



**DISCUSS**

Brandon tells the story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and other pastors who refused to compromise the gospel as their government took over the church.

**Have you experienced moments when your faith was compromised? How did you respond?**

**As an in-group moderate, what do you think would be your biggest challenge?**

**CONFRONTATION LEADS TO DECISION MAKING**

Although many pastors challenged the Nazi government's new control of the churches, Brandon tells about other pastors who chose to go along with the takeover. Faced with a hard decision, they compromised rather than expose themselves to imprisonment or death.

Although the stakes are not normally this extreme, we are confronted with decisions every day. The decision to stay faithful or to compromise matters.

Read Daniel 1:8-21.

Daniel and his friends were faced with a huge decision. Their peers had chosen to change their diet to meet the king's standards, but Daniel and his friends refused in obedience to God.

**How are we as Christians today confronted to make decisions that challenge God's plan for us to be set apart from the world?**

Today we are gifted with the Holy Spirit who helps us choose what is godly. **How have you experienced His guidance when facing pressure to compromise what was right?**

**Why do we go along with wrongdoing?**

*Note: for a more in depth look at being in the world, rather than of the world, see the **Go Deeper** section at the end of this study.*

**STANDING UP FOR TRUTH NO MATTER THE PRICE**

In John 8:1-11, Jesus is confronted with some rather hostile scribes and Pharisees, who wanted a sinful woman, who had broken the Law of Moses, to be punished. At the same time, these men were constantly looking for ways to entrap Jesus in blasphemy. In every interaction they were testing Jesus.

Jesus did not fear these men. He responded with truth toward them and forgiveness toward the woman. **What was Jesus' response to the scribes and Pharisees? How does this provide a model for our own responses?**

Read Esther 4:13-5:3.

Queen Esther was faced with a dangerous task. God placed her in a situation where her husband the king, not knowing that Esther was a Jew, has ordered that her people be killed. Esther needed to stand up for her people and try to change the order. Just approaching the king meant risking her life, but she had to choose between what was easy and what was right.

**How did Esther prepare for this encounter with the king?**

Esther's choice to rely on God for protection meant saving herself, her people, justice for their attacker, and an honorable position with the king for Mordecai.

**How was God glorified in this situation?**

*Note: for a more in-depth look at prayer and fasting, see the **Go Deeper** section at the end of this study.*

**LIVE FOR CHRIST**

As mentioned in session four, sometimes when threatened we react with feelings of fear, anger, and other defensive reflexes. The pastors in Brandon's story definitely felt their positions of status within the church threatened, but they also feared for their physical lives.

Brandon points out that we should be focused on the only audience that matters. He says, "If our faith is in Christ, He's our Lord, and we live our whole lives before this audience of one."

**How have you had the opportunity to be the in-group moderate?**

Having this role is not always easy, but as Brandon asks, "**Who are you really living for?**" Keeping our eyes fixed on the eternal is not always easy.

**What consequences could we face as the in-group moderator?**

**How do these consequences compare to eternal consequences if we choose not to stand up for truth and righteousness?**

**LAST WORD**

The decisions we face can be challenging, but it is only when we put them in the light of eternity with our Savior that our choices become clear. Allowing fear and the weight of earthly consequences to guide our decisions seems small in comparison.

Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our decisions and looking to Christ as our example of truth will bring glory to God and will be testimony to others who share our journey.

Horizontal lines for writing notes.

## **GO DEEPER**

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

### **Of the World or in the World?**

Read James 4:4-8

- What is being addressed in verse 4?
- What does God want from us?
- What does this passage say happens when we are friends with the world?
- Have you been able to successfully be both submersed in the ways of the world and live a life devoted to God?

### **Prayer and Fasting**

We talked about Esther's command for prayer and fasting among her people. In this moment she was seeking God's protection for her as she approached the king without permission, for her people as their lives were being threatened, and for wisdom as they faced what was coming.

God uses prayer and fasting many times in the Bible. Let's look at the different ways it is mentioned in the following passages.

- What is the purpose of their fasting in Joel 2:12?
- What is their posture to be as they fasted?
- What was Moses doing in Exodus 34:27-28?
- Why did he fast during this time?
- What is the purpose of their fasting in Ezra 8:21-23?
- What was God's response?
- What type of fast did he choose in Isaiah 58:6?
- How does this fast demonstrate self-control in a different way than abstaining from food?
- What were they seeking during their fast in Acts 13:2-4?
- Who instructed them to pray and fast?

When Jesus fasted, as we read in Matthew 4, He did so to grow stronger spiritually. In those moments when He had to fully submit Himself to God, God provided angels to minister to Him.

God loves when we put aside the desires of our flesh and seek Him deeply. He wants to carry us through the times that are difficult. He wants us to rely on Him for guidance when making those hard decisions. And He wants us to come to Him with a repentant heart when we mess up. He is always there waiting for us.

Our eternal Father loves us. His opinion alone matters. Standing up for what is right here on earth will never be easy, but when we keep our eyes on eternity, it gives us strength to uphold truth.