

Week #3: Living a Stand-Up Life in a Bow-Down World

Series Goal: We want to learn how to _____ and _____ in a culture of compromise.

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NIV)

King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up. So all these officials came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald shouted out, "People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command! When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." So at the sound of the musical instruments, all the people, whatever their race or nation or language, bowed to the ground and worshiped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ... "But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up."

Daniel 3:1-7, 12 (NLT)

Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up?"

I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"

Daniel 3:14-15 (NLT)

How to live a stand-up life in a bow-down world:

• Standing firm takes _____.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you."

Daniel 3:16 (NLT)

• Standing firm takes _____.

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

Daniel 3:17-18 (NLT)

Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face became distorted with rage. He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. So they tied them up and threw them into the furnace, fully dressed in their pants, turbans, robes, and other garments. And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames. But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?" "Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied. "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!" Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted:



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“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn’t even smell of smoke!

Daniel 3:19-27 (NLT)

• **Standing firm** _____.

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king’s command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!” Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.

Daniel 3:28-30 (NLT)

Final Question: Will I _____ or will I _____?

Recommended Resources

- *The Daniel Dilemma*, by Chris Hodges
- *Thriving in Babylon*, by Larry Osborne
- *Awake, Not Woke*, by Noelle Mering
- *Counter Culture*, by David Platt

SESSION 3 | Standing Up

Connect

In your small group, take 5 to 7 mins to connect.

- What are you thankful for this week? Where did you see God move in your life this week?
- Share what is causing you stress, worry, anxiety, or fear right now.
- This week's talk centered on living God's best life for us despite the pressures we might face in culture. Tell us about a recent time you did what you knew was best even though it was hard.

Opening Prayer

Have the facilitator pray for the study.

[Sample prayer: "God, thank you for inviting us into this community of faith to hear what your Spirit has to say as we study your Word. May we be attuned to the Holy Spirit that teaches and guides, and may we be empowered to follow through on such things as we might be invited to reflect on, or to do. May we be continually reformed into your image by your work in each of us. Amen."]

Read the Passage

Have someone read the following passages aloud.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (NIV)

13 If I speak in the tongues[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part, **10** but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. **11** When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. **12** For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Discover God's Word | Reflection

- What in these passages stood out to you?
- What do these passages tell us about God?
- What are some of the invitations or instructions shared in these passages?
- Standing firm requires us to be rooted in love. Have you seen someone do this well? Explain what this person did that enabled them to stand firm in love.

Moving Forward | Application

- When is it hardest for you to do what you know is best? What makes standing firm in love hard in those moments? Feel free to share about a specific situation or keep your answers more vague.
- Do you have an example of a time you did not stand firm in love? What did you learn from that situation?
- We all need people who help us stand firm in love. Who are the people in your life that help you stand firm? How do these people help you stand strong?
- Is there an area of life right now that you are working hard at standing firm in? Tell us about that situation. What has this process of standing firm for what you think is best been like for you?

Closing Prayer

Have someone close in prayer.

[Sample prayer: *"Jesus, thank you for your word that graciously speaks truth to each of us. May we continue to abide in and obey your word. May we continually be reformed in your image not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others and the world. Amen."*]