

CULTURE SHOCK
Schoolhouse Rock
Daniel 1:4-21

I know what it feels like to send kids off to college. I have done it four times now. I don't like it. I will never forget the feeling of sadness and loss that I felt when I sent my oldest daughter off to the foreign land called Hattiesburg. I felt like I had thrown her to the lions. (I actually threw her to the Golden Eagles.) It did not feel like that to my daughter. It was the adventure of a lifetime for her! She was reveling in all of the new faces and places and information and opportunities that she found at college. This was her chance to shine. And shine she did! She is now just inches away from earning her doctorate. She has been in that foreign land for nine years now, and she is doing just fine, thank you very much! I still don't like it.

Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael were all sent off to college in Babylon with a host of other young, Jewish recruits. Their parents had no say in the matter. They were exposed to all of the BEST and the WORST that Chaldean culture had to offer. They were given free room and board and provided with the finest food that this wealthy world power possessed. They were given bacon for the first time. They were given regular supplies of undiluted liquor, even though they were still MINORS! They were given a chance to LIVE IT UP! And why not? Since they had lost everything that was precious and familiar to them, why not make the best of a bad situation and live out your days to some degree of well-deserved pleasure and peace? The only exceptions at the party among these recruits were our four young friends. **They WRECKED the culture curve in this class of 605 B.C.** They were probably not popular. Everyone wondered why these 4 boys couldn't just fit in with everyone else and not ROCK the BOAT. **But the Golden Warriors of that Babylonian class of 605 experienced their very first SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK because of Daniel and his friends. Class and culture in Babylon would never be the same.** Thank God! This is the basis of our biblical story. **Remember, *Culture Shock* is NOT just something that happens TO YOU when you are plunged into a foreign, faithless culture. It is what the Sovereign God does THROUGH YOU in that foreign culture as you live for and follow him in spite of obstacles and challenges that you face there.** Do you want to rock YOUR schoolhouse, or your workhouse, (or the Whitehouse) like Daniel did? If so, then I want you to learn a simple, powerful truth from Daniel.

Culture Shock begins NOT with outward accomplishments but with inward resolve.

Most people try to change the world by doing something spectacular. We think that we have to accomplish great feats in the world of athletics or academics or in the business or political world in order to have real impact. But Daniel's story challenges us in a very different manner. Before he was ever able to really impact Chaldean culture with his intelligence or his gifts and skills or even his amazing ability to interpret dreams, **Daniel made a simple inward decision to honor his faith commitments to God.** And this opened the way for the entire collection of amazing

stories that are recorded in the book of Daniel. His story really begins with this simple, radical decision: **Daniel 1:8 NKJV**

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

I love that first phrase. The word “purposed” is the Hebrew term “**Suwm**” that means “**to set, appoint, plant, or resolve.**” It is a word that describes a person’s unwavering determination to do (or not to do) something. Other translations say that Daniel “**made up his mind!**” **There was no double-mindedness in this man. He was not looking for “50 SHADES OF GRAY” in his moral life.** He knew what God had called him to DO and BE, no matter what address he currently held. Daniel refused to FORFEIT his usefulness to God throughout his captivity. The Word says that he would not DEFILE himself with the King’s food. This may not make sense to you until you realize that the food that came from the King had been offered to an idol, and eating that food was considered to be an act of WORSHIP before that god. That was not an option for this godly young Jewish worshipper of Yahweh! **Daniel’s resolve revealed the truth that you can become culturally relevant without becoming spiritually irrelevant!** Even if the people around you think that you are simple and stupid for following God’s “unreasonable” commands. Don’t sacrifice your faith for fifteen minutes of fame!

Some of you here today are still trying to decide if you are going to honor and obey God or not. You are still undecided about whether God’s Word will be the authority for your life or not. I hate that for you. Every day that you waver on this line gives the enemy one more chance to lead you to compromise your faith and forfeit your usefulness to God for a season or for a lifetime. Let Daniel’s story challenge you. He purposed in his heart not to defile himself. [By the way, that word “**Suwm**” is the same word used in **Daniel 1:7** when the C.O. “**determined**” names for Daniel and his 3 friends! Daniel’s response shows his resolve that they might be able to change his name, but they will never change his heart!]

I think it is important for us to see what the word means when it says that Daniel purposed “**in his heart**” not to defile himself. **When the bible speaks of our “heart,” it is referring to our “inner man.” This is the place inside of us where we determine what is going to drive us and who we are going to be. Our “heart” is the SEAT of our passions, our emotions, and our appetites!** Sadly, many of us think that we must live at the mercy of our passions, emotions, and appetites. We think these things are the SOURCE of our actions (**I marry you because I feel love for you; I divorce you because I no longer feel love for you!**), but they actually have a deeper source. Our heart is our INNER THRONE, and whoever sits on that throne is the one that determines what will come out of us. I am a passionate, emotional guy. I also have a big appetite! But I do not want to be DRIVEN by those aspects of my life. That gets

me in trouble all of the time! I want those aspects of my life to be UNDER the authority of God. For that to happen, I have to guard my heart: **Proverbs 4:23 NIV**

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

If you do not guard the throne of your heart, thieves will come to sit on it and will alter the outflow of your appetites and actions! The only way to guard your heart from LESSER LORDS is to GIVE IT TO GOD FIRST! Don't let anyone else (including YOU) have access to it without his permission! **Have you made up your mind about how you are going to guard your heart from potential throne stealers?** They can be as alluring and disarming as a beautiful girlfriend or as simple and enticing as a bucket of beer (or a bottle of wine – for you more refined folk!). These become lethal when they pull your heart away from the Creator and Lover of your soul! Are you wholly determined not to let anything come between you and your Savior, no matter how unassuming and harmless those things may seem? If not, then you will quickly be tricked into violating your beliefs and dishonoring your God. No one wondered who was sitting on Daniel's throne after his initial test of his faith.

Just think about this. Daniel's test did not come in the area of SEXUAL temptation or the command to renounce his faith and his God. Yours might! His test came to him on a silver platter. At first glance, it seems like it should not be a big deal at all. But Daniel knew God's word and God's requirements, and he would not eat something that would violate his spiritual conscience. Our spiritual life is just as affected by the simple things of life as Daniel's life was. The glory of God is not limited to great miracles and extravagant displays of power. **1 Corinthians 10:31 NLT**

31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Daniel would not even put something in his mouth if it would take away from the glory of God in his life! My mom used to say to me when challenging me about certain kinds of behavior: "Can you do that to the glory of God?" I hated that back then! But I love it now. Have you used this filter in your own life as a means of guarding your heart? **Sometimes, I think that we talk ourselves out of obedience to God because we are convinced that it will lead to our certain FAILURE.** In fact, we prophesy failure over ourselves by the way that we project the supposed results of obedience to God. "If I don't do that, I will lose my boyfriend!" "My boss would never let me off on Sundays. He would fire me for asking!" Really? How do you know? **Furthermore, how will you ever find out what God will do in response to your obedience if you always let possible failure keep you from obeying him in the real scenarios of everyday life?**

Daniel took a great risk in even speaking up about his inner resolve. Just saying this out loud to the Chief Officer could have resulted in his beheading. [Interesting note: Babylon is actually modern day IRAN and IRAQ. Beheadings are still common

there!] But this did not deter Daniel. I wonder, how could YOU demonstrate MORAL COURAGE today in your work place or school or city? I know this, only those who STAND UP will STAND OUT. This will put you in the spotlight in God's timing, and will allow you to have an impact on those who are the movers and shakers in society. I like to say it this way:

Culture Shock will always involve influencing the influencers!

We do not really stand out by mimicking and parroting the words and actions of the leaders and authorities around us. Our goal cannot be that of BECOMING what they are; but we can practice the art of RESPECTING who and what they are. This issue of respecting the authorities around us is a big deal. God's favor actually rests on the respectful behavior that we exhibit towards those in authority over us, even if they have no respect for God! **Furthermore, we must realize that disrespect for our authorities will never lead our authorities to respect God's authority.** I say that with absolute authority! Seriously, why would anyone in authority over us choose to give credit to our God if we act like JERKS toward them all day long? Daniel's resolve to keep himself pure did not frustrate or infuriate the C.O. when he learned of it. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, God granted Daniel favor in the C.O.'s heart: **Daniel 1:9 NLT**

9 Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel.

That is a miracle. Daniel had only been around this man for a very short time (like – they had not even had their first meal together yet!), but something about Daniel gave this man a tender heart toward him. That is a great gift. God did this same thing with men like Joseph and Jeremiah and Paul. Like them, Daniel did not violate that divine favor. It is also amazing to hear the Chief Officer's response to Daniel's request to be excused from lunch. **Daniel 1:10 NLT**

10 But he responded, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded."

Has it ever occurred to you that your obedience could result in harm to others? This would tend to discourage their cooperation! Daniel immediately saw that his stand could cost this man who was acting kindly toward him to lose his life! I have had to learn this in my own life as well. My obedience always has consequences beyond me. When it does, I must take that into consideration in order to see if there is a faithful but creative way to fully obey God without jeopardizing them. This is what led Daniel to make a creative APPEAL to his authority. **Daniel 1:11-16 NLT**

11 Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 12 "Please test

us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said. 13 "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see." 14 The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. 16 So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

Daniel did not give up after the first try. He found a way to obey God while still remaining under the authority of his masters. I think that too often we are anxious to find ways to get out from under the authority of our "captors," but that is not often God's way! It is vitally important for us to see that the MANNER of appeal that Daniel used was every bit as important as the REASON for his appeal. Daniel was not belligerent or offensively defiant. He did not respond to the offer of this pagan plate of food by pitching it on the floor and throwing a tantrum. He did not jump up and say, "I'll DIE before I will eat this tripe!" They would probably have obliged him. Daniel was not even arrogant when he made the appeal. Notice that in verses 12-13, he refers to himself and his friends as "Thy servants." He was able to maintain a spirit of SUBMISSION even in his CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE. That takes great integrity and self-control. It is one of the reasons why I respect the way that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the Civil Rights Movement in his day. He stood out because of that.

Have you ever tried to APPEAL a decision by your authorities rather than just rebelling against them or talking bad about them behind your back when they would not see things your way? Perhaps a change of attitude and strategy would benefit you greatly. It could also benefit them! [Don't you think that your boss might be more open to your ideas if you presented them with the potential success that they might bring to him?](#) Let me flesh that out for you a bit. You see, these young men became the stars of the Class of 605. **Daniel 1:17-19 NLT**

[17 God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams. 18 When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service.](#)

Can you imagine how PROUD Ashpenaz was of his recruits when they stood before King Nebuchadnezzar? This was a glorious day for their A.C.T. TESTS! And the C.O. and his crew could claim partial responsibility for their work. That is fun! Now, the only way that these boys were able to demonstrate their capacity and skills was by first being allowed to stay at their post. **If they had been belligerent or rebellious**

at first, then there would have been no context for these leaders to see that their capacity was linked to their faith. Furthermore, these young men honored their master's willingness to allow them to keep their faith commitments by working hard. They demonstrated that work ethic every day in their studies by their diligence in study and by their remarkable grades. **The text even says that God was the key catalyst in their successful studies.** Who wouldn't want that? I cannot tell you how many times I prayed for God to help me on a test at school or a task at work that was beyond my ability. God never honored that prayer when it was the result of laziness or foolishness. I also don't think he honors those requests when the only outcome of them is my own self-promotion! Why would God choose to divinely empower me for something that I only desire for my own fame and fortune? God grants true promotion to those who will bring him the greatest glory. This is exactly what happened to Daniel and his friends. This is how the first chapter ends:

Daniel 1:20-21 NIV

20 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. 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

What better thing could be said of Daniel and his friends than that their work was worth ten times what others could produce? I think that something like this should be said of every child of God. You ought to be the hardest, most productive worker at your place of employment. Your work ought to make your boss want to honor whatever it is that makes you so dependable and productive. And you ought to be looking for ways to let him know just what that is: Your awesome God!!

Let's pray.

OUTLINE OF ENTIRE MESSAGE

Culture Shock begins NOT with outward accomplishments but with inward resolve.

- *Daniel's first impact was not that of interpreting dreams or averting some national catastrophe. It did not involve miracles or displays of power!
 - It was a simple decision to honor his faith commitments!

Daniel 1:8 NKJV

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

-Define **PURPOSED** [Suwm – To set, appoint, plant, or resolve]

*Make up your MIND! No double-mindedness here.

- *Refuse to FORFEIT your usefulness to God before the race even begins.
 - Defilement leads to disqualification!
 - Become **culturally relevant without becoming spiritually irrelevant**.
 - *The Word of God must be your ultimate and final authority!
 - *Do you even KNOW the Word?
- *Compare term to previous verse w/ use of same word! **Daniel 1:7 NLT**
 - *They were called by these names for the rest of their lives!
 - How are you countering that stigma inwardly?
- Resolve to GUARD YOUR HEART! (Change my name not my heart!)

Proverbs 4:23 NIV

23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

- *Realize that your heart is the SEAT of your passions/emotions/actions
 - Your HEART is your INNER THRONE! Who is sitting there?
 - *Set your mind on the right things:

Colossians 3:1-2 NIV

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

- *Where are you being tempted to compromise your faith for success?
 - Sexual compromise; ethical compromise; financial compromise?
 - FIX YOUR FOCUS!**
 - *In Babylon, eating the King's food was an act of WORSHIP!

1 Corinthians 10:31 NLT

31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

- What EXCUSES are you using to justify your compromises?
 - *Prophecies of failure; fear of rejection; selfish ambition?
- How could you show MORAL COURAGE today in your environment?
 - *Daniel took a great risk in even speaking up! (Vs. 8b)

Culture Shock will always involve influencing the influencers!

*Not by simply **becoming** what they are, but by **respecting** who/what they are!

- God's favor rests on a respectful behavior toward authorities.
- Disrespect for authority will never lead them to respect God's authority!

*Daniel's RESOLVE revealed the Chief Officer's RESPECT. **Daniel 1:9 NLT**

- GOD gave Daniel favor with the C.O. (God honored Daniel w/ this.)
- This is consistent with how other men of faith had favor with captors.
 - *Joseph/Jeremiah/Paul

*Realize; your obedience could result in harm to others. **Daniel 1:10 NLT**

- This tends to discourage their cooperation!

*The principle of APPEAL to authority. **Daniel 1:11-16 NLT**

- Look for creative ways to obey God while remaining under authority.
- *Don't just give up after the first try!

*The importance of our MANNER of appeal.

- Not belligerent or offensively defiant. He did not begin w/ a tantrum!
- Not arrogant. Note how Daniel said "Thy Servants." (**See Vss. 12-13**)
- Maintaining submission even in civil disobedience
 - [My respect for Martin Luther King's manner of resistance]

*Realize that your obedience can also lead to the success of your authorities!

Daniel 1:17-19 NLT

- *This test involved more than the meals. They stretched their capacity in class! [They demonstrated a strong WORK ETHIC!]
- Why would God answer your prayer to bless your studies/work if it is only for your own self-promotion?

Daniel 1:20-21 NIV

20 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. 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.