

MINORITY STATUS

DANIEL 1:1-21

According to the most recent census data, for the first time in American history, the majority of babies - *children under one year old* - are now *kids of color*.

Until just recently, the majority of babies were listed under “*ethnicity*” as “**non-Hispanic white.**” **No longer!**

The US is changing demographically. The media has dubbed this phenomena, “*The Browning of America.*”

Demographers say that by the year 2042 our country will no longer have one clear ethnic majority. Everyone in America - *white, or black, or Hispanic, or Asian, or other* - will occupy **minority status**. Perhaps the term “**minority**” will become obsolete, since we’ll all be one.

A Duke University Law professor, Jedediah Purdy, points out the positiveness of our country’s browning...

"It isn't that America is beginning to be everyone's country. It's that it has always been everyone's country, and that fact is harder and harder for anyone to deny."

Professor Purdy points out that the distinguished gents who wrote our Constitution began with the phrase, “**We the people.**” Today, that phrase is truly being fulfilled! Purdy’s observations are good news!

Of course, it remains to be seen how Americans will react when everyone occupies a minority status...

Will racial distinctions become less important and will we all rally together as *we the people*? *Let's hope so!*

Or will we maintain our narrowing ethnic identities and wage war on everyone not like us? *Time will tell.*

Sadly, for much of American history the majority race has sought privilege and held sway over the minority.

America is the story of a people with high ideals, “*all men are created equal*” - but from the Civil War to Civil Rights living up to our *ideal* has proven to be an *ordeal*.

Only in recent decades has America's struggle begun to rectify some of its long-standing inequities.

Having been raised a member of the ethnic majority it's difficult for me to truly grasp the humiliation of being made to ride in the back of the bus, or to drink from a separate water fountain - let alone, being inspected like a piece of meat and sold in a slave market. The injuries and scorn fostered on the minority can be unbearable.

In most situations *minority status* brings with it indignities, and disadvantage, and unfairness, and character defamation, and misunderstandings - if not outright hostility and persecution... *just ask the Jews in WW2 Germany... or the Irish immigrants in early 20th century NYC... or Kurds in Saddam Hussein's Iraq...*

Those in the minority are often treated with disdain... seen as an under class... viewed with suspicion...

I'm sure all people consider it safer and more advantageous to be in *the majority*, than *the minority*.

Yet there is another shift in American demographics I want to talk about over the next few weeks. In an even more important way **a new minority** is taking shape.

In October 2012, for the first time in our nation's history, America failed to possess a Protestant majority.

Numbers-wise evangelical Christianity is in decline.

The biggest shift in religious affiliation were among the **“nones”**- not the *n-u-n-s*, but the *n-o-n-e-s*. Rather than **“Christian”** almost 20% of Americans now identify themselves as having no religious affiliation at all.

In 1990, 86% of the United States population labeled themselves as **“Christian.”** But in just 20 years, that percentage had dropped 10%. In 2010, only 76% of Americans self-identified themselves as a **“Christian.”**

Of course, on the surface that's still a huge majority.

Yet how many of those who call themselves Christians live a biblically-informed and inspired life?

There's such a thing as **“a cultural Christian.”**

In Israel you meet Jews, proud of their ethnicity and cultural heritage - *but who merely dabble in Judaism.*

Many of the founders of the modern state of Israel had a proud Jewish pedigree, and observed Jewish custom, but religiously they were atheist or agnostic.

They were Jews in only a cultural and racial sense.

You also encounter “cultural Muslims.” They were born into Islamic families and countries, but rather than ascribe to Sharia Law, they embrace a more western way of life. Yet they still label themselves as “Muslim.”

It seems to me the same phenomena occurs among many so-called “Christians.” American culture is steeped in Christian-inspired customs and institutions.

People born in the US have a history and a tradition shaped by Christianity - thus, they call themselves “Christian.” They celebrate Christmas and Easter, but in reality they give little-to-no credence toward Christ.

They pledge allegiance to “one nation under God,” but there’s not much in life that’s actually been brought under God’s scrutiny, and the authority of God’s Word.

Match their lives up to biblical Christianity and you’re hard pressed to spot any evidence that these folks are following Jesus in any tangible way... yet they call themselves “Christian.” It’s just a “cultural Christianity.”

Recently, a polling company, the Barna Research Group, tried to get a better handle on the proportion of real, biblically-devoted Christians living in America.

They divided Christians into “casual” and “captive.”

“Casual Christians” were minimally active in applying their faith. They held Christian convictions only when they were convenient... Whereas, “Captive Christians” made a real effort to apply the moral and spiritual truths taught in the Bible, despite their consequences...

The Researchers identified 66% of confessing Christians to be of the “casual” variety. While a slim 16% were “captive, committed followers of Jesus.”

This is more our reality - 16%, *if that*, of today's America is serious about Christian faith and devotion.

The vast majority of our fellow Americans - that's a whopping 84% - have adopted a different set of values.

So much for the USA being a Christian nation!

In today's America, genuine, substance-filled expressions of Christian faith are now frowned upon...

Crosses and nativity scenes are banned on public property... Members of our military are under widening restrictions over how they can express their faith...

Politically speaking, there's no reason to mourn the absence of Christian presidential candidates these days, since a person with biblical convictions wouldn't stand much of a chance at getting elected anyway...

And the person who dares to trumpet biblically-based sexuality and oppose same-sex marriage... *hold on to your hat!* You'd incur less wrath if you beat your mama.

Today, you can get fired from some companies if you tell a co-worker that homosexuality is sinful... *Or worse, you'll get saddled with hours of sensitivity training...*

The one anathema in our modern world is to suggest that there's one right way to approach God - that one religion is qualitatively better than any other religion.

Much of our government, corporate America, the entertainment industry, the news media, our institutions of higher learning - all join in to ridicule any claim of exclusivity... Yet that's precisely the claim that Jesus made in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, but through Me."

The very statements of Jesus put all true followers of His in the crosshairs of a conflicting culture.

When I was a child a Christian consensus existed in America. Not everyone was a Christian, but you could count on the school, the media, the government to support a biblical perspective on marriage and morality.

Not to advocate Christianity, but at least be its friend.

You didn't have to worry about your kid going to college and his faith being attacked by a militant, atheistic professor. *It was a different America then...*

David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, sums up what's happened since, "The bottom line is over the course of 50 years, we've become a very pluralistic, multi-faith and, in some cases, no-faith culture, and that is a distinct difference from our past."

Other persuasions, belief systems, and moralities now compete for the hearts and minds of our citizens.

Real Christians in today's America are a minority. We can mourn what we use to be - or acknowledge our new landscape and **learn to adjust to minority status.**

Here's the point I want to make... a minority position isn't necessarily a bad place to be. It has advantages.

In fact, some of the most successful times in Church history have been when Christians operated as a cultural minority... The first Church grew and flourished as a minority among ancient Rome's ruling paganism...

The fires of Reformation were lit among small bands of faithful folk living under the oppressive reign of the Popes and their inquisition... Even today, Christianity is the fastest growing religion in the world, *except where it's the cultural majority*. Where it's a minority it booms.

All of the NT was written from a minority position.

Jesus and the early Church understood what it was like to be part of a persecuted fringe. Much of the NT only makes sense when read from that perspective...

And certainly, this was the position Daniel and his fellow Hebrews found themselves in when they were transported to Babylon. **They were a faithful minority!**

Over the next few weeks we'll be studying the book of Daniel to uncover ways to live out our faith from a minority position. How do we operate in a society where the numbers, and momentum, and the politics, and the culture are against us and what we believe?

In essence, *how do you swim upstream?*

A old, bloated catfish can float down river, but it takes a sleek, powerful salmon to swim against the current.

So you can be a Christian when everybody in the room agrees with you, but what about when you're made to sit in the back of the bus... How committed to Jesus are you when you feel the sting of prejudice - or your faith carries a stigma - when it's a career liability?

Daniel and his friends experienced all this and more, but they proved to be a faithful and influential minority.

The first half of Daniel 1 explains his predicament...

Read with me verses 1-2, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

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 (another name for Babylon) to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god."

The story begins in the 605 BC. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, waged war on Egypt and Assyria, and in the process subjugated the holy city of Jerusalem.

The powerful emperor imprisoned the Egyptian puppet, Jehoiakim, and looted the Temple of the one, true God. We're told elsewhere that God authored Jehoiakim's conquest as punishment for his idolatry.

In essence God was saying to His people if you want to serve idols I'll send you to a land teeming with idols.

Nebuchadnezzar took Yahweh's sacred treasure back to Babylon and placed it in the temple of his gods.

But in addition to the *temple jewels*, the Babylonians also took into custody *royal Jews*... **jewels and Jews**.

Verse 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, 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.”

When the Babylonians conquered a people it was their policy to choose out from among the captives the cream of the crop - the finest young men - to be trained and employed in the service of the court of Babylon.

These boys selected were barely bar-mitzvahed.

They were kids - 14-15 years old. They didn’t even have a learner’s permit. They were HS freshmen.

The Babylonians took the healthiest, best-looking, brightest, most teachable, most adaptable young men.

The Who’s Who of young Jews were taken from home, family, all that was familiar - and shipped 650 miles to a glittering palace in the capitol of paganism.

There were probably more, but we’re introduced to four such boys - **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah**.

Daniel and his pals were **POWs** - prisoners of war...

But they were also **POWs** in that they were recipients of **privilege - opportunity - worldly pleasures**.

Life back home in the besieged city of Jerusalem was a dead end. There, the only ambition was survival.

But Babylon represented a new world, a new start...

Think of these four boys walking the red brick streets of Babel. They're by the shore of the mighty Euphrates, amidst the impressive ziggurats, and hanging gardens.

Babylon was a wonder of the ancient world. Now it's all before them. *They've even got government jobs!*

But that's where life got complicated...

Realize the goal of the Babylonian King... He wanted to reprogram these young men - strip them of their former identities - indoctrinate them in the culture and customs, the learning and language of pagan Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to wean these Hebrews off their religion. Deconstruct their faith in God, and make them idol-worshipping pagans. He designed a three year brainwashing process with this objective in mind...

He relocated them to pagan surroundings...

He re-educated them with a pagan curriculum...

He re-conditioned them to have a pagan palate...

Notice verse 5, "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.” Daniel is an undergrad at the University of Babel.

And talk about a meal plan! This isn't the school cafeteria. The king's food was the best money could buy. Daniel has a meal ticket to Outbacks, *and all the wine he can drink!* It's a keg party at the frat house!

And as if all this weren't tempting enough - these Hebrews were even *re-named with pagan IDs...*

Verse 6, “Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 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.”

Here's the flavor of what's happening... the Hebrew handle, “*Daniel*” means “*God is my Judge*” - but it gets replaced with a Babylonian tag, “*Belteshazzar*” which means “*Bel Protects.*” *Bel* was a Babylonian idol.

Each of these Hebrew teenagers are stripped of their God-glorifying names and given names that honor the blasphemous idols of Bel, and Marduk, and Nebo.

The whole process was to break down their faith in their God, and convert them into good pagans.

It sounds like what happens today to kids who grow up in Christian families only to leave home and enroll in a state university. Immediately their faith comes under siege, *and unless they're a Daniel they're not ready.*

At home and church they were probably part of a Christian majority. Thus, they never had to add muscle to their faith and live their Christianity from a minority status. Now they're ill-equipped to take a stand.

Here's a scary stat - 80% of animals born in captivity, when released into the wild get eaten by other animals.

Reared in an insular environment they're unable to cope with the rigors and harshness of the real world.

And this is the plight of sheltered Christians who grow up in a fundamentalist subculture and are never made aware of what's beyond the walls of their faith.

Growing up in the majority can give us a false sense of security. Whereas, [minority status](#) forces our faith to survive even in the wild. Minority faith learns quickly that it can grow and thrive even in a pluralistic setting.

Commentator, Alexander McClaren, has this to say about Daniel, [“It's remarkable that a character of such consecration as Daniel's should be rooted in a court filled with luxury, sensuality, lust, self-seeking, idolatry, and ruthless cruelty. In the middle of this there grew up that fair flower of character, pure, and stainless by the acknowledgement of his enemies.”](#) McClaren seems to think Daniel remained pure *despite* his surroundings. I suggest it was *because* of the challenge he grew pure.

When you're in the minority you learn to take tough stands. Nothing comes easy. Rather than seek the path of least resistance you realize that faith is a fight.

In fact, it even gets worse for Daniel. As if being renamed wasn't denigrating enough, our text hints at an even more terrible attack on his personhood...

In the courts of oriental kings there was a custom.

To prevent the royal princesses from falling in love with the king's male servants the king had the men castrated. It keep the royal harem *hanky-panky-free*...

Notice, this supervisor "*Ashpenaz*," is twice given the same title... "*chief (or master) of the eunuchs*."

We also know that Ashpenaz was Daniel's overseer. Could it be that Daniel was assigned to the head-eunuch because he had been made a eunuch himself?

This means in addition to their other humiliations Daniel and his pals might've also have been neutered.

Here's a teenage boy who suits up to play baseball and no longer has to wear a cup. *How devastating!*

Imagine, Daniel, a young man... robbed of his virility, confused by new scenery, a part of the minority...

With all the trauma these boys had experienced we might be tempted to expect, and even justify, a little compromise... but Daniel isn't looking for excuses!

He answers to *a new name* - he wears *new clothes* - he has *a new address* for his mail - he speaks *a new language* - and he's learning *a new curriculum*...

A lot has changed for Daniel, but one thing hasn't changed... **his heart**. He still has **a heart for God**.

Verse 8 tells us, "**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...**"

Notice his concern, it's to "*not defile himself*..."

Sadly, this attitude is so foreign to today's half-baked Christianity we no longer understand the term. "*Defile*" means to "taint or pollute." It's the opposite of purity.

Think of a nurse taking a blood sample - then leaving the vial on the counter overnight. We'd say the sample was *compromised*. We're no longer sure of its integrity.

We now have a reason to doubt its purity. Because of a nurse's nonchalance it might be something it's not.

Daniel didn't want anyone to question his loyalty to God. He refused to *say anything* or *act in anyway* that would cast an aspersion on his devotion to His Lord!

He couldn't help what had happened to him... *his captivity, his place in the palace, the strange customs and language, his new name, his new occupation...*

But he could control what he put in his mouth. The food he ate, the libations he drank... *were his choice!* He wanted to be sure no one mistook where he stood.

Being a Jew, Daniel was bound by the OT dietary laws. To ignore these laws would be to disobey God.

Certainly, an idolatrous king wasn't keeping kosher.

In addition, the meats and wines served to a pagan king had been officially dedicated to the nation's idols. Thus, for Daniel to eat from the king's table could be interpreted as participating in the worship of false gods.

It wasn't a matter of how far he could compromise and still please God. Daniel didn't want to run the risk of defiling himself and offending God in any way.

It's true that Daniel was being assimilated into the culture. It's expected... *We all swim in a sea of culture.*

We can't escape. The tide impacts even the person who swims across the current. No one can completely divorce themselves from the times in which they live.

Daniel spoke like a Babylonian. He dressed like a Babylonian. He learned Babylonian protocol. He attended a Babylonian university. He answered to a Babylonian name. He'll occupy a cabinet post in the Babylonian court... but he never became a Babylonian *at heart...* God still governed his values and appetites!

Daniel knew where to draw the line...

He wouldn't compromise his faith in God just to eat at the king's table. Daniel respected Nebuchadnezzar and his position, *but he bowed only to God.* He put his fate and faith in God's hands - not Nebuchadnezzar's.

Here was the question, *Who's your daddy, Daniel?*

And that's the question you answer every day in one way or another, *"Who's your daddy?"* If you really trust God why are you cutting corners to keep your job, or lowering your standards to cozy up to your friends?

Daniel refused to let the king dictate what he ate. He would stay loyal, and consume only what pleased God.

If you want to be a Daniel there's one trait you need... **conviction!** According to Webster, it's *"a strong persuasion."* To me, it's *"an unbreakable allegiance."*

Do you have beliefs that are set in stone? Have you made any promises that you poured in concrete?

Daniel's conviction was to never *"defile"* himself!

It reminds me of the fellow who proposed marriage to his girlfriend. She replied, “When you save a million dollars I’ll marry you.” Three months later the eager fiancée asked, “Honey, how much money have you saved?” Discouraged, the man shrugged, “75 bucks.”

The young lady thought for a moment and replied, “75 bucks... well, that sounds close enough to me!”

Obviously, her previous position wasn’t a conviction.

It’s one thing to know what’s right - even desire to do what’s right - but neither *knowledge or desire* constitute a conviction. *Daniel purposed in his heart!* He knew where to draw the line, and he drew it ahead of time.

A **conviction** is morality with some muscle... It puts heart into holiness... It’s allegiance coupled with determination... **Conviction is virtue with a backbone!**

Author, Frank O’Connor, writes about his childhood in Ireland. He and his friends would run through the orchards. When they came to a wall too high to climb they threw their hats over the wall. That meant if they wanted their hats they had no other choice but to find a way over the wall. *And this is conviction in a nutshell.*

Conviction is throwing your hat over the wall.

Despite the obstacle - or the uncertainty - or the impossibility - you’re not going to run, or back down, or turn back. You’re going over one way or the other.

Daniel doesn’t know how he’s going to solve his problem. He has no idea the outcome. All he knows is *what he’s not going to do*. He refuses to defile himself.

When you're the minority - the only Christian taking a stand - you need conviction! But there's something else *you don't hear a lot about*. Along with **conviction** and **determination**, you need some savvy **navigation**.

Again verse 8, **"Therefore (Daniel) requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."**

This is so instructional... Daniel doesn't picket the cafeteria, or go on a hunger strike, or turn over his tray.

He doesn't get mad the Babylonians don't share his convictions. *What do you expect from pagans?*

It's like a Christian who's appalled that his company stays open on Sundays - *why shouldn't it, if the only goal is to make a buck?... Or why shouldn't your buddy get high when he's got nothing else to live for but a good time?... Or why not have sex, if all that matters is feeling good?... Why do Christians get angry and upset when heathens act like heathens? What do we expect?*

Without a biblical understanding of rest, and moderation, and sex... our morality won't make sense.

Daniel realizes his supervisor doesn't understand his concern, so he makes a polite and honest request...

And he explains his real reasons... He doesn't blame his desire for a modified diet on food allergies, or a finicky palate. He's upfront with the issue. It's about His relationship with God. ***"I don't want to defile myself."***

Where there's a Christian majority the rules reflect biblical values, and everyone is forced to comply.

But when Christians are a minority the establishment may oppose, rather than support, ideas of godliness.

And Christians have to speak up and attach logic to their obedience... When the world isn't sympathetic to our cause, we've got to **navigate** their resistance?

You've got to know what's essential and what's not. What hill are you willing to die on? Where can you negotiate? Being in the minority requires **navigation**.

This is what Daniel illustrates in verse 9, “Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. 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.”

Ashpenaz has a point. *Why should he be expected to risk his neck over Daniel's convictions?* The king's diet is suppose to produce healthy servants. If Daniel and the boys end up puny it's his head on the chopping block. Daniel claims to have faith - not the Babylonian.

And likewise, we can't expect secular people to have Christian faith and values. In a sense, Daniel is asking the chief eunuch to show more faith than he has...

Sometimes we make the same mistake. We ask our neighbors, or co-workers, or boss to honor our convictions without considering *their* concerns. And when they turn us down we squeal “**persecution.**” The problem is we need to learn to **navigate** the situation.

“So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, “Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.

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.” He just threw his hat over the wall. “So (Ashpenaz) consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.” Daniel doesn’t just *agitate* - rather he **navigates** and even **negotiates**.

Sometimes Christians climb up on their self-righteous high-horse to point out what’s wrong with the world without ever offering any helpful alternatives.

Here, Daniel suggests a test. It’s not just about his convictions, it’s also about the Babylonian’s objectives.

The king wants healthy civil servants, so Daniel gives the king what he wants, as well as pleases God.

“Let’s set aside a 10 day trial...” The Hebrews will eat off *the Value Menu* - they’ll get their veggies and drink Evian - while the other court candidates scarf up *Babel burgers* and *Babel brew*. If the Hebrews turn out fitter and fuller, then who’s to complain? Everyone’s happy.

Daniel has a clear conscience, Nebuchadnezzar has healthy helpers, and God gets glorified through faith.

Here’s a modern day example of a similar situation...

Let's say your sales manager wants you to lie about the product because he thinks it'll boost your sales. What he really wants is more income... what God wants is honesty... Thus, a little **navigation** is in order...

Propose a 10 day test... The other guys can do it the boss' way, while you do it God's way. In 10 days we'll see who sold the most? Don't just *mandate*, **navigate**...

Find a way both sides can win, then put the pressure on God! If God wants you in that job; He'll work it out.

Who's your daddy? If God is your Father He'll supply what you need. Dare to be a Daniel and trust God.

Verse 15 tells us what happened in Daniel's case...

“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.” God validated Daniel's conviction, and came to the men's defense.

There's no biological reason the vegetarian tacos would've made this much difference in ten days... It was God's blessing on Daniel's faith that won the day!

And this stayed true for the next three years...

Verse 16 tells us, **“Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.”** For three years they ate veggies, and God blessed them in a *meaty* way...

“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.

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.

Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. 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.**” Daniel proved that *faith in God* can do more to accomplish the king’s goals than *a pagan diet*.

And this needs to be the strategy of a Christian minority. Yes, the numbers are against us. We’re operating in hostile territory. The gallery will boo us...

But rather than be intimidated into the closet and shy away from entanglements with the secular world we need to be brave, and put our convictions on display.

We’ll win hearts and minds when the hollowness of secularism is exposed by the logic and beauty of faith.

I love verse 21, **“Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.”** From the time of this story to the first year of Cyrus 70-plus years elapsed. Daniel was in the minority, but he outlived the emperor and even the empire that took him captive. He served both Babylon and their conquerors, the Persians, for seven decades.

Daniel was a statesman, a government bureaucrat, a professional politician. He traveled among *pagan people*, worked in *pagan institutions*, learned *pagan philosophy*, was surrounded by *pagan practice*, yet he remained loyal to his God. Rather than being tainted by a pagan world, Daniel remained a true witness!

Christians assume we can't really get involved in the world without accepting some degree of compromise.

We've got to be flexible with our convictions.

But Daniel is proof that just the opposite is true. **Navigation yes, but capitulation no!** Early in his life he ***“purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.”*** And he lived out that conviction for the rest of his life!

When I was a kid we had those inflatable punching bags that were weighted in the bottom. You could slap them, or knock them over, or sock them as hard as you could, and the bag-man always bounced back up...

Once a father asked his son if he knew why the inflatable man always came back up... The little boy answered, **“Because he's standing up on the inside.”**

That's how faith survives when you're in the minority. You make sure *you're always standing on the inside.*

Purpose in your heart not to *defile yourself*, and *offend your God*... Don't be a Babylonian, be a Daniel!

If you were asked to categorize yourself, would you be a **casual**, or a **captive** Christian? Daniel was held captive by his allegiance to God. *Dare to be a Daniel!*

Ashpenaz' underling was Daniel's supervisor.