

FutureYou | COMMUNITY

Anson Hanbury Sermon Outline

Introduction:

- **Personal Story** of being dropped into a “foreign” culture and feeling pressure to conform
- FutureView = the future is going to be unstable and will see lots of change
- As the future gets more unstable, pressures will build and isolation will increase, which we already see happening in our present day
 - With this being the problem, we are looking at the importance of community in our lives, the world around us and the fulfillment of God’s mission.
- Daniel and Friends were removed from community when exiled to Babylon
 - Loss of everything, including their home community of support
 - Isolated in foreign culture
 - Pressured to conform to Babylonian ways

Prevailing culture brings pressure to conform. (Problem)

1. Daniel & his friends faced social pressure to conform to the culture around them

a. Eat the food (1:4-5).

[The king] was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. [He] assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king’s table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service. (Daniel 1:4-5)

i. There was pressure because:

1. Saying no would draw attention to themselves
2. Saying no would put those around them at risk
3. Saying no would put them at risk

2. Daniel & his friends faced legal pressure to conform to the culture around them

a. Worship the golden statue (3:4-6).

Nations and peoples of every language, this is what you are commanded to do: As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. (Daniel 3:4-6)

i. There was pressure because:

1. Saying no would result in execution in a furnace of fire
2. Saying no brought quick accusation from the Babylonians
3. Saying no brought them face to face with the king

b. Stop praying to God (6:7).

The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. (Daniel 6:7)

- i. There was pressure because:
 - 1. Saying no would result in execution in a den of lions
 - 2. Saying no would jeopardize Daniel's longstanding position in the kingdom
- 3. In the near future we are likely to face increasing social & legal pressure to conform to the culture around us.**
 - a. Indulge in what the world loves: kids' extracurricular activities & professional success taking first priority without boundaries
 - i. There is pressure because we don't want to stand out, or put ourselves or our family members at risk of accomplishing less than others.
 - b. Worship what the world worships: TV networks: homes, food, sports; Social Media: acceptance
 - i. There is pressure because: we don't want to miss out.
 - ii. ILLUS. I thought my family was the only one without cable TV. Horrendous stories about the pressure children, teens and adults feel to be valued on Instagram, Facebook, etc.
 - c. Stop worshipping God: any number of well-known legal battles seeking to control the message and actions of churches, schools and businesses.
 - i. There is pressure because the religious liberty we've all enjoyed for our lifetime may not be there for the next generation, or even this one.
 - d. **Story Illustration**

Christian community gives us strength to stand. (Solution)

1. Christian community helps us stand together.

- a. Saying no to the king's food (1:12-13)
- b. Praying together for God to answer (2:17-18)

Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. (Daniel 2:17-18)

- c. Rewarded with leadership positions around Babylon (2:48-49)
- d. **Application question:** who are your closest friends? That's your community.

2. Christian community helps us stand alone.

- a. Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego stood up to the king without Daniel (3:16-18)
- b. Daniel persisted in obedience to God without his friends (6:10).

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. (Daniel 6:10)

- c. Healthy community is not just being around people; it's benefitting from the *right kind of connection* to those around you.
 - i. Christian psychologist Henry Cloud recently wrote a book called, *The Power of the Other: The Startling Effect Other People Have on You*. He describes four kinds of connection that either empower or cripple our ability to stand under pressure. Interestingly, these categories are illustrated pretty well in the cast of characters we find in the book of Daniel. Where do you see yourself in these descriptions?
 1. **No Connection** - not able to emotionally invest in others (Nebuchadnezzar) • can be high performing and demanding, but not caring for people • treats others like feelings don't exist • lonely and unsustainable • believe you have to do things on your own
 2. **Bad Connection** - a connection, preoccupation, or pull toward a person who has the effect of making you feel bad or "not good enough" in some way (see astrologers) • more focused on how this connection makes you feel • produces anxiety, fear, guilt, shame • causes sleepless nights
 3. **Pseudo-Good Connection** - pursuing a desire to feel good - the affair, the addiction, the attachment to promotions, awards, positive results (see Belshazzar) • addicted to something that produces temporary and immediate good feelings • flattery can be the worst of them all • can be fun, high energy, electric • doesn't last, and usually had devastating effects
 4. **Good Connection** - a connection where you can be your whole self, real and authentic, you bring your whole heart, mind, soul and passion (see Daniel and his friends) • reach out for help and be willing to be vulnerable • we all need someone to push us beyond ourselves • no such thing as a self-made man or woman
- d. **Story Application** – The knowledge of others standing with us in spirit gives us strength to persevere in obedience despite threatening obstacles.
 - i. ILLUS. I didn't realize the value of our small group community in Clearwater until many years after the fact.

3. Ultimately, Christian community is God standing with us.

- a. Fourth man in the fire. (3:25)

[The king] said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." (Daniel 3:25)

- b. In every situation involving Daniel & his friends, it is God's presence and actions that made the difference.

- i. **When they chose not to conform to the prevailing culture . . .**

- 1. *God gave them knowledge and understanding to represent his Kingdom among the powers of the world. (Daniel 1:17)*

- ii. **When they prayed for knowledge of the king's dream . . .**

- 1. *God revealed the mystery of Nebuchadnezzar's vision and showed him what would happen in the days to come. (Daniel 2:28)*

- iii. **When they walked out of the burning furnace . . .**

- 1. *The king said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! (Daniel 3:28)*

- iv. **When King Nebuchadnezzar lost his mind and his kingdom . . .**

- 1. *Daniel said, "you will not be restored until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes." (Daniel 4:32)*

- v. **When the handwriting was on the wall for King Belshazzar . . .**

- 1. *Daniel said, "God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end." (Daniel 5:26)*

- vi. **When Daniel woke up with the lions . . .**

- 1. *He told the king, "God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions." (Daniel 6:22)*

- c. **Concluding Story Application** - inviting non-Christians into Christian community gives them a chance to see and know God as things happen and God is glorified.

- i. **ILLUS.** As a sixteen-year-old high school student who found himself in a negative prevailing culture, it was the first time in my life I sensed God standing with me in the fire.