


TALKING WALKING POINTS

How to Have an Impact in a Deteriorating Society

Daniel: A Person of Competence

2021.10.17



A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1 Review the Malcolm Muggeridge quote from Pastor Doug's sermon (see [Sermon Summary](#)). In what ways do you agree with his assessment of our culture's health? Disagree? Why? Give examples.

2 **Why** do you think some people contend that our culture actually is making progress—becoming more equitable, inclusive and just? If you wished to rationally discuss this question, what might you say?

3 Review the **four areas in which Daniel & friends distinguished themselves** (see [Sermon Summary](#)).
Which one of those traits do you think our culture values most? ...least? ...and why?

4 In which of those areas have you worked hardest to make progress? Tell us about it...
What means or process did you use to grow in that area? How did you measure growth?
What obstacles did you encounter—and how did you persevere through them?
Who served as an example, mentor, or encouragement to you in that area?
If you were to pass along one bit of wisdom you gained, what would it be?

5 Review the Sheldon Vanauken quote from Pastor Doug's sermon (see [Sermon Summary](#)).
Where do you think you fit on the following continuum—and why?

● "My example is a negative witness to the truth and beauty of Christianity."

● "My example is a positive witness to the truth and beauty of Christianity."

6 Of Pastor Doug's four points of [Application-Challenge](#), which one most tarnishes your witness? What would be one action you could take this week to make modest improvement in that area?

7 How can we help you do that?

Application-Challenge

- Take care of your body. You only get one in this life.
- Exercise your mind for the glory of God.
- Develop the art of social poise.
- Commit yourself to growing as a disciple of Christ.



1 This is totally an opinion question—but make sure you probe for the “why” and some “examples”. Don’t be satisfied with a simple thumbs up or down.

2 This question explores worldview issues—What is real? What is true, and how do we know what’s true? What is good? Who decides what is good? How do we know what’s good or right? What are people? What does it mean to be human? Who decides how humans should live? What is the meaning or purpose of life? What is wrong with our world and how did things go wrong? What is the solution?

Some of those questions would be a good way to explore whether our culture is improving or decaying.

3 This is another opinion question—but make sure you probe the “why” question.

4 Read all of these questions together, and then take plenty of time on this positive, up-beat question—because the next two questions are pretty hard hitting! You’re looking for folks to think meaningfully, substantively about the issue of making positive growth steps. This will help them have courage for tackling their areas of weakness.

5 Time for sober self-assessment. Give folks a moment to mark their chart—and then share their answers. You should go first. Be careful to be neither too pessimistic nor optimistic. Sober judgment is the goal. Make sure you answer the “why” question—and then invite them to do so as well.

Pay attention to whether any group members are overly pessimistic/optimistic in their self-assessment. This may be something to follow up on. Sound judgment is an important issue; Romans 12:3 & 1 Peter 4:7.

6 Time for more sober self-assessment.
You likely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question.

7 Once again—it’s probably best if you, the leader, give your answer first.
Be concrete. If your answer is “pray for me”, follow up with some specific requests.
If you ask for practical help, give some specific examples.
Consider suggesting that group members “buddy-up” with one other person for prayer and help.

Sermon Summary (Key Text: Daniel 1)

"[Our culture] has the unique distinction of training its own destroyers at its own educational institutions and providing them with facilities for propagating their own destructive ideologies far and wide, all at the public expense. Thus did Western man decide to abolish himself, creating his own boredom out of his own affluence, his own vulnerability out of his own strength, his own impotence out of his own erotomania. Himself, blowing the trumpet that brought the walls of his own city tumbling down...educating himself into imbecility, and polluting and drugging himself into stupefaction, he kneeled over, a weary, battered old brontosaurus, and became extinct."

—Malcolm Muggeridge

We live in a generation in which the things people said could not happen are happening. And we seek someone to blame. But there is no one to blame but ourselves. There is tremendous confusion regarding everything from business ethics to racial justice, to the nature of marriage and gender. Things that once seemed to be nailed down are coming loose. The Old Testament character, Daniel, shows us what kind of person it takes to make an impact on a deteriorating and disintegrating society. **He and his friends distinguished themselves in four areas.**

I. They were physically and morally fit (v. 4). They were in excellent physical condition and had good moral character—and there is always a correlation between the two! There are many ways folks abuse their bodies (not just drugs and alcohol, but also too much weight, too little sleep, too much work); guys—let's not take our bodies for granted! The text also says that they were "pleasing in appearance". You may not be the best looking person in the room, but you can still be attractive. A big smile can make even the homeliest person look attractive. Conversely, a frown doesn't look good on anyone! Put a smile on your face, and people will be drawn to you, and to your God! (They will—if for no other reason, they will want to know what you're so happy about!) How you dress also makes a statement. You represent Jesus Christ, and whether you like it or not, people draw conclusions about you based upon how you dress, and how you present yourself. What kind of an image am I presenting to a lost world?

"The best argument for Christianity is Christians, their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians, when they are somber and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive—then Christianity dies a thousand deaths."

—Sheldon Vanauken

II. They were mentally sharp (v. 4). They "showed intelligence in every branch of wisdom"—that means that they were teachable, able to make progress in their studies. They were good learners. A disciple is a learner. When you stop learning, you stop growing. And when you stop growing, you start dying. Age has nothing to do with it. You can be eighteen and dead, or you can be eighty and very much alive and positively impacting culture! Daniel also was endowed with understanding—he was able to package what he'd learned and come to conclusions, making meaningful contributions to society. When you become a Christian you don't throw your mind into neutral—your goal should be to out-think your generation. We Christians have a built-in advantage: biblical revelation allows us to avoid much of the distortion and nonsense which characterizes humanistic thinking. We are to be discerning thinkers, having that rare quality called judgment, thinking and communicating clearly and intelligently.

III. They were socially adept (v. 4). They had the ability to serve in the palace. Being delivered from ourselves by the power of the Holy Spirit frees us to flow into the lives of other people. Many people are hung up with themselves...that is all they can talk about. They can only serve themselves because their eyes always are on themselves. To make an impact on our generation we must be like Daniel and his friends; they were self-controlled, not self-centered.

IV. Their influence was "a God thing" (v. 9 & 17). Their commitment to God enabled them to say "yes" to many things in their pagan culture, but to avoid being defiled by it (v. 8). Daniel had made a decision to not be defiled, and his decision made him. That is true for us as well: first we make a decision and then our decisions make us. It is not enough to **want** to make wise choices, we have to **actually** make them day after day after day.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to learn from Romans how to live as people of integrity...*

Monday—Read Romans 6:1-7. What is the believer's *status toward/relationship to* sin? (Especially note v. 2 & 6-7.)

Tuesday— Read Romans 6:8-11. What is sin's *status toward/relationship to* believers? (Especially note v. 9-10.)

Wednesday— Read Romans 6:12-19. Who/what was our old master? Who/what is our new master?

Thursday— Read Romans 6:20-23. How stupid is sin? How wise is righteousness?

Friday— Read Romans 7:1-6. Widows can remarry (v. 1-3). Who is our "ex"? With whom are we now united? So what?

Saturday—*In preparation for worshipping the risen Lord with your church family,*
read **The Book of Esther.**

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would *this text* answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]

Let's learn to love our struggling friends!



The Biblical Counseling Ministry of
Triangle Community Church
invites you join us for
“Biblical Perspectives on Gender Identity”

Saturday, November 6, 2021

9am til noon



Our seminar speaker, **Dr. Jim Newheiser**, is the director of the Christian Counseling program at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte and serves as a board member of both the Biblical Counseling Coalition and the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors.

For more info: **TCC.org** Keyword: **Gender**