

A low-angle photograph of three men in business suits looking upwards at a massive skyscraper. The building's facade is a grid of windows, and the sky is overcast. The men are positioned in the foreground, their heads tilted back, creating a sense of scale and aspiration.

Surviving the Corporate Jungle

– without losing your soul

A JUNGLE is a place characterised by intense, often ruthless competition or struggle for survival. Does this describe your workplace – Intense? Often ruthless? Competitive? A struggle for survival?

A quote from the movie *Transporter 2* says “In the jungle, you either eat or get eaten”. Many of us want to survive and succeed in the corporate jungle, yet Jesus warns us to examine the cost at which this success is attained. In Matthew 16:26, He says, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?” **If we are not careful, success will be achieved at the expense of our soul – our relationship with God, our integrity and our Christian witness.**

It is possible to survive and succeed in the corporate world without losing your soul, says **Pastor Danny Leong**, who shares from over 25 years' experience in a large organisation.



But this does not mean that we cannot be jungle-savvy people. God wants us to survive – and thrive! – in the corporate jungle. The key is, He wants us to do so without losing our souls. But is this possible?

The good news is, yes! The life of Daniel demonstrates that it is possible. Daniel survived for 70 years in a most challenging and competitive environment without losing his soul. The nation of Israel was under the rule of Babylon, and he was brought to Babylon as a captive, along with other strong, healthy and good-looking young men.

The Babylonian culture promoted pride (they were great conquerors and had a vast empire), the worship of the king,

Daniel 1:1-9

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility – ⁴ 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. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

⁶ Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

⁸ But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. ⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel...

idolatry, and social stratification. **Babylonian culture reflects corporate culture today – where pride, knowledge, the CEO, profit and technology, are kings.**

Daniel found himself facing an egocentric despot and surrounded by idolaters. How was he to survive this ruthless and competitive culture? By making the right **choices** and demonstrating the right **character** qualities. Daniel's choices and his character can be likened to the two rows of beacons on an airport runway that demarcate an airplane's landing zone. These ensured that Daniel not only survived, but also thrived in the corporate jungle.

A. Daniel made the right choices

Within hours, if not minutes, of his arrival in Babylon, Daniel was presented with a dilemma. He was offered the king's food which, having been prepared by Gentiles and offered to pagan gods, did not conform to the Mosaic Law. Daniel had a choice – to eat the king's food or to obey God by not eating the king's food. Eating the king's food was the natural and obvious choice – a no-brainer, in fact, for it would lead to fame and fortune. Daniel could have rationalised that being in the king's favour could grant him opportunities to serve God. But instead, he chose otherwise – he chose not to defile himself with the royal food. He deliberately chose the path that would lead to certain destruction and death.

The issue here is not about food. Rather, it is about ownership. Even though Daniel was now in a foreign land under foreign rule, he did not change his owner from God to Babylon. Even though he lived in a culture that did not follow God's laws, he considered himself under God's Law. His desire was to please God in all he did. Ultimately, Daniel knew that God owned him and so he made the choice to please God rather than the king.

This is typical of life **in the corporate jungle. We are always faced with choices – to please God or to please man.**

To please man is natural and obvious, but could lead you to compromise your faith. To please God seems unnatural and unwise from a worldly perspective, but enables you to honour God.

Three fundamental choices

To survive in the corporate jungle without losing your soul, there are three fundamental choices that you need to consistently make:

- 1 **Declare your faith**
- 2 **Bless your co-workers**
- 3 **Trust your God**

1 **Declare your faith**

To declare means to profess, assert, or announce.. Daniel declared his faith consistently – by rejecting the king's food, interpreting dreams (Daniel 2, 4), and refusing to pray to the king (Daniel 6). He could have

chosen to renounce or hide his faith but instead, he chose to honour God by declaring his faith.

Like wearing a wedding ring or being water baptised, **declaring your faith shows everyone where you stand and who owns you.** If Daniel had not declared his faith consistently, his place in history would have been very different. He could have been successful in his career, but he would have lost his soul.

You may feel that your faith is private and you have chosen not to declare it. Friends, our faith is personal but certainly not private! I know of Christians who have chosen not to declare their faith in their workplace. They could be leaders and elders in their churches, but nobody in the workplace knew they were even believers. This gave them the freedom to please man rather than God. But in the end, the results were invariably sad – most of them failed miserably and the few who succeeded paid a high price.

Contrary to what many people believe, declaring your faith will not affect your career in a negative way. However, we should declare our faith with an attitude of respect. Daniel asked for permission and offered solutions. In the same way, we should ask for permission to be excused from activities that compromise our faith and offer to do something else.

How do you declare your faith in your workplace? Simple acts, such as doing care acts (deeds of kindness) in the office, joining an office CareCell, sharing your testimony and even giving out Christian flyers make God's presence felt in your workplace. You can also show God's power by praying for your colleagues and various work situations so that others can see that God is a powerful God.

If you really believe that God is sovereign and in control of your career, then declare your faith openly.



Daniel 1:17-21

17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 20 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.

21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Romans 1:16 says "I am not ashamed of the gospel...". Choose today to declare your faith.

2 Bless your co-workers

To bless means to bring joy and pleasure to someone else – to make him or her happy. Daniel could have cursed his captors. Instead, he blessed them by giving his best. In the process, he consistently brought joy and pleasure to his supervisors and the king.

Often we are tempted to curse or take revenge on those who step on our toes. But if we

believe that God is in control, we can leave revenge to God. Romans 12:19 says, "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Once, a subordinate of mine did something very unkind to sabotage my career. When it was time for the annual appraisal, he expected me to take the opportunity to get back at him. But I did not. I chose to be objective and gave him an above-average assessment. He resigned soon after the event. This showed me that God will deal with those who hurt me. My colleague's malicious intentions came to naught. And I knew I had pleased God by not taking things into my own hands.

How can you bless your co-workers? One of my guiding principles lies in Proverbs 3:27: "Do not withhold good to someone who deserves it when it is in your power to act upon it". That's exactly what I did.

In the corporate world, kindness is often perceived as a weakness. But in reality, it is a choice to bless. Romans 12:21 tells us to overcome evil with good. As Christians, we are overcomers. We overcome evil by being firm and faithful in our beliefs and by doing good to others. This does not mean you become a doormat for others to step on. You may be kind and, at the same time, remain firm and faithful in your beliefs.

Once, a former colleague of mine was very unhappy at work and wanted to leave. But he told me, "I am staying because of you." This statement brought me to tears before God. **Will your colleagues cheer or tear when you leave your workplace?** Choose today to bless your boss and co-workers consistently.

3 Trust your God

Trusting God is also a choice! Daniel could have chosen to strive for survival rather than to trust God. But he consistently made the choice to trust God for his survival – he looked to God for favour (chapter 1), strength (chapter 1), wisdom and revelation (chapters 2 & 4), and deliverance from lions

(chapter 6). Often, we strive to survive and to be rewarded. But favour and promotion come from God.

Psalm 75:6-7 says, "No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. But it is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another."

God is sovereign. He is the One who gives the



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promotion and He is also the One who withholds the promotion because He has a better plan for you.

At my previous workplace, I often looked at the competition around me and concluded that I would not be among those to be promoted and rewarded. But God always surprised me, and often beyond my wildest imagination. I often asked God, "There are so many capable people... why me? After all, who am I compared to all of them?" Then God showed me from 1 Chronicles 17 that He simply chose to bless

me. All He wanted me to do was to receive it with joy and gratitude. God is truly the One who promotes us.

Proverbs 3:3-4 says, "Never let loyalty and kindness get away from you.... Then you will find favour with both God and people, and you will gain a good reputation."

If you are making such a difference, then surviving in the corporate jungle is not an issue. For God says, "Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained." (1 Samuel 2:30) Therefore, resolve in your heart to always honour God, and He will certainly honour you.

B. Daniel demonstrated the right character qualities

Making the right choices lays a foundation for survival in the corporate jungle without losing your soul. But that is not enough. Having the right character ensures that you not only survive but also thrive in the corporate jungle.

Why character? Very often we focus on being competent. **Competence is necessary but insufficient for survival and success in the corporate jungle.**

You need to have character. Competence reveals your capability; character reveals your qualities.

Daniel was highly competent but it was his character that set him apart from the rest. Daniel 6:4 tells us about three key qualities in Daniel's character. He was faithful (loyal); he was always responsible, and he was completely trustworthy (he had integrity). His opponents could not find any fault with him. It was not intelligence, connections or political suaveness that distinguished Daniel from the others. It was something more fundamental – he possessed loyalty, responsibility, and integrity.

Competence is necessary but insufficient for survival and success in the corporate jungle.



Daniel 6:1-4, 28

1 Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a prince to rule over each province. 2 The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the princes and to watch out for the king's interests. 3 Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and princes. Because of his great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire. 4 Then the other administrators and princes began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling his affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize. He was faithful and honest and always responsible.

28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Three fundamental character qualities

1 Loyalty

Daniel was loyal to King Darius. He had Darius' interests at heart. He protected Darius' interests and his plans. At a time when kingdoms went to war after war, loyalty was perhaps the most critical quality needed for officials, as any disloyalty could cause the empire to be taken over by the enemies.

How do you show loyalty? **My definition of loyalty is to stay and protect.** To be loyal is to stay and protect your organisation, your superiors and your team no matter what. In the corporate jungle, the norm is to move, not stay. Job-hopping is part of today's highly mobile economy. People have an urge to move to something new, especially when they are faced with difficulties. But **loyalty says "I will stay for the time that God places me in my company regardless of my position."** It is making a deliberate choice to stay.

The other aspect of loyalty is to protect. A loyal employee protects the interests of his company, superiors and co-workers. In the corporate jungle, the culture is often "each man for himself". Instead of protecting the interests of the company, superiors and co-workers, people engage in sabotage and back-stabbing. No wonder then, Proverbs 25:13 describes people with loyalty as "refreshing snow in the heat of summer"; they revive the spirit of their employer. In the midst of toxic office politics, loyalty is wonderfully refreshing.

Stay where God has placed you till He moves you. Honour God by protecting the interests of your company, superiors and co-workers.

2 Responsibility

Daniel was responsible. He did not need to be watched or controlled by anyone else. Because he was responsible, God positioned him at the highest level of government.

How do you show responsibility? By having a sense of ownership. In the corporate jungle, the natural tendency is to shift the blame.

Being responsible means taking ownership when things go wrong, and admitting your fault. Ownership also means being excellent – not just doing the minimum to get by. A person who is responsible is productive. He has a desire to do better and do more for the organisation. With responsible employees, productivity will be the natural outcome.

Galatians 6:4, 5 says, “Be sure to do what you should, for then you will enjoy the personal satisfaction of having done your work well, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else. For we are each responsible for our own conduct.” Be responsible, for this pleases God.

3 Integrity

Daniel had integrity. He was completely trustworthy. His achievements and accomplishments were achieved without having to resort to dirty tricks or deceptions. He was more capable than all the other administrators. And he was truthful – he spoke the truth to the kings about their dreams and even their pride.

When he was thrown into the lions’ den for his godly choice to pray to God rather than to the king, he accepted the punishment instead of attempting to scheme his way out of the situation. That’s integrity!

How do you show integrity? It can be summed up in just one word – Truthfulness. Lying, telling half-truths, and twisting the facts are all part of the culture in the corporate jungle. It is always tempting to manipulate the truth especially when we are under pressure to produce good results. In fact, truthfulness may even lead you to lose your position or job. But it ensures that you don’t lose your soul. **Which is more important – your job or your soul?**

You are always a winner when you practise truthfulness. For being truthful enables you to have

a clear conscience, and you will build a reputation for integrity and truthfulness.

Loyalty, responsibility and integrity are essential for you to survive and succeed in the corporate jungle without losing your soul. Honour God with your character and He will honour you in return (1 Samuel 2:30).

The heart of the matter

To succeed in the corporate jungle, don’t ask “How fast can I climb the corporate ladder?” or even “What kind of career will I have?” Instead, ask: “What kind of employee do I want to be?” Look beyond mere career advancement. Above all, ask yourself if you are making a difference in your workplace – in belief, values and choices.

Not long ago, I met a former colleague at a café. She said something which impacted me – “You were one of the few bosses I truly respected.” She said “respected”, not “admired”. To me, there is a difference. Admiration comes from a life of accolades, achievements and accomplishments. Respect comes from a life of making the right choices for God – to declare my faith, to bless my co-workers, and to trust my God – and having the right character.

When you choose to honour Him, God will ensure that you not only survive, but thrive, in the corporate jungle. When you are making a difference with your godly choices, passionate commitment and spiritual leadership, the corporate jungle cannot shackle you. Instead, you will be sought after and looked after by both God and man.

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This series can be heard online at www.trinity.net/sermons.htm