

# JERUSALEM OR BABYLON

## Navigating Cultural Currents

April 2, 2017

Introduction: How does a believer influence society when Christianity is considered irrelevant and extreme? As Christians, we have tried yelling and screaming – to no avail. We have pushed a political agenda – and failed. We have insulated ourselves from culture – and it continues to fragment. Yet, as a community who now lives in the margins our mission is to carry the message of hope to a hope-starved world. What does it take to influence a secular culture? Faithful believers. Any takers?

Scripture Reading: Daniel 1:1-6

### I. The New Cultural Code vs. God's Code

*"You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, **everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes...**" (Deuteronomy 12:8).*

<sup>26</sup> *"If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and **do that which is right in his eyes**, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer" (Exodus 15:26).*

- A. To find yourself, look within yourself. – vs – To find yourself, discover the truth outside yourself, in Jesus.
- B. People should not criticize someone else's life choices. – vs – Loving others does not always mean staying silent.
- C. To be fulfilled in life, pursue the things you desire most. – vs – Joy is found not in pursuing our own desires, but in giving of ourselves to bless others.
- D. Enjoying yourself is the highest goal of life. – vs – The highest goal of life is giving glory to God.
- E. People can believe whatever they want as long as those beliefs don't affect society. – vs – God gives people the freedom to believe whatever they want, but those beliefs always affect society.
- F. Any kind of sexual expression between two consenting adults is fine. – vs – God designed boundaries for sex and sexuality in order for humans to flourish.

Kinnaman, David; Lyons, Gabe (2016-02-23). Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme (p. 60). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

### II. A Fortress or a Beachhead?

<sup>14</sup> *"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> **I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one"** (John 17:14–15).*

"Through the community of the church, the world is to see what living under God's reign looks like – grace and truth, love and compassion, and justice and

mercy. The church is the beachhead from which the kingdom moves to reclaim the world. We are not to be a community of individual witnesses, but rather a witnessing community where all participate in the redemption of the world.”

Erre, Mike (2009). *Death by Church: Finding Our Way Back to Jesus* (p. 228-229). Harvest House Publishing.

### III. Living in Today's Culture

<sup>3</sup> *Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, <sup>4</sup> youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and **competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans...** <sup>5</sup> **...They were to be educated for three years...***

(Daniel 1:3–4, 5).

#### A. Who do I hold dear?

<sup>8</sup> **But Daniel resolved** that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. <sup>9</sup> **And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs** (Daniel 1:8–9).

#### B. What are my values?

<sup>17</sup> *Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, <sup>18</sup> and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, **so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon*** (Daniel 2:17–18).

#### C. What would be the loving thing to do?

*Daniel answered the king and said, **“No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked*** (Daniel 2:27).

#### D. What would be the right thing to do?

**but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these** (Daniel 2:28).

#### E. What would be the wise thing to do?

<sup>48</sup> *Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and **made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.** <sup>49</sup> **Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king's court** (Daniel 2:48–49).*

### IV. Responding to Today's Culture

#### A. Make space for people who don't agree.

<sup>49</sup> John answered, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because **he does not follow with us.**” <sup>50</sup> But Jesus said to him, “Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.” (Luke 9:49–50).

True tolerance is an ability to acknowledge and permit other people’s views. To put up with opinions with which you don’t agree. To live with ideas and people you find appalling. True tolerance— some call it “principled pluralism” is a fundamental feature of a truly free society. NOTE: There is a new definition of tolerance. Let’s call it “fake tolerance.” Fake tolerance has emerged over the last decade. It goes something like this: “We will tolerate you as long as your opinion falls within the range of what we deem acceptable.” (We need to listen more and talk less.)

Kinnaman, David; Lyons, Gabe (2016-02-23). Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You’re Irrelevant and Extreme (pp. 98-99). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

B. Ask the right questions.

*But my kingdom is not from the world.”* <sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said to him, “**So you are a king?**” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. **Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.**” <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, “**What is truth?**” (John 18:36b–38).

1. What is Wrong? – Check and Confront
2. What is Confused? – Clarify and Compel
3. What is Right? – Celebrate and Cultivate
4. What is Missing? – Create and Catalyze

C. Live out your convictions and stand out in a crowd.

*But Peter and the apostles answered, “**We must obey God rather than men**” (Acts 5:29).*

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I. The New Cultural Code vs God's Code (*Deuteronomy 12:8*) (*Exodus 15:26*)

II. A Fortress or a Beachhead? (*John 17:14–15*)

III. Living in Today's Culture

A. Who do I \_\_\_\_\_? (*Daniel 1:8–9*)

B. What are my \_\_\_\_\_? (*Daniel 2:17–18*)

C. What would be the \_\_\_\_\_ thing to do? (*Daniel 2:27*)

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A. Make \_\_\_\_\_ for people who don't \_\_\_\_\_. (*Luke 9:49–50*)

B. Ask the right \_\_\_\_\_. (*John 18:36b–38*)

C. Live out your \_\_\_\_\_ and stand out in a \_\_\_\_\_. (*Acts 5:29*)