

Daniel's Defining Moment, pt 1

Living Rooted in Babylon - part 7
Pastor Bob Johnson, November 1st, 2020

1. D _____ is noticed

*It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; 2 and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. 3 Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. 4 Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. 5 Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."
Daniel 6:1-5 (ESV)*

2. D _____ is manipulated

*Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! 7 All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.
Daniel 6:6-9 (ESV)*

3. D _____ is maintained

When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Daniel 6:10 (ESV) (see also 1 Kings 8:35-36, 2 Chronicles 6:36-39)

Lessons in Dealing With Lions:

1) Be careful with _____ & _____
(Proverbs 29:5, Proverbs 29:20)

2) Be faithful with _____
(Proverbs 29:25, 1 Timothy 4:7-8, Psalm 55:16-17)

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GPC's "Living Rooted in Babylon"

Small Group Discussion of Daniel 6:1-10

(Week Seven of our Eight-Week Study & Discussion of Daniel 1-6)

Check - in If you can't think of a better ice breaker question ... try this one :)

One of the things touched on in last Sunday's message was how we need to be careful when flattery comes our way. What is the difference between flattery and genuine encouragement? Speaking of the importance of encouragement, if you could offer some encouragement to anyone, anywhere in the world, ... who would it be and what would you say?

Pause and Pray: Be still and know that He is God...God who is present with you, loving you. Surrender yourself to His love. Let's open our hearts, lives and minds to whatever it is He wants to do with us. (pause)... Pray with one another.

Look back on your message outline or look back over Daniel 6:1-10

What has continued to resonate with you from Sunday's message?

Digging Deeper:

The first passage Bob shared last Sunday was Psalm 92:12-15. This verse is true of Daniel because he was a righteous man committed to depend moment by moment on God. This was his commitment for decades as our story continues in Daniel 6 with Daniel now in his 80's.

One habit Daniel maintained was a strong prayer life. This week, the focus of this discussion guide will be on the importance praying as we live out our lives.

Anne Graham Lotz said this about prayer:

"There's nothing wrong with routine prayers, meal time prayers, holiday prayers, prayers sent up as a flare - a distress call of help to the Only One who can help us. But what if I told you there's a greater dimension to prayer, because prayer ushers us into an extraordinary relationship even for us ordinary prayers. This is the kind of power, the kind of possibility we find from Daniel prayer." A committed life of prayer. "A commitment each of us can make. Can we afford to pray like Daniel? We can't afford not to!"

One of Daniel's strengths was that he was a man of prayer. We see this clearly this week in two ways:

1. Those that opposed Him knew his unflinching commitment to prayer could lead to his demise.
2. Daniel didn't start this commitment to daily prayer because of the decree but he didn't stop his prayer because of the decree either. He knew who God was, he knew who man was and he determined his allegiance based on his knowledge of God. He was a citizen of the Kingdom of God (symbolized in Jerusalem) not the empire of Medes and Persians.

In Philippians, Paul encourages us to have the same heart and conviction, *"But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control."* Philippians 3: 20-21

What insights do you see from this passage?

If you had people seeking your demise, what would they observe in your life to oppose? Prayer?

What has God placed on your heart that you would continue to do even if a decree was made against it? Take a moment, think wisely, think long term, speak honestly and intentionally...

C.S. Lewis said, *“Relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing had yet been done before.”* What did he mean by that?

Because Daniel lived dependent on God, prayer was a way of life for him. He did not flaunt his conviction, neither did he hide it. Daniel simply continued EVERY DAY to stay rooted in God’s Kingdom while he was in Babylon like he had since he was a teenager - some 60 years...

Another passage from Sunday that reminds us that spiritual maturity is something to strive for and is not automatic is the following: *Stay clear of silly stories that get dressed up as religion. Exercise daily in God—no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever. You can count on this. Take it to heart.* 1 Timothy 4:7-8 (Msg)

What questions, insights or comments do you have regarding this passage?

If you have confessed Jesus as your Savior and Lord and declared dependence on God, how do you live a dependent life on God? How would you describe your prayer-life? If this is a new thought for you, what would you say currently is your pattern for dealing with your worries, concerns, need for guidance and love? What might it look like for you to draw near to God daily, throughout your day in dependence?

God makes us aware of things in our life, not to condemn us but to invite us to surrender to His love, His power, and His grace. What invitation do you sense from God as you reflect on the teaching and example of Daniel?

If you are considering a commitment to more consistent prayer, Daniel has some suggestions for us to consider. Are any of these helpful to you at this time?:

1. Root your belief and dependence in the **Promises** of God...

- Pray in relationship with your Triune God: eternally loving Father, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the indwelling, empowering Holy Spirit
- Pray seeking knowledge of the character of God , will of God and heart of God
- Pray trusting and responding to the living and active Word of God. Looking up the prayers in Scripture and using them as a guide is a good and powerful practice to use during your prayer times. Use them as initial promptings and then add your current circumstances, the specific names of those you’re praying for, your personal concerns into the words and meditations of the prayer.
- At the end of prayer, you can also spend a moment in silence signaling to your soul and to God that you believe Him and can rest in His love free of anxious care of yourself. This is the practice Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God”. God Himself with you is the greatest promise of them all.

2. **Place**...consistent and free of distraction where you can simply begin praying and then God will meet you there, giving you insight and understanding about what to pray next, and then next and then next and then so forth and so on. You are praying to Him and with Him.

3. **Pattern** of dependence set regularly ... Daniel followed David’s example that is described in Psalm 55:16-17. *“But I will call on God, and the Lord will rescue me. Morning, noon, and night I cry out in my distress, and the Lord hears my voice.”*

4. **Posture**...Daniel knelt to reflect his heart posture. He drew near to God as a humble servant. He did not come to demand of God but declare his dependence on his God.

Prayer is an important part of how we remain rooted in and dependent on God in the midst of a world opposed to God. Prayer is also an invitation to a soul-satisfying relationship with God

Richard Foster writes:

“Prayer is the heart’s true home. But, you see, we have been in a far country. It’s been a country of climb and push and shove. It’s been a country of noise and hurry and crowds. The heart of God is an open wound of love because of this distance and preoccupation of ours. God mourns that we do not draw near to him. God weeps over our obsession with “much-ness” and “many-ness.”

God invites us to come home: home to where we belong; home to serenity and peace and joy; home to intimacy and acceptance and affirmation. God welcomes us into the living room of his heart where we can put on old slippers and share freely. God welcomes us into the bedroom of his rest where we can be vulnerable and free. It is also the place of deepest intimacy where we can know and be known to the fullest. And it doesn’t matter if we have little faith, or none. It doesn’t matter if we have been bruised and broken by the pressures of life. It doesn’t matter if our prayers have grown cold and brittle. It doesn’t matter if God seems remote and inaccessible.

Just like a little child can never draw a bad picture, so a child of God can never utter a bad prayer. God, you see, accepts us just the way we are, and he accepts our prayers just the way they are. But here is the beauty of this interactive life of prayer: God does not leave us the way we are. God’s intention is to transform our inward character into the likeness of Christ. C. S. Lewis writes that God’s intent for you and me is to form us into “a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale). His own boundless power and delight and goodness.”

The interactive life of prayer is a central means God uses for bringing this transformative reality into the deep habit structures of our lives. Now, we must not think of prayer as a flat, dull, one-dimensional experience. Far from it! Prayer is a dance, a love feast, a wrestling match, a high, hilarious party... I could continue adding metaphors for some time. Prayer is so rich and varied and individualized a reality.

The syntax of prayer is love. “True, whole prayer is nothing but love,” writes Augustine of Hippo. “The Trinity is our everlasting lover,” declares Julian of Norwich. “Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly,” cries out Charles Wesley. The heart of God is open wide to receive us; we are welcome to come home.

What questions, or comments do you have from what we just read?

Let’s spend the rest of our time praying :).

Let’s let God lead this prayer time. What is He prompting you to pray?

While we pray, is there a passage of Scripture that you would like to share?

As we pray, let’s also take some time to pray for one another as God calls us to help lift each other’s burdens.