

#3 - Standing Up in a Smackdown World

9/07/2008 - Jim Johnson/Daniel 1:17-21

Is it possible to rise in an organization which is hostile to your faith? Is it possible today for a thoroughly Christian person to succeed in a thoroughly non-Christian culture? Daniel 1:17-21 would lead us to believe it is.

A. God gave wisdom to those who _____ Him. – 17

In verses 1-16 we know that Daniel and his friends were drafted to be trained to serve in the king's administration. In order to do that however, they were expected to eat from the royal commissary which would have included things that were forbidden by the Law of Moses. Because they feared the Lord more than man – they flatly declined to eat the Kings food.

The Fear of the Lord

Daniel and his friends had a reverential fear – an awe of God. And it was this reverential fear that that shaped their decisions and the way in which they processed life. Where did this reverence come from?

1. Daniel meant "God is my judge." Every time he heard his own _____ he was reminded that he belonged to God and that God would continually be the judge of his thoughts and actions.
2. He also learned to fear God through his _____.
He witnessed as God finally delivered his judgment on Judah through the Babylonian invasion. Daniel experienced God in his judgment. He saw the consequences that come to those who choose to defy the living God.

We are familiar with fear of the storm. A hurricane is fierce and scary, and overwhelming in its power. There is nothing that any human being can do to stop it or affect it in any way whatsoever. We are simply at the mercy of that storm. We ought to fear the Lord for the same reasons. He has the capacity of being fierce and overwhelming in His judgment. And once it has been determined there is nothing that any human being can do stop it or affect it in any way whatsoever. (Nahum 1:3)

Jesus instructed us to fear the Lord (Luke 12:4-5). Paul testifies that he himself feared the Lord (2 Cor. 5:11). The Bible teaches us that the fear of the Lord is a motivation that keeps us from sin (Ex 20:20).

It was the fear of the Lord that prompted Daniel and his friends to decline the offer to eat the King's foods. God gave them favor and they were excused and then given the right to eat vegetables and water. They eventually tested out and were admitted to the training program

According to verse 17 they were wildly successful in their studies. They showed evidence of having superior ability to reason and discern the nature of things clearly and interpret them correctly. They mastered the literature and the wisdom of the Babylonian culture as well. And beyond that Daniel was given a little extra – the ability to understand dreams and visions. The text makes it clear that though they may have been hardworking, they were given an extra boost from above – a true benefit that comes from the fear of the Lord (Prov 1:7)

B. The boss recognized their wisdom and _____ them. - 18-19

When their training was complete, each student was personally interviewed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. They were competing for just a few openings. Daniel and his friends were amazingly different and exceptional. How ironic in that they were religious young men who were competing at a secular university. The King added them to his staff.

Anybody with enough intelligence or a serious work ethic can get a 4 point average in their studies. But those who fear the Lord; those who honor Him are given seriously unfair competitive advantages.

The point of studying is to get a job. How great to walk into an interview as did Daniel and his friends – and make such a fantastic impression that the King jumps at the chance to hire you. Such is the lot of the person who fears the Lord.

C. The boss tested that wisdom and _____ them. – 20-21

The King had scores of advisors. Some were magicians and others conjurers. 2:2 includes sorcerers and astrologers. Whenever the King had an important decision to make, he would call out the crew. They would look at the omens, and study the stars looking for wisdom to give the king.

But The King compared the service he got from Daniel and friends and decided that they were way better the other guys. Keep in mind that these guys were about 20 years old at this time, and the rest of the court advisors were likely very mature. (Ps 119:98-100) Daniel and his friends were promoted. They went from being rookie counselors, to the preferred counselors of the King. Starters!

In fact Daniel especially was so good that he continued to serve in his capacity for a total of 65-70 years spanning at least 4 different royal administrations - two different world empires. He had the ear of every King. He influenced every major decision that was made. He outlasted the kings and their enormous administrations. In that sense he was more powerful than a King.

APPLICATION

It is possible to rise in an organization which is hostile to your faith? Yes! In fact it is to be expected – if you are wise enough to fear the Lord God and honor Him in all you do.

The person who fears the Lord _____ the ladder

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Use this section in your personal or family devotions to better apply the truth.

1. Do you know any modern day Daniels – people who are devoted to the Lord, and yet amazingly successful in their fields?
2. What traits do they share with Daniel?
3. What is it that is keeping you from going forward?