

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday September 12, 2021. "Standing Alone: The Better Way."

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're pushing through 2021, and in spite of the current spiking of cases, we're still fully committed to gathering in person. A growing group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's, youth areas and coffee spot have been fully open also and we're seeing a good response. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Sunday.

Last week we did a one off message about who we are at work...or whatever we find ourselves doing. It came with a great video of three of our people talking about how they see their work as "*working for the Lord*". But last Sunday was also a kind of an introduction to what it means and looks like to "*stand alone*", apart, in how we are in the world. As followers of Jesus, our lives are supposed to look and 'be' different, and that theme continues this Sunday. As you can see the actual theme is "*standing alone*", but we've added an additional understanding of when we stand alone, we do it in a better way. And this is why we added that one thought. Christians can sometimes turn the idea of standing for what we believe, value, as a call to battle. And in this battle we, (and I include myself in this confession), can turn other people who believe differently into the enemy. And then our battle is with them rather than simply just learning to stand alone in kindness and gentleness. Which is how scripture continually tells us to live this life, AND we're told how God calls us to live a different life. Let's start with some questions that can help us do some work about how we define and see the idea of standing alone for God.

What are some current issues you feel it's important to stand alone on?

Have you had opportunities to practice standing alone for what you believe?

How did that go?

What area of standing alone would you like to learn to practice in a better way?

There were two fairly long passages of scripture we used to build an understanding of what it looks like to stand alone. We'll hit one at a time and talk about the specific truths found in those passages.

First, read **Daniel 1:6-20**.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What did you notice from the life of Daniel about standing alone?

Kal pointed out two truths we see in the life of Daniel that show us what it looks like to stand alone.

1. Daniel had a clearly defined set of personal values. The passage said Daniel “*was determined not to defile himself*”. To pollute, lower himself. But, his decision was personal, (how he chose to live), well grounded, pre-decided. This is what it looks like, and what it means FOR ME to “**stand alone**”. Define the kind of person you want to become, find solid support, reason, for your choices, and then let that be the template for how you make decisions. Always asking; **Will this path/road take me closer or farther away from who I believe God wants me to be?**

2. Daniel did not mock, attack anyone else’s way of life. This is so important. Daniel simply asked; if he could practice a different personal lifestyle...politely. Let the benefits and qualities of his choices be his message, not highlighting the negative of the other. Daniel makes personal life choices...and then simply lives them out. A huge lesson in what it means to “**stand alone**”. Personally choosing to live differently than the world around you. You don’t have to flaunt yours as better, or tear down any other way of life. If you are “**standing alone**” in the right way, personally living how you believe the Lord is calling you to live, “*working for the Lord*”, **time will prove your choices right**.

Now read **Daniel 3:1-18**.

Again, what jumped out to you from this passage?

What did you notice from the lives of these three about standing alone?

There is a little bit of history that needs to come with this passage. In Babylon, the religion, and whatever gods that included, always were in submission to the image and representation of the state. The images and icons of the religion were just representative of the power and might of the empire. So, when these three were asked to bow down and worship the golden statue, they were not being asked to worship the gods of another religion. They were being asked to give honor and recognition to the icons that represented the power and might of the Babylonian empire. And most likely this statue was actually just a golden image of Nebechadnezzar himself.

So, in their refusal to bow down, give honor, tribute to this golden statue it wasn’t simply about worshipping other gods. It was about placing the state, and loyalty to it, above their loyalty to God. This is right out of the Ten Commandments when God said; “*don’t have any other gods before me*”. This was not a call to not chase other religions. It was a warning to be very careful what we give our allegiance to...even to the place we find ourselves living in. This is a scary warning, because we live in a society that, if we’re honest, worships the power and might of the nation. We place loyalty to our country right alongside our devotion and commitment to God. And this is exactly where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood apart from everyone else. What standing alone looks like in practice.

Where do we blur the line between our loyalty to our nation and our commitment to God?

How do we see this happen? What are things we can do to make sure we’re careful in how we live this out?

III Challenge

Standing alone...really alone, takes a lot of courage. But we are called to do it in an honorable way.

How could you grow your courage to live more for God?