

Punching Holes in the Devil's Darkness

When the Scottish novelist Robert Louis Stevenson was a child, the story is told that one night his nanny came into his nursery to put him to bed. She found the little boy looking intently out of his bedroom window.

When she called to him, he continued staring into the darkness, so she went over to ask him what he found so interesting outside. As she peered over his shoulder, she saw the lamplighter walking down the street, lighting the street lamps. Little Robert responded, "Look, Nanny. I'm watching as that man puts holes in the darkness."

Sometimes I can become discouraged when I look out into the "darkness" brought on by the spiritual and moral decay of our great nation. But I'm reminded that while I may not be able to change the world, I can put a "hole in the darkness."

Daniel was a young man who lived during a time of great darkness in his nation of Judah. The Babylonians from the East swept through and destroyed everything in a series of ruthless campaigns. When the enemy king, Nebuchadnezzar, ordered the finest and the brightest Israelites to be taken captives to serve as slaves in his palace, Daniel was seized and marched 800 miles east, never to return. But rather than despair, Daniel put holes in the darkness.

Read Daniel 1

In Times of Change

Political Change

- Describe the political changes that took place in Judah where Daniel lived. See Daniel 1:1-2.

- How do you think these changes affected the average person? How did they affect Daniel?
- What political changes are taking place in our nation? How do they affect you? How do they affect the general public?

Religious Change

- How was the religion of the Babylonians different from that of the Jews? See Jeremiah 32:29, Isaiah 21:9; Daniel 3:12; Deuteronomy 5:2-5; Exodus 20:3-6; 2 Samuel 7:22.
- How do you think this difference affected Daniel's faith?
- Describe the religious changes in our nation over the past ten years.
- What impact do you think these changes have had on the church in general? How have they impacted your own faith?

Personal Change

- Read Daniel 1:3-7, and name four or more changes that took place in Daniel's personal life. Put each change into your own words.
- Which personal change in Daniel's life can you most identify with?
- When so many changes take place at the same time—in the world, in the nation, in your community, in your church and even in your own life—how does that impact you? How do you think they could have made Daniel feel?
- What encouragement for times of change do you find in Psalm 46? Give the phrases.

Be True to Your Convictions

Make the Choice

- How did Daniel handle the changes that swirled around

him? Give the words that describe the choice he made in Daniel 1:8.

- How did Daniel follow through on his choice?
- What impact did Daniel's example have on others? See Daniel 1:8-21.
- If Daniel had not been true to his convictions, do you think anyone back home would have known about it? What blessing would he have missed?
- How did Moses make a similar choice, and what were the results? See Hebrews 11:24-27. Who followed his example? See Exodus 12:37-38.
- How did Joshua challenge his people to make the same choice? Read Joshua 24:14-24. Give the verse and phrase that indicates Joshua set the example.
- How did Elijah challenge Israel to make the same choice? Describe the setting of his challenge in 1 Kings 18. Write out his challenge in verse 21 in your own words. What was the outcome? Read 18:38-39.
- What are your core convictions? When have you intentionally made the choice to live by them? How have you followed through? Who has followed your example?
- What analogy does Jesus use to describe these core convictions in Matthew 5:14-16? How does this analogy relate to Himself, and what does this mean to you? See John 9:5.

Keep the Commitment

- Read Daniel 1:1-15. What resistance did Daniel encounter, and what was the reason for it?
- Read 1 Kings 18:1-15. What resistance did Elijah face for the same reason as he sought to follow through on his choice to obey God?
- Who has resisted your choice for that same reason? Describe the circumstances.
- What were the risks Daniel took in order to overcome the resistance and keep his commitment?

- Give the phrase that reveals God was working invisibly on Daniel's behalf. Do you think Daniel kept his commitment because he knew God was at work, or did he keep his commitment because of the choice he had made?
- Read Exodus 12:36. What similar phrase describes God's activity on Moses' behalf?
- Relate God's activity on behalf of Daniel and Moses to Proverbs 21:1. How does this encourage you?

Experience the Consequences

- What were the consequences of Daniel's choice and commitment? See Daniel 1:15-20.
- How were his friends, the chief official and the king affected by what he did?
- In the end, was he better or worse off than if he had not stayed true to his convictions?
- How do you think Daniel's three friends were influenced by his example in Daniel 1? Describe the choice, the commitment and the consequences that they made several years later in Daniel 3:1-30.
- How are the choice, the commitment and the consequences confirmed in Psalm 1?

Don't be discouraged because of the turmoil and decay in our changing world. Make the choice to be true to your convictions, live out your commitment to the truth and experience the blessing of just putting a hole in the darkness!

For the original article, visit .