

*Article for 32963*

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## ***Compromise?***

Do you hold any convictions which you are utterly unwilling to compromise? Are there any beliefs or understandings you've adopted that you consider non-negotiable, unalterable, and unchangeable? Most of us have some. In fact, we think that some of the best stories and Hollywood movies are depictions of people who did, in fact, stand up for their uncompromising principles, against all odds. Of course, taking a stand can be costly. It can alienate other people, or even endanger our lives. But if we can see no other path of integrity, we may be willing to take such a stand, even so. Do you have any convictions significant enough to you, that you would risk almost anything for them?

A fascinating little Biblical story exists about a group of folks, faithful to the God of Israel, who were asked to deny their beliefs in the most compromising way imaginable for an Israelite. They were asked to bow in worship before a golden statue erected in Babylon, where they were being held in captivity by a ruthless king. They refused. Their allegiance to their God demanded their total loyalty. Even on pain of death, they would not worship a golden idol. And so the Israelites named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown by the angry king into a fiery furnace, as their punishment. But to the great surprise of the king, they were not harmed by the fire.

Now, the great temptation in reading this little story (and indeed, in seeing some Hollywood epics in which the brave and loyal are lavishly compensated) is to conclude that virtue is always instantly rewarded. But, as one of our colleagues has noted: "Sometimes doing the right thing in life does not guarantee that God's cavalry will be stationed just over the hill, ready to charge forward and take up battle with you on your side. The rescue of these three from the fiery furnace was not the point of the story. Rather the point of the story is that they knew they might *not* be rescued and it did not matter. They would have stood up for what they believed anyway."

Do you have any beliefs so central to your nature, your character, your heart, that you would be willing to risk anything for them? If you were to ask us that question, we would answer that our bedrock, rock-solid, core beliefs could be boiled down to a simple few. But these few are so essential to us, that yes, we would do or say most anything necessary in support of those things. And perhaps you see your most critical ideas and convictions similarly.

The fine art of compromise is essential to human well-being and the peaceful coexistence of different cultures, different societies, different people. We must learn when and how to compromise. But, for those rare and critical issues and beliefs that must not be compromised under any circumstances, we take to heart the example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Are there beliefs you simply cannot violate, or convictions you cannot deny? Then, like faithful folks from generations past, may you cling to them, and never count the cost!