

What goals ought we to pursue in life?

What sorts of persons ought we to be?

What practices ought we to follow?

-David Clyde Jones. Biblical Christian Ethics

“A way of life that conforms to the will of God—the way that is good, that pleases God and fulfills human nature.”

Kingdom ethics applied rightly should lead people & societies into flourishing.

The core:

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.⁶ Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.⁸ **But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine,** and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

Daniel 1:1-8

But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. **They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”**

Daniel 3:12

At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.⁵ Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel **unless it has something to do with the law of his God.**”

Daniel 6:1-5

God's character & standards are the core of Kingdom Ethics.

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; **for in the image of God has God made mankind.**

Genesis 9:6

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, **who have been made in God's likeness.**¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.

James 3:9-10

The character:

*Notice a life of **humility**:*

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and **he asked the chief official for permission** not to defile himself this way.

Daniel 1:1-8

Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about,"²⁸ **but** there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.

Daniel 2:27-28

*Notice a life of **integrity**:*

They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and **neither corrupt nor negligent.**

Daniel 6:4b

*Notice a life of **courage**:*

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. **Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.**

Daniel 6:10

Godly character is both a continuous choice & collection of choices.

The crossroads:

Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king,¹⁴ and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up?"¹⁵ Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

Daniel 3:13-15

Resolve that's **never been tested is just a theory.**

*Notice their **conduct**:*

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, **we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.**¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand."¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

v16-18

Notice their confidence:

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, **the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand.**¹⁸ **But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.**”

v16-18

Notice God's faithfulness:

Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual²⁰ and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.²¹ So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace.²² The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego,²³ and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, “Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?”

They replied, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”²⁵ He said, **“Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”**

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire,²⁷ and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

v19-27

What God doesn't prevent us from; He'll be present with & protect us through.

At the crossroads of ethical decisions, trust God & do good.

Closing Considerations:

Grow in wisdom.

In **every matter of wisdom and understanding** about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. Daniel 1:20

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of **all kinds of literature and learning.**

Daniel 1:17

Study the scriptures & read broadly.

Grow in **prayerfulness.**

He urged them to **plead for mercy from the God of heaven** concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel 2:18

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, **he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem**. **Three times a day** he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Daniel 6:10

Set a place & time for **regular prayer.**

Surround yourself with **healthy community.**

Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to **his friends** Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Daniel 2:17

“Christian ethics must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise it could not be Christian ethics. It is, of course, quite possible –for it has often happened and often does happen – that Christian believers may have ethical convictions which do not arise from their faith in Jesus.

-Oliver O'donavan, Resurrection and Moral Order

Jesus is **the champion we long for & **the example** we look to.**