



Introduction – “Heeding the Call”

September 6, 2023

Identify the Problem

The book of Judges states the following, “*Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” (Judges 17:6) In other words, there were no absolute standards or truths being lived out, people made up their own idea of right and wrong. This was written over 3,000 years ago and yet sounds like it is speaking of our culture today.

Therein lies our great dilemma, people are making up for themselves what is right and wrong, good and evil, and it is wrecking our families, communities, and the world at large. To make matters worse, followers of Jesus are now not only called to tolerate evil things that evil people call good, but they are now called to celebrate them. If they are not celebrated you will be shamed, vilified, possibly imprisoned, and in many parts of the world killed. We are told we must “get on the right side of history”. Those who claim to be *tolerant* really seek to be *dominant*.

The problem goes even deeper. Due to a misunderstanding of the meaning “separation of church and state” the church has become absent and silent when it comes to speaking into anything considered political. I am convinced that one of the major factors contributing to the decline and collapse of all things good in our society is the silence and even cowardice of the church to speak into political issues. We must remember that all political issues are rooted in a worldview and every worldview is either biblical or its not, there’s no middle ground. Dr. Erwin Lutzer in his book No Reason to Hide writes the following, “*Politics cannot be separated from morality and morality cannot be separated from Christianity. And if the church has nothing to say to our politicized culture, all that is left are self-destructive ideologies. Our allegiance to Christ means we dare not be silent.*”

Let's look at the great dilemma that Daniel, his friends, family and entire nation faced and then we will begin to look at how they dealt with their dilemma.

Read **Daniel 1:1-7** slowly and carefully, identifying along the way the problems the Jews of that day faced. Then note how those very problems parallel the same things Christ followers are faced with today.

The Problems for the Jews Then and Christ Followers Today:

1. The world seeks to destroy the godly heritage we have through intimidation and abuse of power. (**Daniel 1:1**)
2. The world seeks to deconstruct our faith in God and His Word. (**Daniel 1:2**)
3. The world seeks to reconstruct our values with that which is evil. (**Daniel 1:3-5**)
4. The world seeks to eliminate and replace our godly identity with that which is secular and evil. (**Daniel 1:6-7**)

Although the book of Daniel was written some 2,500 years ago, the problems they faced are the same ones we face today. We live in a world that seeks to destroy our godly heritage, deconstruct our faith in God Almighty, reconstruct our values with that which is evil, and then eliminate and replace our godly identity with that which is secular and evil.

What are some examples of the above statement that you have seen right where you live today? Don't be afraid to be specific, we won't do anything about the things we don't identify.

Now the question becomes, "How will we be a church that survives and even thrives in Babylon?" We will explore that in an abbreviated form below as that will be the thrust of what we will explore over the course of the next three months.

Discover the Solution

How we become a church that survives and thrives in Babylon is found in the rest of Daniel 1. Read **Daniel 1:8-21** slowly and carefully, noting along the way how four teenagers were able to stand for God in the midst of evil rulers, evil policies, and evil agendas that all came against them. These are the same principles we can employ as Christ followers today.

The Tools Employed for Living Godly Lives by the Jews Then:

1. They **resolved** to honor God in the small things then so that they'd be prepared to honor Him in the big things later. (**Daniel 1:8**)
2. They **remembered** God's promise to honor those that honor Him. (**Daniel 1:9, 17-21**)
3. They **relished** in the fact that present sacrifice for God guaranteed future reward from Him later in heaven. (**Daniel 1:10-21**)

These teenagers, as well as the remnant that remained faithful with them were committed to three things. They made a resolve to honor God no matter what, to remember all His promises despite the current situation, and to relish in the fact that though were in dire circumstances, those circumstances could never circumvent God promises to His people.

Before we go any further, let's review just how dire their circumstances were. In 605 B.C. the Babylonian empire, headed by King Nebuchadnezzar ransacked Jerusalem, carrying off thousands across 700 miles of desert wasteland to Babylon where they would be trained for three years in Babylonian culture, literature, and religion. That was for those that weren't brutally slaughtered in the process. A second wave followed in 597 B.C. and a third and final in 586 B.C. where at this time the city was obliterated and the temple destroyed.

It was in the midst of this mess that Daniel and his three teenage friends made the resolve to honor God, committed to remembering His promises, and even relished in the fact that God's future promises are guaranteed regardless of present circumstances.

This means that we too can develop and live out character that reflects and honors Christ regardless of circumstances.

Apply the Solution

We have seen from God’s Word in the book of Daniel what some of the solutions are to living for Jesus in a Babylonian culture. The question now becomes how we specifically employ these tools in the society we live in. Below are three specific action steps we can begin employing today that can become daily habits which shape our lives and those around us.

The Tools Employed for Living Godly Lives by Christ Followers Today:

1. Resolve to live for Christ in 5 key biblical areas by committing to the following:

- Worship God: I am committed to being in God’s Word and prayer for at least _____ minutes every day.

- Equip Yourself: I am committed to reading _____ minutes per day through a book that will equip me in the areas of either theology or apologetics.

- Connect with Fellow Believers: I am committed to praying for, encouraging, and equipping _____ (fill in at least one persons name) as well as being prayed for, encouraged by, and equipped by this person at least once a week.

- Share the Gospel with the Lost: I am committed to praying for and sharing Jesus with at least three people on a daily basis (pray for them by name and have a gameplan for sharing Jesus with them)

- Serve Others: I am committed to serving anyone God puts in my path with whatever resources He has blessed me with.

2. Remember God’s promises given to His children by writing out what some of those promises are. Derive these from Scripture. (You will have to do some digging here but a good place to start is in the book of Psalms and Ephesians... there are lots of others ☺)

3. Relish in the fact that present circumstances can’t circumvent God’s sure promises. Do this by spending some time dwelling on and thanking God for the promises you just wrote down.

Recommended Resources

(The following resources are invaluable when it comes to digging deeper into the topics at hand just discussed in the previous section. The recommendation would be to read one book a month so as to have time to absorb it but not forget the material by taking too long to read through it.)

NCC Bible and Book Reading Plan (nccabq.org)

Your Daily Walk by Walk Thru the Bible (amazon.com or christianbook.com)

The Gospel According to Satan by Jared C. Wilson – This book exposes the lies of Satan and modern culture when it comes to how we live our lives and the biblical counterattack against them.