

How many of you adults went to Sunday School as children? (hands)

If you did, you probably remember the story of Daniel in the Lions’ Den...

how Daniel was tossed into a dark pit among hungry lions  
and the entrance was sealed...

how the king spent a sleepless night worrying about him...

how next morning he rushed to the entrance and called out:  
“Daniel, has your god been able to deliver you?”

and how Daniel’s voice rang out, “I am well. God sent His angel to shut  
the lions’ mouths!”

Yes, a dramatic story... but do you remember  
**WHY HE WAS PUT THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE?**

That part of the story is worth hearing too... listen to it in the first half of  
Daniel chapter 6:

**READ THE TEXT**

Daniel was in that lions’ den because he **TOOK A STAND**.

It was the same with Martin Luther centuries later.

Luther **TOOK A STAND**, and because he did, he was summoned before  
Emperor Charles V and threatened with death by burning at the stake.

Daniel and Luther teach us

that **IF YOU BELIEVE IN GOD,**  
**SOONER OR LATER YOU WILL HAVE TO TAKE A STAND.**

If you’re a normal human being, you don’t want to hear this!  
Taking a stand means you’ll be singled out as “different” –  
you’ll be in a minority – possibly facing danger.

**WHO WANTS THAT??**

We want to be liked...accepted by people.

We want smooth sailing, no unpleasant surprises,  
and a peaceful death in our sleep at age 90.

But God gives no such guarantee.

In fact, He guarantees the opposite!

“If you follow me,” Jesus promised, **“the world will hate you.”**

WHY?

Because, very simply, we believe that

there is something that is TRUE and something that is FALSE  
some behavior that is RIGHT and some that is WRONG.

That puts us in opposition to the prevailing opinions of this culture.

Already back in 1991 George Barna polled Americans and found out that  
67% believe there is no such thing as ABSOLUTE TRUTH.

Many people think the only real heresy these days is to say

“This is true and that is false” / “This is right and that is wrong”

Modern man, wrote Francis Schaeffer,

“Has both feet firmly planted...in MIDAIR!”

As Christian people,

we confess a particular TRUTH about who GOD is, what SIN is,  
how one is SAVED, about JUDGMENT and HEAVEN and HELL.

That puts us out of step with most people around us.

Daniel and Luther and you and I are

SQUARE PEGS that will not fit into a ROUND HOLE...

if, that is, WE ARE WILLING TO TAKE A STAND,  
confess that faith openly, and live obediently toward God.

But how many of us are?

A convenient way to sidestep all of it is to say,

“I admire those great HEROES of faith. But they were FAMOUS...and they lived  
long ago and far away. I don’t want to chase after HEROIC CAUSES. I just  
want to live a normal, everyday life.”

But wait a minute.

Neither Daniel nor Martin Luther started out FAMOUS.

And neither had to go looking for a HEROIC CAUSE. Conflict and danger came and parked right on their doorstep.

Luther was a plain parish priest doing his job when along came an indulgence seller named Tetzel, and Luther had to decide if he'd OK the man's pitch or not.

Daniel was a young fellow captured in a war and brought to a foreign country to be a slave. All he had to decide was whether or not he'd eat the king's rich food or stay kosher...

and later whether or not he'd continue having his daily prayers in the face of an executive order to stop for a month.

YES or NO, Daniel? Yes or no, brother Martin?

Each of those men was just leading a "normal everyday life" (like we want to) when here came a decision to make...

YES or NO? OBEY or DISOBEY? GOD or the KING?  
It happened to them right where they lived.

That's where it will happen to you and to me.

Are you a student in a classroom at school? It'll happen there.

Our students at Oregon City HS, or Canby or Gladstone face weekly...even daily challenges to what they believe and how they've been taught to live.

"It's a different world out there," said former DP Charlie Mueller.

"A student in HS faces more temptation in a single week than I faced in 4 yrs"

Are you a mom doing your shopping at Safeway? It can happen there too.

Some time back, while shopping there I overheard a conversation between a mom and her 2 kids. The kids wanted to rent a questionable VIDEO, but the mom was hesitant about it...

"Stick to your guns, mom," I wanted to say, but she didn't. The two wore her down, pestering and pleading until she gave in. She could have taken a STAND, but she didn't.

Are you an employee at a JOB? There too you face decisions...  
Whether to join in the gossip around the coffee pot...or abstain.  
Whether to tell your customer the truth about a job foul-up...or to lie.

My son-in-law, while living in Colorado, encountered repeated dishonesty  
at the computer company where he worked.

He would not take part in it.

Soon it became so unpleasant that he had to look for another job.

TAKING A STAND is something required of every believer,  
wherever we happen to live or work, on even the most ordinary of days.

TAKING A STAND is usually a simple matter of OBEDIENCE.

Am I willing to OBEY what God tells me to do, or not?

What complicates matters is that obedience to God usually COSTS us something...  
time, money, inconvenience or more.

Take something as simple as GOING TO CHURCH.

That commitment costs time – two hours or more.

And there's an offering to bring.

And the price escalates when it means we will miss out on something  
“everyone else gets to do” on that day.

In Daniel's case it was as simple a matter as his daily prayers.

How could there be any problem with that? All it cost was a little time.

But then the price went up.

There came the king's order: “Whoever makes petition to any god...for  
30 days, except to the king, shall be cast into a den of lions!”

Now what, Daniel?

Give up prayer for 30 days and wait for this to blow over? Or take a stand?

“Daniel went down to his house....got down on his knees...and prayed...  
as he had done previously.”

Next thing he knew, he was in trouble!

The Bible tells it like it is.

The plain truth is DOING THE RIGHT THING MAY BRING YOU TROUBLE.

Taking a stand will have UNPLEASANT CONSEQUENCES.

Do you remember the name Donald Wildmon?

He was a Methodist minister who campaigned tirelessly against pornography in the media and urged people to boycott the corporate sponsors of such. He took a stand, and urged others to do so.

For his trouble, he became, as one magazine called him, “the most hated man in America” and was targeted by repeated lawsuits.

Hanani Mikhailovich was a major in the Soviet army in the early 1980s.

Always he had been a faithful Communist. But one night he heard a shortwave radio broadcast of a Gospel program...and he believed the message. Faced with a decision about future allegiances, he absented himself from the next party meeting.

The following day his party leader cornered him and demanded an explanation of his absence. He decided to take a stand on the truth. “I have become a Christian,” said Mikhailovich. The next day he was stripped of his rank as a major and publicly humiliated before his regiment.

TAKING A STAND comes with a price-tag.

No one knew that better than Daniel as he was rudely shoved into the pit that night.

And just before the giant stone was wedged into place,

Daniel heard the king’s voice echoing down into the darkness:

“Daniel, may your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!”

So it was for Martin Luther, who rode off toward his destiny at the Diet in Worms with Elector Frederick’s warning in his ears:

“If you go there, brother Martin, I cannot protect you!”

That’s the real issue, finally, isn’t it?

How can we stay SAFE? How find SECURITY?

For taking a stand removes the shield of anonymity.

No longer can we hide in a crowd....we stand ALONE, where only God can deliver.

Ah, but that’s the glorious news in this story!

For the way it ends teaches us in no uncertain terms,

**THOSE WHO TAKE A STAND FOR GOD DO NOT STAND ALONE.**

GOD IS THERE WITH THEM! GOD DELIVERS!

The next morning, the king's anxious fears were met with the sound of Daniel's cheerful voice: "God sent his angel...to shut the lions' mouths!"

Luther too emerged from his confrontation with Emperor Charles trembling, but unharmed.

Are you afraid to TAKE A STAND?

If so, take heart from this wonderful story.

You are not alone. God is in the picture, and He is not sitting on His hands!

"He heard my cry for help," wrote the Psalmist, "and He bowed the heavens and came down."

He did that literally!

In the flesh he "came down" to dwell among us, and to "take a stand" beside us.

**He's by our side upon the plain  
with his good gifts and spirit**

Luther later wrote in his magnificent hymn

**With might of ours can naught be done  
Soon were our loss effected  
But for us fights the Valiant One  
Whom God Himself elected.**

Talk about taking a stand!

Jesus took one for us.

HERE I STAND! He said before Caiaphas the High Priest.

No running away. No dodging the questions.

"Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?"

Everything hung on His answer: "I AM!"

Willingly He did that for you. For me. Bared His back to the whip.

Bowed His head to the crown of thorns.

Opened His palm to the iron spike that would pin His body to the cross.

All because He loved us. Was not ashamed to call us His own.

Willingly forgave our failures.

He was not ashamed to stand up for us. Shall we not also STAND UP for Him?

Never has there been a time when courage of conviction  
was more crucially needed than right now.

ALL OF YOU, like Daniel,  
are challenged to make your daily appointment with God a priority!

You MEN of the congregation  
are challenged to take a stand for faithfulness in your marriages,  
for time with your children,  
for eyes and hearts kept pure from pornographic images and videos.

You WOMEN of the congregation  
are challenged to respect your husbands,  
keep your speech edifying and free from gossip,  
to care for your children and model virtue in your workplaces

You CHILDREN of the congregation  
are challenged to honor your parents,  
to treat other children kindly without making fun of them,  
to do your school work honestly without cheating.

Such seemingly small things set the moral compass of our nation  
and determine whether or not the church of God will make a winsome witness  
for the Gospel in an increasingly godless culture.

Take a STAND!

STAND UP for Jesus!

Tell of His love. Live a life that reflects His glory.

DARE TO BE A DANIEL,  
and you will have God as your Helper and Deliverer!

In the name of Jesus. Amen.