



Where do you turn when life closes in, and the pressures pile up? Sometimes when life closes in on us, the last thing we feel like doing is remaining faithful to God. When the pressure mount, we're tempted to look for a release valve, and that release valve isn't necessarily good or godly. Daniel is facing a crossroads in his life. He's been stripped of everything comfortable and everything familiar. Life was closing in on him, yet he demonstrated his commitment to God. Today we'll see Daniel demonstrate a commitment we need to make for ourselves when life seems to be closing in on us: "I Will Not Defile Myself."

SCRIPTURE: Daniel 1:8-21

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. We've all been there when the pressures of life become increasingly difficult. When life begins to close in, where do people often turn to release some stress? Where do you turn? What's your default release valve?
2. Daniel committed that he would not defile himself by eating the king's food. As Christians, we're frequently pressured to believe that we can't be too unbending in our convictions; after all, compromise is a part of life. What are some subtle compromises we're tempted to make each day in the workplace, in our personal lives, etc.?

"Daniel and his friends avoided the luxurious diet of the king's table as a way of protecting themselves from being ensnared by the temptations of the Babylonian culture. They used their distinctive diet as a way of retaining their distinctive identity as Jewish exiles and avoiding complete assimilation into Babylonian culture (which was the king's goal with these conquered subjects). With this restricted diet they continually reminded themselves, in this time of testing, that they were the people of God in a foreign land and that they were dependent for their food, indeed for their very lives, upon God, their Creator, not King Nebuchadnezzar." - Iain Duguid and Paul Wegner

3. Daniel lived his life with the conviction that he was, first and foremost, under God's authority. What difference should it make in our lives to live with this same conviction every day? Why is it important to resolve to live under God's authority before we come to the crossroads of compromise?

Daniel loved the Lord and decided to resist the king's subjugation by standing upon the foundation of his faith—God Himself. Daniel literally "sets his heart" not to eat the food. Daniel understands the situation, decides what is right and wrong in his heart, and chooses to do the right thing. F.W. Boreham said, "We make our decisions, and then our decisions turn around and make us."

4. Read Romans 13:1-2. Daniel was under God's authority and the authority God had placed over him in Babylon. What can we learn from Daniel's life when it comes to the challenges of living under God's authority and the authority God has placed over us, especially when they don't align? Has there been a time when you faced such a dilemma?

Daniel decided to live under God's authority, and then he appropriately dealt with the dilemma he faced with the human authority over him. We're not given the conversation details, but it's safe to assume that Daniel wasn't aggressive or offensive in asking for an alternative path forward. Daniel models humility, which is more effective than causing a scene.

5. Read 1 Peter 2:13-14 and Acts 5:27-32. Daniel was taken from his home, forced into the flow of a new culture, and even given a new name. Despite all this, he chose not to object to these things as he did the king's food. How do we determine when we should take a stand against or submit to the authority God has placed over us?
6. Daniel understood his situation and still decided to stand on his spiritual convictions. Fear was undoubtedly a part of his experience; after all, resisting the flow in Babylon could cost your life. What do we need to do to have the resolve to say "no" to compromise our calling to live God-honoring lives in a progressively godless culture when it could cost us our job, a promotion, a relationship, etc.?
7. Is there anything God has asked you to do that you haven't yet done? Where might you be delaying obedience or flirting with compromise? Where might you be compromising or buying into the world's systems?

Sometimes we want God to do His part before we do our part. In today's passage, we see that Daniel did his part, and God showed up. He gave Daniel favor with his human authority. We often delay obedience - waiting on God to move before we do. Today's passage highlights a principle: Follow through with what God has ALREADY asked us to do – then wait and see what He will do.