



# God in Politics

## Bible Study Part Three

### Faith with integrity

#### Daniel 1:1-21

We live in a time when the debate about the role of faith in public life has never been more heated. It may become increasingly difficult for Christians even to hold public office, and there is sometimes pressure to compromise on fundamentals. Making sense of what it means to live and act as a Christian in a hostile environment is not always easy.

In about 600BC, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Judah. He besieged Jerusalem and carried off some young noble Israelites to serve in his palace - Daniel being one of them. During the 70 years of exile, he rose to a position of power in a regime that was unsympathetic to his closely held faith. How did he do that?

Daniel was able to live out his faith with integrity and at the same time find favour in the eyes of pagan kings. He faced tests of faith far beyond those which most of us are called to experience, yet on each occasion found that God honoured Daniel's faith and protected him. For today's Christians thinking about how to live out their faith with integrity especially those embarking on a career in politics, the media and other challenging arenas there is great encouragement in his story!

#### Read Daniel 1:1-21 and Daniel 6

Every day we may have to make decisions that challenge our belief system and may require us to compromise. For Daniel, eating the palace food, which had been sacrificed to Babylonian gods, would have been against his faith (**Leviticus 12:30, 31; 14:1-21**). Later, Daniel's enemies used his integrity against him, knowing that he would refuse to cease his worship and prayer.

Daniel stood firm but put himself at great risk. In Chapter 1 God blessed him and his friends with better health and strength than their peers, who were eating the palace food. Daniel then stepped out in faith and interpreted the king's dreams. Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed that he appointed Daniel ruler over Babylon (**Daniel 2:48**). As Daniel's favour with the king grew, his jealous enemies plotted against him. Daniel chose to disobey a royal decree rather than dishonour God. Even though it seemed his life was forfeit in the lion's den, he was protected by God while his enemies faced their deaths.

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# Discussion and questions

Living as part of a community, means making concessions and choices that benefit the common good. The eighteenth-century politician Edmund Burke said 'All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter; we give and take; we remit some rights that we may enjoy others.'

In a modern democracy, there are many views of what our society should look like. The question of where and when compromises can be made, whilst maintaining integrity, is an important one.

**? Daniel faithfully served pagan kings who did not follow God's laws, yet on some issues he refused to compromise. On what basis did he make these decisions?**

**? On what issues can Christian people compromise, yet maintain their integrity?**

Daniel, and many other people of God, have found themselves in positions of authority in secular or pagan states. In our own time, it may be difficult for Christian politicians to stand firm and not compromise in a parliament controlled by a party system and collective policy lines, and where the experience of power can be so tempting and intoxicating.

**? How did Daniel respond to the power he was given? When today's politicians face challenges on conscience issues how can we support them?**

In **Jeremiah 29:7** God tells the exiles in Babylon (including Daniel) to pray for the good of Babylon, even though it was ruled by a pagan and tyrannical king.

Jesus later acknowledged the authority of Roman imperial rule in **Mark 12:17**, and Paul and Peter did the same – see **Romans 13:1** and **1 Peter 2:13,14**. Christian believers are urged not to withdraw from the political arena, but to pray for the good of their government because that's where our own good lies. God can use governments as His instruments (in Babylon's case, to punish His people Israel for rejecting Him as Lord). We may not agree with some of the policies of our present Government, but we certainly have a duty to pray.

**? How would you answer someone who says that Christians should not seek political and other authoritative power?**

**? What should Christians do with political power when they have it?**



## Prayer

Spend some time asking God to help Christians in politics to have wisdom and integrity.

Pray too that God will show you how He wants you to be involved and how you might know when and how it is right to make compromises.