

**Living for Jesus
in a Secular World
BE WISE!**



The following document is a rough copy of Pastor Drost's sermon notes
of his message preached September 3rd, 2017

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 Our topic these past weeks has been about Living for Jesus in a Secular World

If we are going to follow Jesus we will find ourselves traveling in a different direction than society around us, not in everything but in several things. As a Christians, we DO have non-negotiable convictions that at times put us in a position of disagreement with the secular tide, the popular opinions, values and views of those around us.

We find ourselves swimming against the tide

The way of Christ is countercultural!

There is a pervasive and intimidating undercurrent in Canada today which works to pressure us to conform to group-thinking. Basically, it goes like this: *"You are a good person, part of the in crowd, as long as your opinions fall within the range of what we deem acceptable. But if you dissent from prevailing popular narratives that we have scripted for you, then you are a bigot (Narrow minded, extremist, you are the enemy)"*.

Very often these "**opinion fads**" come and go based on who controls the power to script the narratives dished out to us. People in power with personal agendas, the press, politicians, etc. who spin the information in such a way to make us believe their slant on an issue. They craft what becomes popular opinion and what becomes political correctness. And those who disagree get labeled **bigots** (Narrow minded, extremist, the enemy, dangerous). And so, a very subtle yet strong atmosphere of intolerance emerges and freedom of speech, freedom of thought go out the window.

The assumption of course is based on the premise that the popular dominant views must be correct and so, only a bigot, an idiot or a crackpot would question them.

And who wants to be ostracized and thought to be a bigot, an idiot or a crackpot? So, the simple solution is to shut up and conform to the populous group-thinking, even if (in your heart) you hold to a very different conviction.

Illustration: You remember the term "Freedom fries"? The term became popular in 2003 when restaurants renamed their menu items from French Fries to Freedom Fries in response to France's opposition to the proposed invasion of Iraq. Anyone opposed to the invasion of Iraq (including Canada at the time) was considered a coward by the populous American narrative.

"Cubbie's" restaurant owner **Neal Rowland**, said in an interview: *"Since the French are backing down [from the war], French fries and French everything needs to be banned"*.

Then U.S. Representatives Bob Ney and Walter Jones directed the three House cafeterias to change all references to French fries and French toast on menus and replace them with Freedom fries and Freedom toast. Many Americans refused to call them French Fries as an act of patriotism. Looking back, most people see it as silly and childish but at the time, "group-thinking" made it perfectly acceptable.

After the invasion of Iraq became unpopular, the term "Freedom Fries" disappeared. On August 2, 2006, the House cafeteria menus were changed back by the new House Administration Committee Chairman, who replaced Ney following his resignation due to a fraud scandal to which he eventually pleaded guilty.



Followers of Jesus throughout history have often found themselves in disagreement with the popular opinions, values and views of society. Many have had to courageously stay the course and suffer the consequences while others have caved to the pressures of popular opinion and compromised their convictions. It takes courage to follow Jesus!

Jesus calls us to be Salt and Light... He said:

“You are the salt of the earth... (then He said) You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:13–16

It takes courage to shine! It’s easier to hide under a basket of the prevailing popular correctness and “blend in”.

In today’s climate, it’s all-too-easy to allow our Christian views to be shaped by the dominant opinion of the broader culture and yield to group-thought.

“You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world...”

“A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Last week Pastor Chad pointed out the importance of why Jesus used “a city on a hill” to illustrate what we are to be.

1. Cities in the Bible were often on a hillside (it made them easier to defend). That had an interesting effect. You could see the city lights from afar. All the individual candles and torches in houses and on the streets sent a glow across the plains that could be seen for miles around.
2. We have this limitation in English. There is no difference between ‘you’ referring to one person, or ‘you’ referring to a group (As Pastor Chad pointed out: unless you’re a cowboy/cowgirl and say y’all). This verse is not a “you” verse, it is a “y’all” verse.

JESUS IS TELLING US TO SHINE TOGETHER!

Being the light to the world is not a solo act; it is a together act.

WE SHINE BRIGHTER TOGETHER!

...we serve Jesus together

...we love each other

...we pray “our Father” “forgive us”

...we are lights together (that **“togetherness” makes us like a city that shines and cannot be hid!**)

“You are the salt of the earth”.

The principle works for this as well.

How many have ever cooked something following a recipe?



Have you even come across a recipe that called for “one grain of salt”?

It would have no noticeable effect!

We affect our world when we are salt TOGETHER - “y’all”

LIGHT TOGETHER!

✚ In our time we have left I want us to focus on Colossians 4:5-6

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Col. 4:5-6 (NIV)

The Old Testament book of Daniel is a great example for this topic we are looking at:

Living for Jesus in a Secular World!

- Daniel has a lot to say to us about finding our own way in a culture that at times is even a bit hostile to the Christian faith.
- Not only does Daniel teach us how to survive as Christians in our culture, Daniel shows us how to engage it, thrive in it, and even be used by God to be leaders in our pluralistic culture.

Here is how the book starts:

“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 gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.” Daniel 1:1–2a (NKJV)

- Nebuchadnezzar was a powerful Babylonian tyrant who did not serve God or care about the God of the Bible. Yet, because Jehoiakim had done evil in the sight of God, God handed him over to this ungodly dictator which goes to show you that God allows ungodly leaders to rise in order to punish disobedient nations.
- Not only did Nebuchadnezzar ransack and take the valuable articles from God’s temple but he also took captive some of the better Hebrew young men to serve in his palace. Daniel was one of those that was taken captive! NOT A GOOD DAY!
- Nebuchadnezzar sent Daniel to be trained to serve the king along with other captives. After a considerable time passed this is what it says:

“Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon.” Daniel 2:48 (NKJV)

Wow! How did that happen? How did Daniel go from being a captive to being a chief administrator ruler over all of Babylon?

Over a pagan pluralistic society that did not serve the God of Daniel?

Here are some lessons that come out of the story of Daniel.

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1. Daniel’s deep convictions prepared him for leadership.

Here is what it says:



“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies.” Daniel 1:8a (NKJV)

- The food of this Gentile King included meats and dishes that were not permitted for Jews to eat (Pork, crab, snails, etc). Delicacies for the Babylonians but prohibited for the Hebrew people under Moses.
- You’d think under the pressure of the circumstances he would just keep his mouth shut and go along with the politically correct socially acceptable thing and just “blend in”.

But Daniel had non-negotiable convictions

If you are going to stay standing in the face of the pressure to conform to group-thinking, if you are going to have a voice in a pluralistic society, if you are going to be a leader, you need to be a person with deep uncompromising convictions.

A person of character!

Only Christians with deep solid convictions are ready to lead or influence others in a pluralistic world!

Illustration: Hanwell Park 300-year-old tree – roots.

Deep convictions are the roots that allow us to grow tall in a pluralistic society and stay strong against the winds of secular pressure

As a Christian, do you have strong deep convictions?

Non-negotiable that you will not compromise no matter what!

God is looking for strong people with Daniel-like character.

2. Daniel was able to turn a crisis into an opportunity.

What looked like a crisis and devastation was actually a great opportunity for Daniel.

When we are face to face with a crisis (a problem, a trying situation, a conflict, a **mountain**, even a failure) it is often a great opportunity.

One of my favourite quotes:

When you are face to face with a difficulty, you are up against a discovery. (Lord Kelvin)

Jerusalem had fallen, Daniel was ripped away from his homeland and family, taken prisoner, surrounded by huge pressures to compromise, but in reality he was on his way to becoming the top leader and influential person in the Babylonian and Persian Kingdom.

He ends up having a book in the Bible named after him! **All in the face of great conflict!**

You might be facing some huge problems at work, at home, at school; a conflict with someone, an unjust situation, someone has done you wrong... stop thinking about it as a problem. Start looking at it as an **open door of opportunity.** Your finest hour of victory!



I believe the Christian Church in Canada is facing one of its greatest opportunities ever in the face of this pluralistic society! It's not the time to circle the wagons and hide. This is the time to stand tall with Godly conviction and see God open great doors of opportunity.

3. Daniel rose to the top by being a wise person.

The word “wisdom” constantly appears in this book of Daniel. It was said of Daniel “that the Spirit of God was in him, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom were found in him.” (Daniel 5:14)

- When Daniel was faced with the dilemma of eating food that was not proper under Jewish Law, he did not become belligerent, stubborn, confrontational. Instead he spoke “graciously” and wisely, appealed to the chief in charge and asked him to “test him, and let him just eat vegetables and drink water for 10 days and see if in 10 days his appearance is not better than the others eating the king’s food”. The chief in charge agreed to the test and discovered Daniel to be in much better health than all of them.
- Every time Daniel was faced with a difficulty he would act and speak wisely and graciously to whoever was in charge.

The Bible is full of admonitions to be wise! **Back to our verse...**

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be ALWAYS full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Col. 4:5-6

If we are going to live for Jesus in a Secular World, if we are going to make the most out of the opportunities, we need to BE WISE!

- Know how to **ALWAYS** speak to people graciously!
- Know how to answer people wisely!

“He who wins souls is wise.” Proverbs 11:30 (NKJV)

It takes wisdom to win someone over! Gracious words spoken wisely! Jesus said...

“I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Matthew 10:16

Sometimes we are as wise as doves and harmless as serpents

God wants us to be wise! Wise towards others... Our verse again (say it with me)

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be ALWAYS full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Col. 4:5-6

Are you facing a situation you are needing wisdom with?

Maybe needing to learn how to deal with something with grace?

“If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He will give it to you.” James 1:5a (NIRV)

