

So, You Want to Grow Up?
Never Compromise Your Convictions
Daniel 1:1-21

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Text Introduction: Our theme verse as a church for this year is Luke 2:52. “And Jesus grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and men.” I trust that you are striving to do that. I want to help us to take that growth to a new level. I began thinking about some Biblical examples of this kind of growth. I was drawn in the text to examples of youth or children who exemplify maturity. We will spend the next several weeks examining these stories looking for the principles to help us grow. Today we begin with the example of Daniel and 3 other Hebrew youth.

Text: ¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.

³ Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king’s descendants and some of the nobles, ⁴ young men in whom *there was* no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who *had* ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans. ⁵ And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of *that time* they might serve before the king. ⁶ Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷ To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel *the name* Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.

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. ⁹ Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. ¹⁰ And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who *are* your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.”

¹¹ So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² “Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king’s delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants.” ¹⁴ So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.

¹⁵ And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies. ¹⁶ Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷ As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

¹⁸ Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. ²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding about which the king examined them, he found them

ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers who *were* in all his realm.²¹ Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

Introduction: Daniel lived in the days of the Babylonian takeover of Israel. Daniel was drafted into the personal service of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar set out on a plan to make-over certain youth of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to direct the learning, the diet, and the way of life of certain young men. At the end of this “training” period, the hope was that these young men would serve the king. Daniel, even as a young man, recognized Nebuchadnezzar’s plan. Daniel recognized immediately that at the core of Nebuchadnezzar’s plan was the hope that Daniel would turn from his faith in the God of Israel. Though it would have been easy to go the way of many, Daniel had a different resolve.

Daniel 1:8 is the place to start in this text. “⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart...” Here’s the key. We are asking the question, “So, you want to grow up?” There must be a resolve, an unwavering commitment—a conviction to never compromise your core principles in life.

I want us to consider the characteristics of the kind of commitment to never compromise our convictions.

Commitment is inseparable from conviction.

The first thing that we learn from Daniel and his three friends is that commitment is inseparable from conviction. We generally do what we have the conviction to do.

The King set out to change their way of . . .

- Thinking (v.4)—The king wanted them to learn a new language and new literature.
- Living (v.5)—The king wanted to change their diet. Their diet represented more than just the things they ate and drank. For these Hebrew young men, their diet represented a way of life—a godly way of life.
- Worship (v.7)—Most of all, at the heart of the king’s agenda, was his desire to change their worship. We notice this in the names. Whereas there has been much discussion on the significance of the meaning of the names, it is generally recognized that their Hebrew names all had something to do with the one true God. Their new names have something to do with referencing pagan gods.

The statement made about Daniel in 1:8 is a reference to his strong conviction that he was going to remain true to the one true God.

We must come to the place in our lives where we believe that some things are right and some things are wrong.

George Shultz was Secretary of State during the Reagan administration. Before newly appointed ambassadors left to their assigned country, Shultz met with them. He would have them go to a globe he kept in his office. He would instruct them to find their country on the globe. As a final test, so to speak, he would make the candidate go to the globe and prove that he or she could find his country. Mike

Mansfield was appointed to be U.S. ambassador to Japan. In his customary way, Shultz asked Mansfield to go over to the globe and find his country. Shultz would later say that what Mansfield did changed his way of thinking. Mansfield went to the globe, spun it, and put his finger on the United States. He said emphatically, "That's my country." Shultz said from that day forward, new appointees were told that story. He would send them off with these words, "Never forget you're over there in that country, but your country is the United States. You're there to represent us. Take care of our interests and never forget it."

We live in the kingdom of this world, but may we have the conviction to say as the Apostle Paul, "Our citizenship is in Heaven." (Philippians 3:20) That must be our conviction. We are going to get pulled and swayed by the world, so we must always remember to whom we belong and that must impact our commitment.

Commitment is strengthened by community.

Don't let it escape your notice that Daniel's resolve was strengthened by the resolve of others.

- Daniel and his 3 friends purposed together.

*As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.
Proverbs 27:17*

- Daniel and his 3 friends prayed together. (2:17-18)

⇒ Find a Church and find some friends who will help you to live out your commitment to Christ.

God never intended for us to be lone ranger Christians. C. S. Lewis said, "The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle with those who are." Before I went to college, I read the book of Proverbs. On July 13, 1988, I read Proverbs 13:20, which says, "He who walks with wise men will be wise." I began to pray that God would give me Christian friends in college since I was going to a college where I knew not a person. On my first evening with my roommate, having already discovered that he was a believer, he was reading His Bible, and asked, "What do you think it means to be wise?" I knew then that God had His hand on my life and was going to provide exactly what I had prayed. I knew that if I relied on God, He would use others to strengthen my commitment to Him.

Commitment is necessary for future challenges.

Daniel's resolve to not eat the king's food and drink the king's drink was not his last challenge to his convictions. There were greater challenges to come. From this we must learn:

- Today's test of your commitment is preparation for tomorrow's crisis.
- When we obey, next time is easier.

It is also true that when we disobey, it is more difficult to obey the next time.

I love the story about Athanasius, early bishop of Alexandria. Athanasius stoutly opposed the teachings of Arius, who declared that Christ was not the eternal Son of God, but a subordinate being. Hounded through five exiles, he was finally summoned before emperor Theodosius, who demanded he cease his opposition to Arius. The emperor reproved him and asked, "Do you not realize that all the world is against you?" Athanasius quickly answered, "Then I am against all the world."

One of the first verses I remember memorizing is Jeremiah 12:5. Sometimes it is a daily reminder of the challenges ahead of me. "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with the horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan?"

Dear Christian, it is time that we realize that in order to carry out the plans that God has for us we must have resolve—commitment. May God find that in each of us today.