or bow in submission to compromise. When that time arrives, will we have the resolve to stand firm and face the consequences?

SCRIPTURE: Daniel 3:1-18

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What encouraged you, challenged you, or stood out the most to you from the sermon?
2. In today's passage, we see King Nebuchadnezzar take something wicked (idol worship) and turn it into a large public celebration. Why do you think he wanted leaders and influencers from every province to worship the golden image? Do you think all of these leaders and influencers genuinely believed in worshipping this idol? Why do you think they yielded to the king's order if not?

King Nebuchadnezzar likely gathered these leaders and influencers for the "celebration" to flex his authority over the kingdom at large. Much like celebrity gatherings in our day, this event would have been a "can't miss" for these power brokers. Even if these leaders and influencers rolled their eyes at the idea of bowing in worship to this idol, they wouldn't have wanted to risk the opportunity to garner favor with the king or risk their position of influence within Babylonian society. They likely wanted to be on the "right" side of this cultural moment, as many leaders and influencers do today. It's also likely that many feared the wrath of King Nebuchadnezzar if they were a "no-show" to his "invitation."

3. Like King Nebuchadnezzar, our modern culture takes wicked ideas and turns them into something to celebrate. First, leaders and influencers seek to create sympathy toward an idea, and then, over time, it becomes more and more normalized. Eventually, those who refuse to adopt the idea are demonized. How have you seen this progression take place in our time? What arguments are often made to push conformity?

4. There will be times when we are forced to take a courageous stand for our faith. What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego risk by refusing to conform to the king's decree? What risks should we be prepared to endure when we refuse to compromise our faith?

While we can say for sure how much time passed between the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3, it's important to note where we last saw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The final few verses of Daniel 2 read as follows:

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. ⁴⁷ The king answered and said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery." ⁴⁸ Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. ⁴⁹ Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court.

By not compromising their faith, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego risked their positions of influence and their lives. Likewise, Christians today can reasonably expect to face the proposition of losing a job, losing influence, missing promotions, being cut off from the friend group, etc., when standing up for their faith in the face of cultural/peer pressure to compromise. It's easy to romanticize the idea of courageously standing up against the pressure to compromise our faith when it's just a thought. When the time comes, and the risks are real, true courage is required, and the costs are counted.

5. When faced with the threat of punishment, some easily crumble, while others dig in their heels. How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond to the threats of King Nebuchadnezzar? What does their response reveal about their faith? How should their response inform our own when it's our time to stand against compromising our faith? What does 1 Peter 4:12-16 have to say about facing trials?

The passage doesn't indicate that these young men were trying to make a scene. They're not pictured as being in the middle of the town square protesting that they weren't going to bow down. It seems like they were just living their lives, and in the midst of that, they weren't bowing down. In the everyday rhythms of life, they remained faithful to God.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond to the king's question, "Who will deliver you out of my hand?" with two statements: First, "Our God will deliver us," and second, "If not, we will still not bow down." They were confident that God would show up in their situation.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego responded calmly and answered confidently: "The God we serve will deliver us out of your hand." Their boldness and confidence in the power of God are striking. They realized this might be the most important thing to notice: God alone determines our future. We are not bound by an unfair boss, a bad coach, a dysfunctional family member, or anyone else. As Christians, we follow the Lord and let Him deliver us from challenging circumstances. Furthermore, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego understood that God doesn't have to rescue them, and He might not. Sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers with "yes." So, these three young men

recognized that God was in control and that He alone decides things according to His own will. As we heard on Sunday, the safest place you'll ever be in your life is to resign yourself to what God wants for your life.

1 Peter 4:12-16, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name."

This passage reminds us that we shouldn't be surprised when trials come our way. We should expect, as Christians, that we will face peer pressure to compromise our faith. When we meet these difficulties, we can be sure that we are sharing in Christ's sufferings, and one day we will stand in honor and be vindicated even if we're being shamed by those around us today. When we face insults because of our unwillingness to compromise our faith, we are blessed and can rest assured that the Spirit of God is with us in the trial. Lastly, we need to make it our aim that any ridicule that comes our way isn't justified. We're called to live with integrity and represent our Lord well in every part of our lives – especially as we face the pressure to compromise our faith. The way we respond to the protests of others to yield to their demands, we shouldn't compromise our faith with our words or actions.

6. How can we best prepare ourselves to remain faithful to God and resist compromise when the pressure to conform arrives?