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Daniel: Tempted to Compromise

Daniel 1

In A.D. 156 a hostile Roman ruler threatened to burn Bishop Polycarp at the stake unless he renounced his faith. Few of us today face this kind of temptation to deny Christ. Yet our daily temptations to compromise our commitment to Jesus are just as serious. The seemingly small decisions we make carry with them far-reaching consequences both in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

GROUP DISCUSSION. When is compromise good and when is it bad?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. List three to four temptations you are presently facing.

Daniel confronted one of these “small” temptations. Having been forcibly exiled to Babylon, he was offered a prestigious education in the best school in the country. The problem, however, was that this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity also required a small compromise.

Read Daniel 1.

1. Why were Daniel and his friends brought to Babylon and selected to enter the king's service (vv. 1-4)?

2. What tactics were used not only to train these young men but also to help them blend into Babylonian culture (vv. 4-7)?

3. In what ways are we pressured to conform to our surrounding culture?

4. Daniel and his companions accept the education offered by Nebuchadnezzar, the possibility of attaining top positions in the pagan empire and new names (vv. 4-7). Why do you think they agreed to these things but refused the king's food (v. 8)?

5. Why might it have been easy for Daniel to rationalize this seemingly trivial compromise?

6. In what small ways are we tempted to compromise our lifestyle or beliefs?

7. What creative arrangement does Daniel make with the chief official and the Babylonian guard (vv. 8-14)?

How is his proposal an expression of his trust in God?

8. In what situations do people ask you to compromise your convictions or beliefs without realizing it?

What creative alternatives might you propose?

9. In what ways does God honor the trust and obedience of the four young men (vv. 15-20)?

10. What might have happened to Daniel and his future ministry if he had compromised here?

11. In what ways does our obedience in “the little things” have far-reaching implications in our service to Jesus?

12. How can Daniel’s example help you respond to one temptation to compromise you are facing today?

Pray that God would give you wisdom and discernment to be in the world but not of the world (John 17:15).

Now or Later

In situations similar to Daniel’s, Christians often go to one of two extremes. Some won’t even attempt to cooperate with what they consider to be a pagan system. Others cooperate to the point of losing their distinctiveness. Why are both extremes counterproductive to our desire to be faithful witnesses to Christ?