

Outline

Principled Living vs. Political Correctness - Daniel 1

We live in an interesting age. It is an age of astounding progress both in technological and humanitarian advances. Not a week goes by that we do not see some new invention or product that amazes. Cars are beginning to advance to a space age appeal and our cartoons of old seem to be jumping off the pages of our comics and onto our roads. I mean - have you seen the "Smart Car?" I swear that car was pictured in some of the comics that I read as a kid. And if you ever saw the movie "Blade Runner" back in the early 80's, you got a preview of some of the new electric, solar hybrid cars. The only thing they lack is the ability to fly – just wait for next week!

The humanitarian advances of our society are also quite astounding. We have done in this calendar year what few thought would happen in our lifetime – we have elected a person of color to be our President of the United States. As a matter of fact, our last century in humanity can be counted as one of the most outstanding in all of history. Still less than a century old, women, people of color, the poor have all been extended equal rights for the first time in history. Truly the glass ceiling for all walks of life has been shattered and the opportunity to advance to one's goals and dreams stands available world-wide. No longer is slavery or oppression of any type tolerated as acceptable in the world and nations that tread in those paths are viewed dimly and sanctioned strongly. Even China is making strides to join the world in human liberty. I say it is a good time to be alive.

However - and you had to know a however, was coming – there is a new dilemma that threatens to oppress humanity. This dilemma causes people to check their minds before speaking freely. It reigns in fear on those who dare to step away from its boundaries. Those who choose not to accept its rules and standards and dare to individually stand for something entirely different are branded heretics or jettisoned to the dark rooms of lunacy and fanaticism. In a day and age where the lunatic fringe have owned the world stage with dates like 9-11 and perverse actions like suicide bombings, this dilemma has threatened to take away freedoms very similar to the freedoms lost in the battles of sexism, apartheid, racism, and the Holocaust.

What dilemma am I talking about? The dilemma of "Nice." Yes, you heard me correctly. I believe that we are suffering from a severe case of "Nice" that has caused humanity to take on some very self-destructive habits in the hope that we will not be ridiculed or rejected or thought to be different from the normal. The disease to please called "Nice" has caused many of us to check our brains at the door. Rather than question what the rest of humanity is doing with moral abandon and the government allows us to do legally, we give in to a spirit of political correctness and adopt a world view and belief system that is being forced upon us by a very persuasive media and a very politically correct government that must look out for the rights of all humanity. Both the media and the government are good entities in a free society; however, neither should be the guide of conscience for us as individuals. The media must be allowed the liberties of free speech and the audacious desire to shape our opinion and form the news in whatever way they please, yes, even pressure us to believe like they do. I welcome competing affiliates like CNN and Fox News. The government also has a right to seek to be all things to all people and to look out for the rights of all mankind. They must retain the right to protect the rights of the able-bodied and disabled, the man and the woman, the born and the unborn, straight and the gay, the Republican, the Democrat, and the Independent. I have no beef with these very important ideals in our free society. They all have the right to pressure me to live and act and think the way they think I should live and act and think.

However, the choice is always mine. I do not have to live and act and think the way the media, the government, my teachers, friends, and family tell me I must. Oh, they will pressure me to be like them and even apply the tough pressure on me that I am not being nice when I choose to live and act and think differently. But the responsibility is still mine.

My problem in life? In the spirit of being "Nice" I have often caved to allow all of these groups to shape my thinking and my belief system and my world view. And I have often done it without even thinking. All in the spirit of being a "Nice Guy" and not making waves. You see, In this day and age of Political

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Correctness, it is not fashionable to set a hard standard. It is not “Nice” to actually believe in anything too firmly. Oh, it is ok to say I am a Christian, but I just shouldn’t do it too vocally or allow it to cause undue notice lest I “offend” someone with my beliefs. That would not be nice. Everyone has a right to have their beliefs but don’t let them differ too much from the “norm” of society. That would not be nice. It has become unfashionable to have a belief that rides opposite of what society has set to be a “nice” belief. Don’t stray too far from the middle, don’t question the thinking of the rational - trying to fall in line with what others think is fashionable. Be nice. If you think the opposite that is ok, but just don’t live it too blatantly or preach it too loudly. That would not be nice.

Since when did being “Nice” become attractive? I know that if Melodie, my wife, tries on a new outfit and asks my opinion and I say, “It’s Nice,” she questions why I don’t like it. When I am talking to her about this message at the end of the day, the last thing I want to hear from her when I ask her thoughts about it, is ... “It was Nice.” I will question her further, for I know that she will not have liked something about it. (editorially, she has never told me that my message was nice – LOL!) Nice is a 4-letter word. We even say it all the time – “Nice guys finish last.” Nice is generally not a compliment - it is boring, bland, vanilla, middle of the road, politically correct.

Let me illustrate with the life of one of my heroes in the Bible. He is a guy that had every reason to just be “Nice” and go along with what society thought he should do and believe, yet he stopped, and respectfully so, chose to live out what he knew to be right. His name is Daniel and we find him in the Old Testament in the book that bears his name. As we get to know Daniel, we find a guy and a few of his friends that are in the worst possible place of political pressure. Where he finds himself, it is either choose to be politically correct or die. Daniel and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (maybe better known to you as Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego - their stage names given to them by their Babylonian captors) have all been kidnapped from their homes in Israel, probably after watching their families be slaughtered. They are then shipped off to live in the foreign land of Babylon to be servants to the King of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar. As we are introduced to them in Daniel 1, we find out King Nebuchadnezzar’s purpose for them:

[Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah’s royal family, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. \(He commanded\): “Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.” The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service. Daniel 1:3-5 NLT](#)

Now I am not sure you realize what is going on here. These men were not simply recruited to Harvard to get a great education and a full ride scholarship with room and board included. No, they were to be indoctrinated into the thinking and worldview of the Babylonian lifestyle. They were to be wined and dined and daily re-trained to stop thinking like a person of Israel and servant of the Most High God – to be changed into a fully thinking, acting, living, believing Babylonian. They were to be simmered into the culture with little room for individual thought or action. Their food was to be given to them straight from the altar of Babylon’s gods so that Daniel and his friends would even begin to develop a new belief system steeped in a foundation of the gods of Babylon, something that was opposite the way they were trained in Israel, home of Jehovah God.

Now what does any sane person do in this situation? Babylonian or Death – not too many perks outside the job description! The nice thing to do is to simply go with the flow, fall in line, get with the program. Don’t make waves. No one would expect anything different. The line was already forming for new brains and if you don’t act now, you might not get the best wine or the prime beef. What is a Nice Guy like Daniel to do? Well, he does something not exactly nice. Look what the next verse tells us He does:

[But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Daniel 1:8 NLT](#)

Daniel chose not to be nice and just go with the flow. Daniel chose to stick with what he knew to be the

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right action based upon a right belief structure and a known worldview. He chose not to be nice and just follow what society was telling him was the way to go, but to make the painful and probably short-lived decision to live by his beliefs, though they were contrary to the King's desires, the government's permission, the media's pressure, and the culture's politically correct pressure. Tough place to be. See ya' Daniel – nice knowing ya' - not so quick...

The pressure to conform came quickly:

Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." Daniel 1:9,10 NLT

Why are you making life tough on the rest of us? Why are you stepping outside society's thought processes? Why don't you just be a "Nice Guy" and get in line with the rest of us?

Now what happens next is quite remarkable and shows the heart of Daniel and the difference between the 4-letter politically correct word "Nice" and another 4-letter word that is the opposite of Nice – "Good." You see, Daniel's example challenges us today to stop just being nice to each other, to stop living nice lives with little thought as to what is right and what is wrong to stop simply going along with the politically correct world we live in that is driven by government, media, education, and peers. However, Daniel does not ask that we stop being kind to one another – that we stop being "Good" down deep. You see, Nice is often only smile deep, while Good goes through to the soul. Nice can't handle the differences of other people, but Good allows for differences of opinion, creed, sexuality, political thought, faith, etc. Nice cannot stand up to injustice, while Good cannot be silenced, even in the face of death. Nice is not sure what to believe, for it may not know what the majority believe. Good knows what it believes and believes what it knows. That is the kind and compassionate spirit of a Good Man like Daniel. He had great compassion on his "trainer" and desired no harm to come to him so he made a deal with him, based on his belief and faith in his Good God!

Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. Daniel 1:11-14 NLT

Daniel did not mercilessly and unkindly throw his worldview and his belief system into the face of the Babylonians. He respected their lifestyle, their thoughts, and their world view, even though he disagreed with it. He knew what he believed and believed what he knew. He stood by his worldview, but did not disdain a contrary world view.

You see, we as modern Daniels make two mistakes that Daniel did not make. First, we fail to know truly what we believe. How can I make the right decisions in my life when my only source for a foundational belief system that drives my world is the media or the government or an educational institution? When I leave myself to their wine and meat, I end up with little rational reason for living other than my own desires and passions. That is why I end up believing in sub-prime loans and bottom up mortgages that leave me in financial ruin. That is why I end up with a loose morality and much relational frustration. That is why I give up on my marriage and choose to rip apart my home in divorce without trying to spend a dime on counseling. I spend and I eat and I sex and I drink and I drug and I smoke my way into a miserable life because I allow the loudest voices to motivate and direct my life without stopping to question if the government, the school, the family, the friends, the media are right in the belief systems they are espousing. And I am just too nice to question the crowd.

Secondly, we so often throw down on those who are living or believing confidently. Our niceness lasts as long as it takes someone to question us or believe different than us or take a stand that is not what we stand for. Then we gossip and criticize and ridicule and exclude that person who is different. Then

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where is my nice guy stand for the homosexual, the Catholic, the Mormon, the virgin, the abortionist, the anti-abortionist, the Republican, the Democrat, the Bush, the Obama and the list could go on.

Daniel may not have been nice and just gotten into line, but he was good. He was convicted of his beliefs and he was compassionate. He lived out what the New Testament tells us just a little bit later should be the way we should seek to live out our lives:

[Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not Christians will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others.](#)
I Thessalonians 4:11,12 NLT

He chose to live out his beliefs without forcing them on others. He lived what he knew he believed. And God blessed his life for it. I believe God always blesses those who seek Him with all their heart by allowing them to find Him and the peace and the joy that comes from living out His principles. When we seek God with all our heart, He will bless us in every part of our lives. Look what happened to Daniel and the boys that watched him live out his convictions about his God.

[At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king... God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams. Daniel 1:18-20 NLT](#)

God blessed them with Spiritual Gifts that gave them supernatural wisdom and supernatural peace. When they refused to allow others to shape their world view and belief system but trusted God with their lives, He matured them, grew them, and increased their goodness until they were the envy of the kingdom. Look:

[When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom. Daniel 1:18-20 NLT](#)

God does not desire a "Nice" people that sway and are influenced by the wind of culture. God desires Good People – people that are flawed but will pursue His principles that will allow Him to constantly be maturing them into who He desires them to be. His blessing comes with obedience. It is not the nice who impact the world, but the Good. Seek God today with your whole heart, by sinking into His Word on a daily basis, talking to Him throughout your day, obeying every positive thought that is placed in your mind and heart and spirit – He put them there. Refuse to be molded by society. Question everything, even what I am teaching you – check up behind me.

To help you with this, we are going to offer [a course in helping you question your beliefs and seek God's Truth in your heart](#). It is called **Foundations** and will be offered on [Sunday mornings from 8:30 to 9:30](#) at the end of this series. We will be offering childcare so that you can attend. It's time to stop living nice just to fit in. It's time to learn the Good that God has for you – Know what you believe and believe what you know. Learn to be a Daniel!

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