



Living for God in an Ungodly Culture

Ice Breaker: What is your favorite workout or body-movement activity? Tell your group about it.

Read Together: Daniel 3:1-7 (MSG), Exodus 20:3-4

When Your Love for God Causes You to Stand Instead of Bow

1. You will be criticized for your choice.

Read Together: Daniel 3:8-12 (MSG) and Acts 5:29

Discuss:

- What are some things you feel convicted to choose? What kind of feedback have you gotten for doing them?
- What is your knee-jerk reaction to being criticized for a choice you have made?
- Look at the ways Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego responded. What cues do you take from them on how to respond to your critics?

2. You will continue to be challenged to bow down.

Read together: Daniel 3:13-15 (MSG) and Joshua 24:15

Discuss:

- For you in your life, how are you pressured to bow down?
- How do you deal with the pressure to conform to what others say is right?
- Have you encountered any conflicting thoughts about whether those pressures are right? Explain those feelings and why you are conflicted.

Consider:

- Our culture can have many gods. Education, medical miracles, television, sports, financial security, the perfect home... Take a minute and consider how you fill in the blank with what is most tempting for you to worship. (I know!!! We don't like to call our desires worship, and maybe we aren't worshipping those "things," but what if we are? Let's check our hearts and see what we are worshipping. Is it God? Or is it something else alongside God?)

3. You will receive courage from the Holy Spirit to stand.

Read together: Daniel 3:16-18 (MSG)

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

- Jim Elliot

Discuss:

- "But even if He doesn't..." When we ask God for help with a situation, we can encounter fear that He won't answer the way we hope. What have you been asking God for?
- What if He doesn't bring the deliverance you hope for? Imagine your disappointment and the response you may have. Is your heart inclined to say, "Even if He doesn't, I will not bow down to other gods?"

4. You can be confident God is standing for and with you.

Read together: Daniel 3:19-26,28 (MSG) and Acts 7:54-60

Discuss:

- Recall the stories of Thomas Hawkes, Jim Elliot, and the stoning of Stephen that Pastor Jason talked about. What are your reactions to these martyrs' stories?
- Do you get excited at the prospect of being able to lay down your life for the Lord and the truth?
- Do you get fearful at the prospect of being required to lay down your life for the Lord and the truth?
- What does the confidence that God is standing FOR and WITH you bring to your actions?

Additional points to ponder:

- In our circumstances, we may not face persecution or a fiery furnace because we stand instead of bow. On the other hand, it might be WAY worse than what the Hebrews faced in Daniel Chapter 3.
 - What are some things we might face?
- The temptation to compromise might not be as obvious as a 9-foot gold statue.
 - What are some subtle things that might tempt us to compromise?
- Our “fiery furnace” may be that we are allowed to experience a trial so that we can receive deliverance from something that has been holding us back.
 - Have you experienced trials that you would liken to a figurative “fiery furnace?”
- If you read the text of the fiery furnace in Daniel 3:25, you see a small (but very significant) detail that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were unbound. In verse 24, Nebuchadnezzar confirmed that they had tied the men up before throwing them in the fire. Then, in verse 27, we see that when they come out to talk to the king again, they don't even SMELL like SMOKE!!! The ONLY thing that was destroyed in the fire were the bounds that held them.
 - What bounds have you been delivered from through trials?
- Here are two significant questions to really ponder:
 - Are you willing to lay down your life for the God you love?
 - You may not be martyred, but you might face trials to set you free so that you can bring more glory to God. Are you willing?
 - You may not be that committed to the One who saved you. If that is you, talk about it with your group and let's ask God to strengthen our conviction for TRUTH.

Pray together:

Father, we do not know what plans You have for us. We do not know if we will be called to lay down our lives to the point of death or if we will experience trials to deliver us from things that hold us back from You. In any case, we want to be faithful to You. No matter what, we do not want to bow to the things of this world. Please give us a CLEAR mind to hear Your voice and the gift of DISCERNMENT to know when we should not bow. Help us to see the battles YOU want us to fight. Help us to KNOW without a doubt, what You would have us do to STAND for what is RIGHT. Help us to STAND for TRUTH. But not our version of truth....YOUR TRUTH...the ONLY TRUTH. We need Your help to see through the lies of the enemy and the deception of our culture. Please show us clearly what You would have us do in each moment. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.