

Living in a Pagan World  
Part 1  
“Standing Against the Tide”

This is a Pagan Culture

- It's not a surprise to God.
- Acknowledge it. How do we live in it? How do we change it?

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (NLT)

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. 2For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. 3They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. 4They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. 5They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

An example to follow in the Scriptures:

- The first six chapters of the book of Daniel. Daniel was a man who had to live in a pagan world.
- Context:
  - God's Holy nation. (Exodus 19:6)
  - Choose who you will serve. (Joshua 24:15)
  - The people became like the nations around them. God sent prophets to warn them, but they wouldn't listen.
- Northern Kingdom Israel. They were destroyed by Assyrians in 722 B.C.
- Southern Kingdom Judah. They didn't learn from Israel.

Jeremiah 2:13 (NLT)

“For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!

Ezekiel 5:5-8 (NLT)

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is an illustration of what will happen to Jerusalem. I placed her at the center of the nations, but she has rebelled against my regulations and decrees and has been even more wicked than the surrounding nations. She has refused to obey the regulations and decrees I gave her to follow. “Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: You people have behaved worse than your neighbors and have refused to obey my decrees and regulations. You have not even lived up to the standards of the nations around you. Therefore, I myself, the Sovereign LORD, am now your enemy. I will punish you publicly while all the nations watch.

God acted and Judah was exiled.

God's message to the exiles:

Jeremiah 29:4-7 (NLT)

This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: “Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food they produce. Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare.”

Daniel

Daniel 1:6-21 (NLT)

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. 7The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names: Daniel was called Belteshazzar. Hananiah was called Shadrach. Mishael was called Meshach. Azariah was called Abednego. 8But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. 9Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. 10But 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." 11Daniel 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." 14The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days. 15At 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. 16So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others. 17God 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. 18When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. 19The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. 20Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom. 21Daniel remained in the royal service until the first year of the reign of King Cyrus.

How to Live in a Pagan World

1st We must have the conviction to stand against the norm

- Notice the four young men were not the only ones taken from Israel.
- Daniel would not defile himself.
- He led his friends to do right rather than following the crowd.
- There has always been a remnant.

Matthew 7:22-23 (NLT)

On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'

Matthew 5:13-15 (NIV)

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

2nd The wisdom to fight the right fights in the right way

- He did not fight over every thing. For example, he let them change his name.
- He showed great wisdom and respect. He asked permission.
- He did not try to convince his overseer that he was wrong for eating the king's food.
- He did what was right himself.

2 Timothy 2:14 (NLT)

Remind everyone about these things, and command them in God's presence to stop fighting over words. Such arguments are useless, and they can ruin those who hear them.

Titus 3:10 (NIV)

Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.

3rd God blessed Daniel because He trusted in the Lord's ability to keep His promises

God used Daniel to change the culture from within. The King converted. God preserved the Jews.

No matter how bad the culture gets, God is in control. He is working for His glory and for our good.

Who do you want clapping for you...?

Romans 8:28 (NLT)

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

John 12:42-43 (NLT)

Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. For they loved human praise more than the praise of God.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

Quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1978 by New York International Bible Society.