

DON'T JUST SAY NO

DANIEL



BIG IDEA: Representing God to the world requires tactfully taking a stand for biblical convictions. Christian students often find themselves on one of two extremes. They so desire to be accepted by peers that they simply conform. Their lives look outwardly like the non-Christian friends around them. On the other extreme, the young Christian student that is so eager to please God and live according to biblical principles may isolate himself from the very people he should be trying to reach.

In the study of Daniel, we find a man who took a stand tactfully. He did what all of us want to do. He took a definite stand for God, but was so admired even by those who disagreed with him that he was able to point them to God. That is what your students need help in doing. They have a normal desire to be admired by others, but they realize that in living for Christ, their views on certain issues will not be accepted.



DESIRED LIFE CHANGE: The students in your group will, as a result of this study, determine whether they tend to be conformists or isolationists. Also, they will learn how to balance taking a stand for God while reaching out to non-Christians with love and grace.



AUDIENCE: This lesson is designed for growing young Christians and more mature believers who desire to make an impact in the lives of those around them.



LEADER'S PREPARATION: Study Daniel 1 and gather insight from a Bible dictionary or study Bible regarding the background of the book. Read through the entire leader's guide to get an overview. Familiarize yourself with the flow of the discussion. Think about how to ask the questions in such a way as to get the most response. Be prepared to share your story related to this topic. Let your group see how these truths have changed your life (or how they could change your life, if applied).



AT A GLANCE

As your group interacts in this study, they will think . . .

This is my **WORLD:** As a Christian, I feel pressured to either conform to the world or isolate myself from it.

This is my **NEED:** I need a way to overcome the pressures to conform or isolate myself and tactfully take a stand.

This is my **ANSWER:** Representing God to our world requires tactfully taking a stand for biblical convictions.

This is the **DIFFERENCE:** When I obey biblical principles while maintaining relationships with unbelievers, I am able to point them to God.

This is what I'll **DO:** I will examine my patterns to see if I tend to be a conformist or an isolationist and I will resolve to both take a stand and reach others in a winsome way.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?



This study will help your students grow in taking a stand with unbelievers. They need to be made aware of their tendency to be either a conformist, one who is not taking a stand, or an isolationist, one who is withdrawing from others or forcing his views on others to the point that no one wants to hear what he has to say about God. Of course there is the danger of a young believer being pulled back into his old ways if he

does not find a new set of friends who want to live for Christ. One way this danger can be avoided is by the wise counsel of a more mature believer or the person discipling him.

The balance is taking a stand tactfully while not compromising convictions. It's a process. None of us can respond perfectly like Daniel, but we can make progress.

1 **ASK:** What was the greatest pressure to conform you experienced in each stage of your life?

- JR. HIGH:
 - smoking
 - drugs
 - make-up
 - pornography
 - stay out late
- HIGH SCHOOL:
 - Hang out with "right people"
 - Cheat
 - Get drunk
 - Party
 - Sex
- COLLEGE:
 - Hang out with "right people"
 - Cheat
 - Get drunk
 - Party
 - Sex

2 **ASK:** What pressures do you think a person in corporate America faces?

- Compromise
- Bend the law subtly
- Unethical business practices

3 **ASK:** Across the board, what's the same about peer pressure at any level?

ANSWER: Someone will always be trying to get you to do something that you know is wrong. People will try to convince you that bending your convictions has no consequences. They will tell you you are no fun if you draw the line.


4 **DISCUSS**

5 **ASK**
ANSWER: You feel disappointed in yourself. You are not "strong" any more. Later you feel regret or remorse.

ASK
ANSWER: You feel weird or not "in" at first. Later, you are glad you took a stand.


6 **READ**

STATE: Let's look at a person in the Bible who tactfully took a stand before God for what was right.




VERSION 1.1


DON'T JUST SAY NO




PEER PRESSURE:
JR. HIGH



PEER PRESSURE:
HIGH SCHOOL



PEER PRESSURE:
COLLEGE



PEER PRESSURE:
CORPORATE

DISCUSS

Share a personal experience when you felt peer pressure.

*Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I ... I took the one less
traveled by, And that has
made all the difference.*

—Robert Frost,
The Road Not Taken

What does it feel like when you ...

Give in? Initially? Later On?

Hold your ground? Initially? Later On?

*We know what happens
to people who stay in
the middle of the road.
They get run over.*

—Aneurin Bevan,
The Observer, 1953

LORI'S STORY

"My friend asked if she could use my I.D. one night so she could get into some clubs. I felt really bad saying no because I didn't want her to be mad at me. It put me in an awkward position. I told my roommate what had happened and then my friend asked my roommate for her I.D. Because I had already said no, it gave my roommate the strength to also say no. We both felt bad and really good at the same time."

TOOLBOX

- THINK
- OBSERVE
- CLOSE-UP
- WRITE
- DISCUSS
- FEELINGS
- BRAINSTORM
- REFERENCE
- PASSAGE
- ARTICLE
- BIG IDEA
- CROSSROAD

1 READ

2 STATE: To make sure we all understand what is going on in this passage, let's answer the questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.

WHO: Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Ashpenaz (chief of the king's officials), Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah.

WHAT: Judah is taken into captivity and the Hebrew young men are brought to Babylon to be educated in Babylonian culture. They were given a Babylonian diet, Babylonian names, and asked to worship Babylonian gods.

WHEN: After the Babylonian captivity of Judah. After being defeated in battle.

WHERE: In Babylon, which is modern day Iraq. They are a long way from home.

WHY: The king wanted to educate the top young captives in order to build the glory of his court.

HOW: King Nebuchadnezzar's mandate was issued and the Hebrew men were required to follow.

DANIEL 1:1-7

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 delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. The king 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.

Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishel and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

COMMENTARY

Culture Change: The literature and language of the Chaldeans was the focus of a three year, rigorous training to render these Hebrew boys fit for the king's service. When they study Babylonian literature they are studying the Babylonian value system, including astrology.

Food Change: The Mosaic Law contained a strict dietary code distinguishing pure and impure food for the people of Israel to eat. This code made Israel distinct from other nations. The daily ration from the King's table may have included types of food forbidden by the Law or meat offered to pagan idols.

Name Change: The four Jewish young men had names which honored the God of Israel. They were given names honoring pagan gods. Daniel meant, "My judge is God" - Belshazzar meant, "May Baal protect his life." Hananiah meant, "The Lord has shown grace" - Shadrach meant, "The command of Aku." Mishael meant, "Who is what God is?" - Meshach meant, "Who is what Aku is?" Azariah meant, "The Lord has helped" - Abednego meant, "Servant of Nego."

Who?
What?
Where?
When?
Why?
How?

DANIEL 1:8

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.

DEFINITION

RESOLVE: To make a firm decision about. Syn. "Decide": Firmness of purpose; resolution; determination.

DEFILE: To make filthy or dirty; befoul. To tarnish the luster of; render impure, corrupt. To profane. To make unclean or unfit for ceremonial use; desecrate. To violate the chastity of.

DANIEL 1:9-16

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 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 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.

At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

Who?
What?
Where?
When?
Why?
How?

3 READ

4 ASK

They would have felt pressured to conform to the culture and fear of losing their lives. They probably felt disoriented being in a foreign land, not knowing what to expect.

5 READ

6 ASK: What do you learn from this verse?

Ask: What insight do the definitions of "resolve" and "defile" give you on the principles found in this verse?

7 READ

8 STATE: Let's answer Who, What, When, Where, Why and How for these verses.

WHO: Daniel, Ashpenaz (commander of king's officials)

WHAT: Daniel says "no" in regard to defiling himself by eating the king's food, but devises an alternative plan.

WHEN: After the king's order for their education, diet, and name change.

WHERE: In the king's court.

WHY: Daniel wants to obey God, not the culture.

HOW: Daniel devises a plan to have the commander test and see the results of their Hebrew dietary convictions.

9 ASK: How did Daniel show that God's way is better than the world's way?

-He resolved not to defile himself. He offered a plan to the king's official

1 READ

2 READ

3 ASK: What would Daniel say to Rachel and Sean? Ask yourself, What does the Bible say about this issue?

Resolve to be pure in private and before others.

What are some biblical guidelines that speak to the issues raised in the above stories? (see 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Ephesians 5:3-5; Romans 13:14, and 2 Timothy 2:22).

NOTE TO LEADER: One problem in this scenario is that on the inside they are different, but on the outside they are exactly the same.

FOLLOW-UP: What would people have thought if Rachel and Sean had decided not to stay together?

4 ASK: What would Daniel say to Cassandra? "No" is not enough. How will others see the benefits of God's way?

NOTE: Daniel chose neither conformity nor isolation. What kind of plan could Cassandra follow in reaching out with love and grace to her non-Christian friends?

5 ASK: Describe a time when you were pressured to do something wrong.

FOLLOW UP: What tensions did you feel?

6 ASK: What would the consequences have been given in?

7 ASK: What would the benefits have been if you had if you had not given in?

8 ASK: Do you tend to be a Rachel/Sean or a Cassandra?

RACHEL AND SEAN

Rachel and Sean were growing Christians and wanted God to be a part of their relationship. They had been dating 4 months when Sean invited her to go to his out-of-town formal. As was the norm, it was assumed that they would share a hotel room together. At first they felt uncomfortable with it, but at the beginning of their relationship, they decided to not be sexually active so they knew nothing would happen if they stayed in the same room. They thought, "No big deal," and shared a room.

CASSANDRA

Cassandra trusted Christ as her Savior. She began to learn she was a new creation in Christ and pulled away from everything that was "old".

CASSANDRA THOUGHT:

- "I don't want to hang out with non-Christians. They're a bad influence on me."
- "I don't want to be with the girls on my hall because they are too wild."
- "My friends will see that I don't do those things anymore and know that I am a Christian."

HER FRIENDS THOUGHT:

- "Cassandra thinks she's better than us. She's holier than thou."
- "Cassandra doesn't like us anymore. All she likes are her Christian friends."
- "She won't do anything with us anymore. Christians are so exclusive but they're supposed to be loving."

CONTRAST

What would Daniel say to Rachel and Sean?	What would Daniel say to Cassandra?
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DISCUSS

Describe a time when you were pressured to do something wrong?

CONSEQUENCES If you had given in?	BENEFITS If you didn't?

REFLECT

Do you tend to be a Rachel/Sean or a Cassandra?

1 READ

2 ASK: Where do I succumb to the pressure to conform?

3 STATE: Write your answer in the space.

4 ASK: What specific passages speak to this issue?

FOLLOW UP: Would someone like to share some verses you thought of that address the issue you noted?

LEADER'S NOTE: As these students talk about issues they are struggling with, encourage them to only share things that would be appropriate to share in the group.

5 ASK: How can I "resolve" not to "defile" myself and do right?

6 ASK: Do I tend to isolate myself from relationships with unbelievers?

7 STATE: Write your answer in the space.

8 ASK: How does this prevent me from reaching out to them?

FOLLOW UP: Would someone like to answer that?

9 ASK: What can I do to strike a balance between not conforming yet not isolating myself from relationships with non-Christians?

State: Discuss as a group.

NOTE: While compromise is never an acceptable option for the Christian, isolation is sometimes an appropriate and often necessary course of action. The biblical term is "separation."

FOLLOW-UP: When might there be appropriate times for separation?


ANSWER: When the temptation is too great, when an activity is in clear violation of God's Word, when involving myself with a questionable activity might jeopardize my witness for Christ.

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TAKING A STAND

It had been hard for such a young believer. The word had gotten around the fraternity that Dan had become a Christian. There were a good number of brothers who weren't very happy about it. So they turned up the heat. They talked behind his back and they mocked him to his face. They even knelt down and pretended to worship him once he walked down the hall. But still he hung in there. Outside the house, his involvement with C.C.C. helped him nurture his faith. Within the house, he sought to live an exemplary life before his brothers.

Four years later, when Dan was a senior, a Campus Crusade staff man spoke to Dan's fraternity chapter on "How You Can Know God Personally." The living room was full. There had been a change in the house since Dan was a freshman, but the most revealing comment came from the brother who had given Dan the greatest grief. His comment card read, "If you are from the same organization that Dan is a part of, you are welcome in this house at any time."



🧠 ✍️

CONFORMITY

Where do I succumb to the pressure to conform?

What specific passages speak to this issue?

How can I "resolve" not to "defile" myself and do right?

🧠 ✍️

ISOLATIONISM

Do I tend to isolate myself from relationships with unbelievers?

How does this prevent me from reaching out to them?

What can I do to strike a balance between not conforming yet not isolating myself from relationships with non-Christians?

NOTE: While compromise is never an acceptable option for the Christian, isolation is sometimes an appropriate and often necessary course of action. The biblical term is "separation."

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the *New International Version*, ©1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Published by Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Christ and Culture – Reinhold Neibhur



TOPIC CONNECTIONS

Related *InterACTA* small group studies: *Two Worlds; Distilled Logic; Mega Choices; No Compromise.*

DIGGING DEEPER

The following excerpt from Em Griffin’s book, “The Mind Changers,” would be an excellent tool for helping our students dig deeper into the subject of conformity. You may want to copy this for each student and give it to them at the end of the study. Encourage them to take it home and read it and think about it during the week and be prepared to discuss it next week as a review. You could use questions like, What is the main point of this article? How does it increase our understanding of conformity? How might a person apply it?

The easy popular criticism of conformity also assumed that the man who follows the crowd in one instance will automatically do so in another situation. But it just isn’t so! ...The difference is not in personality, but in situation. Some conditions encourage a person to weigh his own perceptions and experience heavily, while almost ignoring the thoughts and desires of those around him. In this case—no conformity. But change some of the situational factors and the very same man will tend to doubt the value of his own judgement and rely almost totally on the opinion of those around him.

As Christian persuaders we need to know those situational factors. On the negative side, we want to avoid placing anyone in such a strong group pressure situation that they simply can’t say no to our message. This would be dishonoring to the Lord and show a casual disregard for them as fellow human beings. We also want to be able to spot those non-Christian group situations where the cards are stacked so high that believers will have a tough time maintaining their faith and witness. Again, it’s not without reason that Christ taught us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

Em Griffin, *The Mind Changers: The Art of Christian Persuasion* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1976), p. 196.

O V E R V I E W O F M E E T I N G T I M E



Planning your group session

INTERACTION AS A GROUP	INTERACTION WITH THE STUDY & WORD	INTERACTION WITH GOD	UPCOMING INFORMATION	OTHER IDEAS
Ice breaker? Refreshments?	Provided. Add personal story?	Worship / Praise / Prayer time?	Next meeting? Special event?	Music / Video?
_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.

Allocating your time

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