

Shine With Purpose

Target is among many large corporations who have an internship program where the talent of aspiring business professionals is evaluated. Target combs the ranks of universities looking for individuals who show an aptitude for innovation, creativity, assertiveness, and integrity. The Babylonians had a similar process in recruiting gifted teenagers from their conquered provinces and bringing them back to Babylon for training. Daniel was one of them.

Five Decisions in Shining Your Light with Purpose:

1. Learn the _____(Culture)

- a. *“Then the king ordered Ashpenaz...to bring in some of the Israelites...young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.” Daniel 1:3-4.*
- b. The Babylonians attempted to change their recruit’s thinking by giving them a Babylonian education, their loyalty by giving them Babylonian names, and their lifestyle by introducing a new diet. *“But Daniel resolved not to defile himself.” Daniel 1:8.* How would he do that?
- c. God wants us to be wise and discerning in making a stand. The Apostle Paul said, *“To the Jews, I became like a Jew, to win the Jews.”* Wherever he went, Paul studied the culture so he could effectively minister in that culture.

2. Strive for _____(Excellence)

- a. *“In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.” Daniel 1:20.* There is no excuse for laziness and sloppiness. If you want to let your light shine for Jesus, work hard (Colossians 3:23)!
- b. Do you have a reputation as one who strives for excellence, like Jesus?
“Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men.” Luke 2:52.

3. Serve the _____(King)

- a. *“They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service.” Daniel 1:5.* God wants us to be good citizens (I Peter 2:13; Romans 13:1-2). Both Peter and Paul were beheaded by the very government to whom they were in submission.
- b. In rare situations, we will be called upon to put our loyalty to God above country (Daniel 3:14; 6:10; Revelation 14:7).

4. Pray for _____ (God's Help)

- a. *"Daniel went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God."* Daniel 6:10. As we pray, God guides us, even in "no-win" situations (James 1:5)!
- b. God led Daniel to propose a ten-day dietary test that would enable him not to defile himself (Daniel 1:12).

5. Maintain Your _____ (Integrity)

- a. *"Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel."* Daniel 1:9. God expects us to take the first step in demonstrating faith. Only after the Israelites stepped into the Jordan River did God part the waters (Joshua 3:10).

Maintaining your integrity involves both what you say and what you don't say. Chip & Joanna Gaines of HGTV's *Fixer Upper* are devout Christians whose pastor, Jimmy Seibert, faithfully preaches the Word of God, including our Lord's instruction on marriage (Matthew 19:4-6). After gay marriage was legalized, Chip & Joanna were approached by reporters seeking to know if they agreed with their pastor.

Chip chose to reply with grace. "Joanna and I have personal convictions. One of them is this – we care about you for the simple fact that you are a person, our neighbor on planet earth." We need to seek God for discernment so that we fight "*the good fight*" (II Timothy 4:7). Will you seek God in discerning when to speak truth, when to speak grace, and when to remain silent?