

**Intro:** Israel exiled into Babylon for their idolatry

Babylonian society was a Pluralistic Society Like Ours

1. Pluralistic - Pagan Society (Babylon), many gods, none exclusively over all
2. Culture of Greed, Power, and forms of spirituality
3. People from many nations, languages, and cultures are present (3:4-5, 7)

**Three options** for the Christian to be missional to a pluralistic society in which we live:

**1. Absorb the worldview around us**

- a. Judges 17:1-6
- b. Completely absorb
  - i. No difference b/w Christians and their surrounding society both internally and externally
- c. Partially absorbed
  - i. Accept the culture's prevailing worldviews internally (don't look different in character), but reject the culture externally and create a Christian "sub-culture" (still like the culture in character, but with Christian T-shirts, bracelets, music, movies, etc.)

**2. Fight against the worldviews and society around us**

- a. Psalm 137 – separate from our society
  - i. When taken into foreign land, these people will not have anything to do within the culture they have been exiled to.
- b. Christian Ghettos – huddle together in complete separation from the culture
  - i. Jeremiah 28:10-11, Hananiah prophesies a short exile
    1. Positive thinking, but a lie
    2. God condemned Hananiah later in chap. 28 for his lie
  - ii. No familiarity or desired understanding of the culture around
  - iii. Missionaries jump out of the ghetto and grab unbelievers and haul them into our "righteous society"
- c. Anti-culture attitude of rebellion against anything that comes from our society or has to do with our society.
  - i. Partial rebellion, we take the forms that we like but will have nothing to do with the people

**3. Become missional toward the society and worldviews around us**

- a. **Seek the welfare of the city** for you're going to be here a while
  - i. Jeremiah 29:1-11
    1. Go about daily life, settle in for a long haul, so to say
    2. Build houses, start businesses, marry off your children, etc.
    3. Pray for the city and call out to Me, says the Lord.
  - ii. Life of Daniel
    1. Daniel was a civil servant, he worked for the secular government
    2. Daniel was not a preacher, a pastor, or a "professional" minister.
    3. He was more like you than he was like me 😊
  - iii. Live within and among the culture, understanding its arts, language, learning, politics, and its idols (Dan 1:1-7).
    1. Daniel and his friends were taken into the culture and educated within the culture
    2. They did not fight or rebel against this, but accepted it as God's people
    3. They entered into the culture and immersed themselves in its language and learning (agriculture, mathematics, astrology, astronomy, language [Akkadian], history, etc.).
    4. They received different names
      - a. Daniel = God is Judge

- i. Belteshazaar = May Bel protect his life
    - b. Hananiah = YHWH is gracious
      - i. Shadrach = Achu [god of the moon] is mighty
    - c. Mishael = Who is like what God is?
      - i. Meshach = Who is what Achu is?
    - d. Azariah = YHWH helps
      - i. Abednego = servant of Nebo
  - 5. Each name went from having a form of El or YHWH in it to having the name of one of the pagan gods
- iv. APPLICATION:
  - 1. Work to understand the arts, literature, music, and learning of your culture
  - 2. Get to know people and what they think, feel, and believe
    - a. Treat them with respect and love, even when they are your enemies, attacking you or your intelligence for believing differently
    - b. We need to work to understand the philosophy and worldviews of our culture, even when, especially if, we disagree
    - c. Don't shy away from the teaching of the world simply because it is not in-line with Scripture, rather engage it and understand it so that you can master it and tell where it differs and reveal its weaknesses
- b. **Remain distinctively Christian** even from within the culture (Dan 1:8-
  - i. Although they entered into the culture and learned it, were a part of it accepting the new names and the new education, they also remained distinct from it (vv. 8-21)
    - 1. Not about vegetarianism (the issue was not merely meat, which is lawful, but the King's choice meat)
    - 2. No evidence that it was regarding kosher law (no evidence as to why it was not acceptable, particularly the wine mentioned as well), but it may have been
    - 3. Most likely had to do with what the meal meant, i.e. the King's choice: affluence, power, superiority (the power and affluence would defile their distinction as God's people and lead to compromise) and a complete loss of distinction
    - 4. Daniel and fellows would not compromise their distinction as God's people, when the will to power arose. This made them different.
  - ii. We must **learn to differentiate** between what things in our culture we accept, what we need to reject, and what can be adapted and maintain distinctively Christian virtues
    - 1. Some things within a pagan, pluralistic culture are good due to common grace
    - 2. Some things within a pagan culture are bad and need to be rejected
    - 3. Some things merely need to be adapted, they can be redeemed to glorify God
  - iii. Internal distinction **displayed through outward gospel-living** is what sets the Church apart
    - 1. Not mere external distinction with no heart difference
    - 2. Not mere separation from the culture, either
- iv. 7 Ways of Distinctive Gospel Living (not an exclusive list):
  - 1. Derek Kidner lists it this way:
    - a. **Create Christian community which is counter-cultural and counter-intuitive.**
      - 1. In the Christian ghetto, 'fellowship' is basically just a set of nurturing relationships, support and accountability. That is necessary, of course.
      - 2. In a missional church, however, Christian community must go beyond that to embody a counter-culture,' showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.
        - a. **In sex:** We avoid both the secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. We show a deep respect and honor to every individual of the opposite sex. We also exhibit love rather

than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual lifestyles are different.

- b. **In money:** We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, the economically and physically weak.
  - c. **In power:** We are committed to power-sharing and relationship-building between races and classes that are alienated outside of the Body of Christ.
  - d. **In general:** a church must be more deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice than traditional liberal churches and more deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion than traditional fundamentalist churches. This kind of church is profoundly 'counter-intuitive' to American observers. It breaks their ability to categorize (and dismiss) it as liberal or conservative. Only this kind of church has any chance in the non-Christian west.
- b. The primary distinction between Daniel and his friends and the culture in which they lived was that God was with them (v9,17)
2. **Love your enemies** and work to better the lives of unbelievers
- a. Daniel saved the false prophets, the 'wise men' of Babylon from the destructive wrath of Nebuchadnezzar (2:13-19). He worked for the welfare of God's enemies!!!
    - i. Work for the welfare of your enemies! How like Jesus, isn't it?!
    - ii. Simply, can you invite unbelievers to your home?  
- "We are called to be witnesses, not judges or lawyers."
3. **Proclaim the Good News of Jesus in everyday life**
- a. Daniel revealed the eternal Kingdom of God (His sovereignty and superiority over all) when he interpreted Nebu's dream (2:44-45, 47)
  - b. Proclaim the gospel in the way that you live: grace (I am better than no one else), repentance (I can freely admit my own weaknesses and lose my own power), faith (I trust only in Jesus for my salvation and my significance).
  - c. In this gospel we find a deep distinction from the pattern of world, which seeks for power and works for self-righteousness, comparing themselves to themselves and true grace is a hidden and deceitful form of performance; which seeks for power and cannot give up its own out of fear, defining oneself by success and power and not able to truly repent or show weakness; which seeks to save itself, to be its own savior, whether in self-pity (trying to save myself and am failing) or in boasting (trying to be my own savior and am succeeding), and has no room for the Christ as the *sole* work of salvation .
4. **Do not compromise worship** when the opportunity comes
- a. Daniel and his friends would not compromise their worship while in the culture. They would not bow to other gods, be they man or heavenly beings. Their distinction brought jealous hatred upon them from others, who wanted to see them fall.
  - b. When the opportunity arises to compromise our greatest love, see Jesus, and stand firm in our distinction as the people of God in Christ. Reveal the gospel of grace, as opposed to self-righteous idolatrous systems of the world (give up power, rather than seek to gain it at any cost)
5. **Work hard with integrity and faithfulness**
- a. Daniel worked with integrity for the good of the pagan king so that no evidence of corruption or negligence could be found in his work or in his

person (chap 6). He worked faithfully, honestly, with integrity, and so that the king might not suffer loss.

- b. “My Fair Lady” – “Words, words, words! I’m so sick of words.... Sing me no song, read me no rhyme, don’t waste my time, show me.”
6. **We must learn to continually think through how the gospel of Jesus Christ changes the way that we live**, and our words should never be about our rightness, but rather as mere witnesses to what simply has taken place and what God has promised to fellow sinners like us when we repent and trust in Jesus.
7. **PRAY** for the strength to glorify God by living missionally
  - a. Daniel immersed himself in gratitude toward God and for humbly asking for His provision as he prayed. Daniel prayed in the midst of this culture and remained distinctive by doing so. Though an exile, he thanked God daily.

God used Daniel and his friends to bring the revelation of Himself to the Babylonian empire, which was a meeting place for all of the then known world. By the method of exile, God had brought His people to the world, so that He would be known as the God over all that exists. The constant message of Daniel and his friends is that the Most High God is the one true King and His sovereignty over all makes Him the only one to be worshipped. Daniel calls Nebuchadnezzar to repentance and acknowledgement of God’s reign. And the amazing thing about God is that He brings Nebuchadnezzar to the knowledge of Himself and the gospel goes out to all the peoples through this one King.

Daniel worked within the culture by becoming incarnate into the culture. He immersed himself in its learning, its language, its politics, its social structure. He was not a preacher, a priest, or a full-time missionary. He was a civil-servant in a pagan society, working for the good of that society with all of his vigor. Though he was a part of the culture and deeply invested within it, he remained distinctively a follower of YHWH. He worked faithfully, with integrity, and would not compromise for comfort or to achieve power by stepping on others. He worked to save his enemies, who were unbelievers and hated him. He yearned for the glory of God and sought the welfare of the city. This is how we live missionally in our society. We do not have to be preachers, priests, or incredible apologists. We must enter into the society to learn its language, its learning, its politics, its structure. We must work at our jobs, whatever those are in the society with vigor, faithfulness, integrity, and without compromise for power or comfort. When the opportunities come to compromise what we believe, and they will come, we must stand up to reveal the gospel of Jesus, the glory of God, the worship of God, and the welfare of the city. We must seek the good of the society as we work with integrity. We must proclaim the truth of the gospel as we give up our own power and live with grace upon our lips. We must be people of prayer, constantly thanking God for what He has done in Jesus Christ and asking Him for the resources that we need to live well and to live missionally at our workplace, in our families, among our peers, and within our city. May we be a city within a city, that lives not merely by a different standard, but by a completely different set of rules. Where God is the center, not power of self. Where God is the savior, not my political view, my family’s pedigree, not my bank account, not my earthly government, not my own self-will.

This is what it means to live missionally for the glory of God. We are in exiles on this earth. It is not our home, but we are to seek its welfare and work for its good. We at EBF must work to be counter-cultural and counter-intuitive to the way that the world thinks and believes. Why? Because the gospel is counter-cultural and counter-intuitive. It is power through weakness, salvation through defeat, blessing by sheer grace, passive righteousness given from the heart of God.

Ultimately, we are to proclaim the gospel from within the culture. Focus on showing how the gospel of Jesus Christ makes us view power differently (since I am saved by grace alone, not by my own power, I can give up my power and reputation), salvation differently (I am not saved by my own rightness or holiness, but by the grace of Jesus), grace differently (grace cost God immensely, the blood of Jesus for my sin), joy differently (joy through repentance and brokenness, not success in temporal comforts and wealth), race differently, where we are all in desperate need of a glorious savior and where every person is equal at the foot of the cross, where the power of Jesus gives life and the glory of God renews the broken-hearted. Let us live together in the light of the glorious gospel of our great God and Savior, Jesus the Christ! Long live the King!