



MCG
Study Guide
Daniel
January 17 – 23

Wednesday January 17th – Peer Pressure

Reading

Read Daniel 3:1 - 7.

As soon as you hear... you must fall down and worship the image of gold...

We may not think that we have the same pressure to bow down to idols and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego but there are many modern-day equivalents where believers in Jesus are asked to bow to ideologies and cultural trends that, as Christians, we simply must resist.

What can make this even more difficult is that there always seem to be others who claim to be followers who justify these compromises of conscience. I'm sure that there were other Jews who bowed, who knows they may have even tried to convince Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego also. Warning them that their "stubbornness" would cause problems for everyone else. You can just imagine the pressure they must have felt to compromise. "After all doesn't God look at the heart? And in my heart I won't be bowing."

In a *Los Angeles Times* poll (3-19-89) found that most women choosing abortion—at least 70 percent—say they believe abortion is immoral. In David Reardon's book *Aborted Women: Silent No More*, one woman shares why she had an abortion even though she felt it was wrong:

My family would not support my decision to keep my baby. My boyfriend said he would give me no emotional or financial help whatsoever. All the people that mattered told me to abort. When I said I didn't want to, they started listing reasons why I should. I started feeling like maybe I was crazy to want to keep it...I finally told everyone I would have the abortion just to get them off my back. But inside I still didn't want to have the abortion. Unfortunately, when the abortion day came I shut off my feelings. I was scared to not do it because of how my family and boyfriend felt. I'm so angry at myself for giving in to the pressure of others. I just felt so alone in my feelings to have my baby.¹

I'm sure that if you spend some time you could think of many ways in which the pressures of the prevalent culture are challenging Biblical faith. How will we

¹ Amy Sobie and David C. Reardon, Ph. D., "Who's Making the Choice? Women's Heightened Vulnerability During a Crisis Pregnancy," [Post-Abortion Review](#) (January/March 2000)

stand up against such pressure? It begins with a pre-determination to bind our heart to not compromising our beliefs. This is not to say we are unreasonable or unwilling to consider another's point of view. But on those issues where God's Word is clear, we must be willing to take a stand – even when all others choose to bow.

Mediation/Application

Take time to think about those issues that are being challenged by contemporary culture. How prepared are you to stand up for your position and even defend it against those who challenge you? Consider taking out a book from the church library on that topic in order to be better prepared to respond.

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- As we think of Martin King Luther Jr. justice is a word that would fit well with our thoughts. Today pray for those who may be marginalized and that God might show you a way to stand up for truth.
- Pray for those in our own NBBC family who you may know that are being swayed or blinded by contemporary culture. Ask God if there is a posture or action you can take to sway them back to Him.

Thursday January 18th – Facing Accusations

Reading Daniel 3:8 – 12

At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews.

In 2 Timothy, Paul warns his prodigy that in the last days people will be “...always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.”² There seems to be a glut of information coming at us from all kinds of sources but it seems that discerning the truth is not so easy.

A recent cover story for *The Economist*, an international magazine, was entitled “Yes, I’d lie to you: The post-truth world.” The article analyzed the dishonesty that’s wreaking havoc in politics, journalism, social media, and many other areas of our common life. One expert quoted in the article said, “Right now, it pays to be outrageous, but not to be truthful.”

The article also highlighted one of the most effective ways to tell lies—by hiding the truth in a glut of information. “‘Information glut is the new censorship,’ says Zeynep Tufekci of the University of North Carolina, adding that other governments are now employing similar tactics. China’s authorities, for instance, do not try to censor everything they do not like on social media, but often flood the networks with distracting information. Similarly, in post-coup Turkey, the number of dubious posts and tweets has increased sharply. ‘Even I can no longer really tell what is happening in parts of Turkey,’ says Ms. Tufekci, who was born in the country.”³

“Fake news” is a term that has become part of society’s common parlance. It is hard to discern between gossip columns and news reports. Sometimes, it is Christianity that is the object of distortion through information glut. A casual search on the internet will give you all kinds of, so called *proof* that:

- Jesus never existed.
- Christians believe in unicorns.
- The Bible is false.
- Christianity is a lie.

And so many other accusations.

So how should we respond in the face of such false accusations and fake news swirling around the good news? Not all of us feel as if we are able to

² 2 Timothy 3:7

³ Adapted from “Yes, I’d lie to you,” *The Economist* (9-10-16).

intellectually argue against everything that is hurled at our faith but there is a way in which we can silence critics.

Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to live lives of faithfulness and consistency so can we. The truth of Christianity will reveal itself in and through our lives as we are faithful in consistently conforming ourselves to its teachings. As the saying goes, "time will tell". And as we live as Jesus lived and strive to be like Him, the truth of what He taught will undermine the false foundations upon which our critics evidence is supported.

Mediation/Application

Think about where, in your life, are you compromising what you know Jesus would have you do? Ask Jesus to forgive you and ask for His grace to conform your life to living according to the truth of His Word. What practical steps can you take to turn towards what Jesus' teaching and example?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- NBBC Leaders meet tonight. Pray for God's wisdom and His Spirit to be evident as they listen and respond to Him and one another. (Council – ministry leaders, Elders – care for the people, Board – Vision & Admin)
- Today is the start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Pray that unity would be experienced at NBBC and an ability to celebrate diversity without compromise of core essential beliefs.

Friday January 19th – God’s Power

Reading 3:13 - 15

Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?

When we think about God’s power we are right to think of it as unlimited. But too often I feel we have a “Hollywood” version of power in our mind. The kind of power that forces itself against others, overwhelms its competition, crushes its opponents and gets its own way. But this is not the power we find God wielding in Scripture.

God’s power is the power which submits itself to others. It is the type of power that lays aside its rights and privilege. It is a power that serves the weaker and protects the poor and does not bruise the broken-hearted. It is the power of restraint.

God’s power is a power that is under control, but is not controllable; we cannot manipulate God’s power for our own ends. Paul prays in Colossians that we would be strengthened with all power, but not so we can use it as we wish, to get our way or even to avoid dangers. On the contrary he writes, “...we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...”⁴

Power to endure and be patient – this is not they type of power the world wants. But this is the power of God that is available to us. Yes, He may sometimes rescue us, He can easily do this. Yet, more often than not, He extends His power to us so that we might endure patiently.

A recent television documentary pointed out that the cheetah survives on the African plains by running down its prey. The big cat can sprint seventy miles per hour. But the cheetah cannot sustain that pace for long. Within its long, sleek body is a disproportionately small heart, which causes the cheetah to tire

⁴ Colossians 1:9 – 11

quickly. Unless the cheetah catches its prey in the first flurry, it must abandon the chase.

Sometimes Christians seem to have the cheetah's approach to ministry. We speed into projects with great energy. But lacking the heart for sustained effort, we fizzle before we finish. We vow to start faster and run harder, when what we need may be not more speed but more staying power--stamina that comes only from a bigger heart. Motion and busyness, no matter how great, yield nothing unless we allow God to give us the heart.

Sometimes when the pressure is on we pray for God's power to overcome, or to be rescued but God's power is not always like that. Deliverance is the way the world defines the strength of one's power, but God's power is measured by is endurance.

Mediation/Application

Think about where you need God's power to endure in your life? Read over Colossians 1:9 – 14 but replace the word "you" with your name. After you have done this use this passage as a guide for prayer.

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- Do you see God's power in your neighbourhood or workplace? Can you think of one situation or person that demonstrates His power working? Pray that this situation or person's story would be told and heard.
- In our own lives we can rely on our own power. Pray that God would reveal to you one area that you need to surrender to His power.

Saturday January 20th – Civil Disobedience

Reading Daniel 3:16 – 18

...we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods...

There are times when doing the right thing, the moral thing, means doing the illegal thing in the eyes of the law. Some suggest that we are seeing subtle and disturbing trends in Canadian culture that suggests that Christians may soon have to take a stand which may result in them feeling the squeeze of nuanced forms of persecution.⁵

Of course this is not a new experience for the people of God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego experienced it. The early church experienced it and Jesus warned us that such would be the case. Yet, the option to conform to authorities by compromising our faith is never entertained. Rather the church chose to remain faithful, to embrace the persecution and bear witness to their God.

Martin Luther King Jr. reminds the us that "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state and never its tool."⁶ Jesus said we are to be the "salt of the earth"⁷; salt has a preserving quality and was used to keep meeting from putrefying. As Christians, it is our responsibility to stand up against injustice and to stand against unjust laws even while embracing the cost of our disobedience to unjust laws. Someone must be able to stand up to the government and say, "this is wrong!" The church is the instrument God uses for calling nations to act justly.

This may be new to our generation in Canada but all around the world and throughout history, the church has embraced the hardships which come for remaining faithful to the teachings of Jesus. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army once said, "No great cause ever achieved a triumph before it furnished a certain quota to the prison population." We may not yet find ourselves in the types of situations where we must be jailed for our protests, but we need to pre-determine that we will follow Jesus even if that is required.

⁵ You may want to read some of the articles from the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in this regard. You can find them here:

<https://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/ReligiousFreedomCanada>

⁶ *Martin Luther King, Jr., Strength to Love (Fortress Press, 2010), page 59.*

⁷ Matthew 5:13

At the heart of Christian acts of civil disobedience is a belief that we live our lives for an audience of one. We live in a culture that suffers from the disease to please, we are constantly being encouraged to live for other people's opinions of us rather than who we actually are before God. The danger of living for other people's approval leads many people to become slaves to approval addiction. And as with any addiction this desire, that is always concerned about what others think, is fueled by unhealthy ways of thinking and acting that feed the addiction. There are many people living in bondage to what other people think about them.

The secret to the cure is to continually embrace and life and identity that is found in Christ. When we are secure in Him, then we will be secure enough to go against the flow, stand up to injustice and embrace persecution should we find ourselves in that position.

Mediation/Application

Think about some of the laws that you feel are unjust in Canada. Consider writing your local MP to express your concerns. Some issues you may want to consider are abortion, the legalization of marijuana, the present restrictions of government grants from the Canada Summer Jobs program to organizations that won't "attest" their approval of the Liberal governments abortion and transgender rights policies.

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- Research your MP and MPP for your area. Pray for our federal government and local MP's that they would hear and know God's truth.
- Courage. Pray for courage to act.

Sunday January 21st – Being Faithful When the Heat is On.

Reading Read Daniel 3

Sermon Notes:

Faith is,,,

- Being certain of _____ not necessarily being certain of what _____.
- Not necessarily void of _____.
- Not the _____ of our faith nor the _____ of our faith, but the _____ of our faith that makes faith “work.”
- Tested not as we believe against all odds that God will _____ but when God _____ give us what we want.

Mediation/Application

As you think about today’s sermon what is one action point that you are taking away?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- We have several at NBBC who are experiencing “heat”: a single parents who are low in income & energy, a teacher who faces difficulties with demonstrations of faith in classroom, and many others. Pray that these and others would be faithful in the “heat” and to discern God’s will/presence.
- Where is the “heat” coming from for you? Pray for those who bring the “heat”. It is an opportunity for you to be faithful.

Monday January 22nd – God’s Presence

Reading Daniel 3:19 – 25

Look! I see four men walking around in the fire... the fourth looks like a son of the gods.

God is not limited in how he can protect us. With Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego God used an angel to protect them from the fire, but in another remarkable story of God’s protection God used fire.

Terry and Sue Hammack were missionaries with Sudan Interior Mission and lived on a compound in Kano, a large city in northern Nigeria. On one occasion, the population of Kano erupted in dangerous rioting against Christians. Terry managed to smuggle his family to safety, but he felt compelled to stay and help “hold down the fort,” particularly as his job included operating the radio equipment. For several days they were trapped in the compound, surrounded by thousands of angry Muslims. Day after day, the missionaries expected an attack, and their lives were in jeopardy.

Finally everything settled down, and the assault of the compound fizzled. Terry wondered why. As he later talked to some of his contacts in Kano, he heard the explanation. To the frenzied crowds, it appeared as if the compound had been ablaze. Fire shot up from the walls, and these strange flames kept the rioters at bay. Yet there had never been any fire in the compound or the walls.

God is able to save and protect in many ways, and yet, the fact that we must be saved from difficulties assumes that we will find ourselves in difficulties. He does not promise that we will not face hardships, trials and persecutions, He promises something better – His presence. It is as we perceive that God is with us, that we will find ourselves less anxious and more at peace in the midst of our difficulties.

This is why spiritual practices, which help to make us conscious of God, are so valuable. When we are in the habit of acknowledging God in our day-to-day activities, if we can train our minds to wander towards Him throughout the mundane duties of our life. Then when the heat is on, we will find our minds turning towards God automatically.

It is the conscious awareness of God’s presence in the middle of hardships which can bring peace in a crisis and allow us to look with anticipation at what God is up to in the circumstances we are in. It will allow us a perspective that can encourage others and bear witness to God’s faithfulness.

Mediation/Application

Think of a crisis or stress that you are presently in, facing or just gone through and ask God what He was doing in the midst of that time. What was he teaching you? How was he shaping you? What good came from it? Take time to tell God and thank Him for those lessons learned.

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer request:

- Pray for a neighbour or someone in your Missional Community that may be facing a crisis or stressful time. Consider sharing with the MCG tomorrow what God might be saying to you.
- Pray for NBBC leaders/staff as they venture into the preliminary stages of forming a counselling center that will help bring God's truth into the many crisis' that so many face, especially young people with mental illness.

Tuesday January 23rd – Power Encounters

Reading Daniel 3:26 – 30

They... were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

In our day and age there are very few Kingdoms that hold true political power. The British monarchy is, to most of us, holds no true power. So when we hear talk of the Kingdom of God, the notion of a kingdom seems vague. Perhaps in our context we might talk about the government of God.

When two governments claim to rule in the same location, inevitably there will be a conflict, some show of force and power in order that one government might exert their dominion over the other. This explains so much of the tension within the Middle East as different governments make claim to the same land.

Daniel and his friends lived under the reign and dominion of God and yet, there are other forces at work, asserting their own power and influence trying to reign where God has made claim. While most often the clash of values and

“Powers encounter is a general term which includes “spiritual warfare” as well as “signs, wonders, and miracles.” Spiritual warfare refers to the confrontation which takes place between a believer, as God’s agent on earth, and the forces of demonic darkness. In signs, wonders, and miracles (works of power), the focus is not so much on direct confrontation with the demonic as on supernatural displays of God’s power over the natural elements of our fallen world. In either case, God’s power is visibly displayed.”¹

between a believer, as God’s agent on earth, and the forces of demonic darkness. In signs, wonders, and miracles (works of power), the focus is not so much on direct confrontation with the demonic as on supernatural displays of God’s power over the natural elements of our

struggle for dominance is evident when there are secular rulers opposing God’s will – as was the case with Nebuchadnezzar. However, the Bible tells us that

our real struggle is not with flesh and blood (i.e. people) but with spiritual forces of evil.⁸

When these two kingdoms clash over the right to reign in a person's heart and mind this is sometimes referred to as a power encounter.

Author Brenda Salter McNeil tells the following story:

I once met a brother from Ghana, West Africa, who was completing his PhD in the School of World Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary. During one of his trips home, he attempted to share the gospel with several people who lived in his community. Although they listened respectfully, no one turned to Jesus Christ. He later learned that they were intimidated by a witch doctor who lived nearby. The witch doctor kept a symbol of his authority hanging outside his home: a lattice basket, filled with water, that never leaked.

My friend decided to pray that God would empty the basket.

He stayed outside the home of the witch doctor and prayed all night that God would demonstrate his power. At some point he fell asleep. The next morning he was awakened by a commotion. The basket was empty. That town saw a mass revival as people learned about the God who caused the water to come out of the basket. There had been a power encounter—and God had won.⁹

As we seek to bear witness to God's Kingdom and are "willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God." As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were, we too must be conscious that are real battle is with spiritual forces that we may be called upon to confront.

⁸ See Ephesians 6:10 – 20.

⁹ Brenda Salter McNeil, "Behold, the Global Church," Christianity Today (November 2006), p. 45

Preparing for your MCG

As you come for you MCG be prepared to share:

- What from chapter 3 of Daniel made an impression on you or what confused you.

IN YOUR GROUP:

- IF YOUR POTLUCK IS NEXT TUESDAY think and plan who from the community might you invite? Talk with your group about who each of you might encourage to come.
- IF YOUR PRAYER WALK IS NEXT TUESDAY think about what route you might take or strategy/method (quiet, casual, intentional about a home or two, walk to encourage some who have not joined your MCG yet)
- IF YOUR STUDY IS NEXT TUESDAY discuss some stories about your neighbours. Discern some more about what a missional project for the neighbourhood looks like. Share and discuss these together and take time to pray about them.

Prayer Request:

Record the prayer requests that are shared at your MCG to inform your prayers this coming week.

- **A**
- **B**
- **C**
- **D**

Missional Community Group (MCG) Covenant

We desire to grow as followers of Jesus who represent Him and His Kingdom well in all of our life. We recognize that God's plan is for us to grow in and through relationships with other like-minded disciples. As those who identify as neighbourhood missionaries we enter into this covenant so that we might be transformed by God's grace and that together we might be transforming agents in our neighbourhood.

To this end, this year, we therefore covenant to:

- Meet regularly for weekly encouragement, accountability, and fellowship in our Missional Community Group and corporately with all of NBBC.
- Seek to grow in likeness to Jesus by engaging in NBBC MCG's shared practices.
- Nurture loving relationships within our Missional Community, accepting others as Christ has accepted us.
- Faithfully steward the resources that God has given us: time, abilities, resources and energy.
- Together discern where God is at work and join Him in His mission to bring the Kingdom of God to our neighbourhood.

In all that we covenant we recognize that we are dependant upon the grace of God to enable us and so we joyfully enter this covenant in hope of what He might do.

Missional Community Group Shared Practices

1. Daily engage in reading Scripture and pray for God to bless NBBC in it's missional calling.
2. Weekly purposely and intentionally bless another person.
3. Monthly practise table fellowship with someone in your Missional Community.
4. Respond to the Spirit's prompting as you sense Him leading and directing.
5. Share with others the stories of what God is doing in your life as opportunities arise.