

BE A CHANGE MAKER WITH A
STRONG HEART

APRIL 23, 2023

WORSHIP

We Praise Your Name,
Everlasting God, Whom
Shall I Fear, Made Me Glad,
Christ Be Magnified

WELCOME

Share an example of a
certain food or activity
that you know will
strengthen your
physical heart.

WORD

DANIEL 1:1-8
(READ THE REST OF
CHAPTER 1)

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god. ³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, ⁴ youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵ The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. ⁶ Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego. ⁸ But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

There are times when we need to compromise to come to an agreement with others over something that we disagree on. But when it comes to following God's principles, we must make up our minds to not compromise but obey Him faithfully. What will surely hinder us from becoming "changemakers" for the Lord is if we give way to the pressures from within (our own weaknesses), or from outside influence like our peers, social media, even authority or influencers in our world today. Daniel was a young man from Judah who was among the captives of King Nebuchadnezzar exiled into Babylon (vv. 1-2). He was among the outstanding young men chosen by the king to undergo training in the practices and culture of the Babylonians in order that they may enter royal service (vv. 3-5). No less than a total transformation into the "image of Babylon" was planned for Daniel and his friends from Judah. Even their Hebrew names were changed to reflect the gods of Babylon (vv. 6-7)! There was great pressure on Daniel to have a change of mindset from a worshiper of the God of Israel to a worship of the gods of Babylon. As followers of Christ, we face pressure today to compromise our faith and convictions from our workplace, even sometimes from our own family. But the greatest pressure that we battle is from our own hearts (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

If we don't know how to handle such kind of pressure, we will surely give in and we will not be the change maker that God intends for us to be. Let us learn from Daniel how we can be a changemaker with a strong heart that is devoted to God characterized by the following:

1. CONVICTION

A strong heart has conviction that is connected to God's Word. Godly convictions will help our heart resist the pressure to compromise. Daniel had such conviction (v.8) as he made up his mind that he will not defile himself with the king's food. Perhaps this was because these were foods forbidden by God in Deuteronomy; or perhaps these foods were offered to the gods of Babylon and eating them was an acknowledgment of these false deity. Daniel must have taken to heart the most central passage in the Law of Moses --- to love the Lord your God with all your heart, etc. (Deuteronomy 6:5) as well as the command in Joshua 1:8. Our convictions are formed by what is constantly absorbed by our minds. Develop godly convictions through prayer and time with the Lord daily, reading God's Word daily and memorize Bible verses, weekly accountability in a discipleship group and weekly corporate worship. Having godly friends surround you to check on how you are doing and responding to pressures will greatly help you. What is the foundation of your convictions? For believers in Christ, Jesus himself is our foundation. He is our Savior and Resurrected Lord, and what He says is the absolute truth! Like Daniel, let us not conform to this world but be transformed according to God's will (**Romans 12:2**).

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2. CONSIDERATE

When we have strong convictions about God, etc., there is a tendency for us to become proud and combative. Instead of being gracious like God is to us, polite and loving, we tend to judge and condemn others. Daniel and his friends showed that a strong heart is a heart that is humble and wise (vv. 8-9). They appealed to the authority, Daniel was honest and respectful. God gave him wisdom and favor before the commander (vv. 10-16). Are you following worldly wisdom rather than godly wisdom? We always must ask ourselves, "is this what you want for me, Lord?" and ask for His wisdom (James 1:5, 3:15-18). God desires that we do what is right and He will take care of our rights. Daniel, David, Gideon, etc. were all mistreated by others, but God defended them as they followed God's wisdom in how they responded to their opponents. God will protect you and give you a strong heart!

3. COURAGE

Obey God no matter what the cost and leave the results to Him (vv. 19-20). Daniel was not afraid of the consequences of obeying God as a young man, and all through his life and service to different kings (Daniel 6:3-10, 16-22). The greatest blessing from Daniel's courageous faith was the effect it had on the kings he served. The Persian king, Darius declared that everyone in the kingdom must revere the God of Daniel (vv. 25-26). King Darius recognized and gave praise to the real God and the Lord blessed Daniel with success under Darius and even under the next king! The reason why it is absolutely worth it to obey God is because of Jesus! He died for us and rose again, and there is nowhere else where we can experience that kind of love but with Him as our Savior and Lord. Be a change maker with a strong heart, today.

DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

What are some convictions you are living for presently? How were you able to evaluate if it's the right conviction to live by?

2. Setting It Right.

What do you think about the biblical convictions God commands His followers to obey? What makes it hard or easy for you to follow these convictions?

3. Living It Out.

What impacted you from the life of Daniel about having a strong heart in living out biblical convictions?

4. What biblical convictions do you need to courageously live out today? How will you have a strong heart like Daniel?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE
IN ACTION

Pray for family, friends and those who surround you who may be in compromising situations. Be a Daniel to them---live as a change maker who has a strong heart with conviction, being considerate and with courage to obey God fully. Share about Jesus, the foundation of our convictions so that others can also know Him as Savior and Lord!

WEEKLY
PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's help and comfort for the Sudanese people caught in violence and conflict.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; tension in East Asian and Middle East countries to stop.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE

DANIEL 1:8

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself...